Why it is important to teach students ethics of work

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Quite a number of years ago I was invited to give a major lecture at my alma mater IIT Kanpur (IITK). My lecture was inspirational one where I told the students how through their technological training they can help in nation building and in the process achieve happiness. After my lecture a group of students wanted to discuss with me some issues on agriculture (an area which I had stressed in my lecture).

So over coffee at Cafe Day Cafeteria in IITK campus some of them said that I stress too much on idealism and the country. They said that corruption is a part of life and they can factor that in their enterprise as increased service cost! Their cynical and street-wise behavior shocked me and bothered me tremendously and I felt that they had no empathy or honesty and were justifying their materialistic behavior. One of them went so far as to tell me that he was purposely failing in his B.Tech so that he can stay for much longer time in IITK and use its facilities for running his business in Punjab!

I also felt dejected that what we as society have done to raise this type of young generation who have no ethics, moral values and everything is based on money.

Since then I have interacted with hundreds of students all over India and anytime when I ask them to help in our NGO and do some work for social enterprise their first reaction

is how much package they will get. What work will they do etc., is never in their vision field or something that they want to discuss.

Yet it is not the students' fault. I feel they are smart and want to do something meaningful in their lives. It is the fault of the broken education system, poor role models and society's pressures to make money at any cost, that make them behave like that.

Around 30% of India's youth are neither employed nor going to school. Thus they are easy prey to social evils. Thus rapes, riots, burglaries or just general hooliganism is carried out by most of these youths. They are almost like ticking bombs since they have bottled up frustration and anger.

The lot of the educated ones is no better than that of these unemployed youth. They have all learned to pass exams with very few skills and hands-on experience and thus are unfit to work. A generally quoted figure that only 7-12% engineering graduates are fit to be employed could also be applicable to most of the other educational streams.

Thus the doctors, engineers, commerce and legal graduates are not fit to do their jobs after graduation and have to be trained on the job for many years before they become practicing professionals. The amount of money and time wasted in training these fresh graduates is tremendous and is a drain on the country's resources.

But more than simply learning some subjects and passing exams, what is not taught either in schools or in colleges is the ethics of work and how to become a good human being and a good citizen.

Once the qualities of a good human being and ethics of work are inculcated, one can do work in any environment and learn new things. The education system theoretically should prepare a student for taking up challenges – an important part of ethics of work. But it does not do so and what the students learn is simply passing exams with questions given in the question papers which are as removed from reality as possible.

To be a good human being and have [ethics of work (both are related to each other) should be taught right from school onwards](#). In every course there should be a short section on ethics of work. If all course work and books have examples of ethics of work of great people then slowly but surely it will start soaking up in the brain of impressionable youngsters.

It is also possible that what the students learn in school is unlearnt during their interaction with family members and surroundings. Yet we must persist in our endeavor to teach them ethics and good behavior. This is a long learning process and will take time to infiltrate into the society since these youngsters are the future of our country.

In many institutes and organizations (both government and private) I have seen many examples of scientists and engineers who are employed by them try to "Screw" the system and quite a few also brag about how they hoodwinked their superiors and hardly

did any work. Besides not doing work the biggest tragedy is when they fudge or falsify experimental data. They seem to have no qualms in doing it because they have only been trained to pass exams by hook or crook.

I think one of the ways in which this passing of exams mentality can be changed is that in all the school and college curricula more focus should be put on carrying out activities in various courses and fields and much less on passing exams. Open book exams, many more marks for project activities, etc., will help in this process.

When there is too much emphasis on rote learning and passing objective type tests then the elements of cheating, corruption and general thievery creep in. This mentality is then carried over in other aspects of life.

So the most important thing that youngsters should be taught in schools and colleges is ethics of work and how to become good human beings. This will reduce greed, help them have a perspective in life and can ultimately help in making India a great and happy nation.

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