

Text of speech of Hon'ble HRM at the CBSE's Principal's Conference on the theme 'Equipping Global Learner's with 21st Century Skills' at Indian School, Dubai on 25th September, 2013.

(Address made through Video Conferencing)

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I have immense pleasure to join you on the occasion of the CBSE's Principal's conference on the theme '**Equipping Global Learner's with 21st Century Skills**'. It would have been a great occasion for me to meet all of you in person, but due to some urgent engagements that cropped up back home, I am joining you via Video-Conferencing. It is, indeed, a great occasion for me to share my perceptions with all stakeholders including educationists, administrators, and policy framers on this subject.

Education to my mind is not only a goal in itself but is a powerful facilitator of social and economic change. Combined with sound macroeconomic policies, education is fundamental for the build-up of democratic societies. It is the key to creating, applying and spreading new ideas, which in turn are critical for sustained growth.

- Education builds up what the **Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen rightly calls "human capabilities"**. Education and education alone, could provide the foundation of an enduring value-based and egalitarian society.
- The 21st Century is acknowledged by all as the "Knowledge Century" which means that Knowledge or intellectual prowess should be reflected in a country's competitiveness, advancement and human capabilities.

The ability of a nation to make best use of its knowledge will ultimately determine its place in the comity of nations in the present century. Lifelong

learning should therefore be a high priority for all. The four pillars of education,

- **learning to know,**
- **learning to do,**
- **learning to be and**
- **learning to live together,**

provide the enhanced opportunities that are essential for full citizenship in knowledge society. Indeed, it is fundamental to the development of a nation.

In order to ensure that meaningful values driven and learner-centric education is imparted to our children, it is essential for the education system to have these four attributes-

- **“Every Student, an Engaged Learner”;**
- **“Every School, a Good School”;**
- **“Every Teacher, a Caring Educator” and**
- **“Every Parent, a Supportive Partner”.**

The school leader plays a critical part in achieving these. Therefore, it is fitting and essential to add one more attribute to the list of four, to include the role of the Principal:

- **We need every Principal to be an Inspiring Leader in Education.**
What does it take to be an Inspiring Leader in Education?

This is a major topic.

I would, like to list 6 expectations that may serve as a useful guide in your daily work. I will speak on these expectations based on the **learnings from Gandhiji**, recognized internationally for his vision and non-violence.

- **Value experience**
- **Absorbing ideas you need**

- **Communicate effectively**
- **Realize the limits of precedence and prototype**
- **Blend tradition and innovation**
- **Be a quiet example**

First, **Value Experience**- Our age is obsessed with diplomas and certificates. These, certainly are of value. However, it is a big mistake to minimize the value of experience, which is a highly effective teacher – perhaps the best teacher of all. The 21st century Principal must emphasize a lot on the experience; experience of a teacher or experiential learning of a student.

Second, **Absorbing ideas you need**- As principals you will find good ideas everywhere, but many of you will resist them for one reason and one reason only; that you did not think of them. Management analysts sometimes call this attitude NIH (not invented here) syndrome. Effective leaders use whatever works for them. Exceptionally effective ones absorb what they find, making it their own. An idea may not be your original idea but you can certainly create an original application for you, and thus you can bring something new and powerful to your school.

Third, **Communicate effectively**- Language is a powerful means of bonding people. The most important task any principal undertakes is to ensure that everyone in the school speaks the same language – that is, a language meaningful to the school and its stakeholders. And the universal language is called the language of students. The more fluently you speak the language of your students, the more compelling your message will be.

Fourth, **Realize the limits of precedence and prototype**- We should respect those who had come before, but never slavishly follow the precedent. There is much wisdom in the record of collective experience of the past but the principals must bear in mind that the past decisions were made in response to a particular reality at a particular time. Accept the past

as a teacher, but remember that the measure of a successful teacher is the number of students who rise above his example, and the very greatest teachers are those who produce students much greater than themselves. In this connection, it is very timely that the CBSE has introduced reforms in the examination system to enable the school leaders move forward.

Fifth, **Blend tradition and innovation**-To bring any change in any school is actually a balancing act between the status quo and innovation. The CBSE's scheme of CCE which is a blend of tradition and innovation – the Board supporting the school based assessment, seems to be very much in tune with blending tradition and innovation. As a leader of school, it is your job to make this change now as meaningful and as seamless as possible. Look, Listen, Learn, Live on, and Improve should be the philosophy as no error can be forever.

Lastly, **Be a Quiet Example**- **Gandhiji's one of the famous quote** “**Be the change you want to see in the world**” holds true in today's context. Promoting change by personal example is the most effective tool and as school leaders, you are put as models against which others will measure their attitudes and beliefs.

In our journey through 21st Century, let us aim to sustain our achievement and move towards the teaching of 21st century competencies. Let us create niches of excellence in every school. In that regard, every school should have something interesting to offer. I hope to see our schools breaking new paths, so that we can inspire and help others level up. The global shifts and demographic changes will have a huge impact on the future of jobs and on lifestyles. Our school leaders need to have a good understanding of these shifts, if we are to prepare our students well for the future. These 6 expectations of principals are not neat, distinct boxes, but serve as guide to daily efforts. I hope you reflect upon these and synthesize these into a coherent plan of action.

CBSE is an organization that is leading enthusiastically its schools in this challenging 21st Century. I am pleased to learn that over the last few years, the CBSE has grown tremendously in reforming and upgrading its unique matrix of curriculum, assessment and teacher training notwithstanding the fact that the number of affiliated schools are growing at a fast pace. It has also taken up the task of providing parameters for quality education through several academic initiatives like :

- **introducing periodic accreditation of schools,**
- **updatation of examination system through use of ICT,**
- **addressing topical themes of Gender Sensitivity and**
- **Value Education along with reviving traditional knowledge systems and awareness of our rich heritage.**

We must always understand the need to walk the tightrope between tradition and modernity on the one hand and innovation and change on the other.

I would also like to laud CBSE for its efforts at de-stressing examinations and bringing in the much needed reforms in the process and procedure of education. The strengthening of the continuous and comprehensive evaluation system will go a long way in giving autonomy to schools and students.

I am aware that schools affiliated with CBSE in the Gulf Region have been facing certain challenges, some of which relate to

- **non-availability of CBSE office in Dubai and**
- **timely availability of NCERT textbooks.**

I am happy to say that a CBSE Sub-Regional centre will be opened in Dubai in consultation with the Indian Mission in Dubai to deal with all academic, affiliation and examination related matters. This office will also

coordinate for timely availability of NCERT textbooks in the region. There is one wholesale agent for NCERT textbooks in Dubai and Sharjah each, besides suppliers based in Delhi. I will ask NCERT to address the issue of timely availability of books in these parts on priority. The other issues relating to fee structure and quality control etc. would be taken up with the local Governments at appropriate levels.

Before I end, I convey my best wishes to the CBSE for their laudable objective to bring together the change makers of education who could provide selfless and dynamic leadership to the centers of learning. I wish all success on this grand endeavour and hope that today's deliberations would contribute immensely in reshaping the learning skills to groom our new generations as the Global Citizens.

Thank You !

JAI HIND!