

RSOG LEADERSHIP FORUM

Instilling Moral Values and Cultural Understanding – My Experience

with

Noorjahan Sultan

When : 18 January 2016
Where : Razak School of Government
Speakers : Noorjahan Sultan

About the Seminar

“Kalau hendak melentur buluh biarlah daripada rebungnya” (start cultivating good values at an early age). The said proverb has a lot of truths and reflects the societal reality that we observe today. People with good manners, are respectful, honest, and able to adapt and integrate with his or her surroundings seem to decline each day. Such a trend is certainly a concern to us as we want to see Malaysia become a developed country in every aspects especially in mind-set and attitude – way beyond certain economic related numbers. Having such a wish and thinking is commendable – how do we do it? How do we instil moral values and cultural understanding to our young ones in a diverse society like Malaysia? This seminar intends to explore from Puan Noorjahan Sultan of SK Indera Mahkota in Kuantan, Pahang her thoughts, experience, and broad-ranging perspectives on the said topic. More often than not narratives from leaders like her could help to open doors of possibilities that has been neglected or underestimated by others all these while.

Summary

While some innovations are born out of rigorous experimentations such as the lightbulb by Thomas Edison, some can be by chance. Puan Noorjahan Sultan, in sharing her experience at the RSOG Leadership Forum, admitted that the “Let’s Rhyme” concept was initially designed to enhance English language acquisition among children from four to nine years old. However, the rhyming text, which consists of three basic principles - holistic, fun, and meaningful, was embedded with moral values and culture that inadvertently leads to children being inculcated with those elements.

In addition to enhancing vocabulary, improvement of pronunciation, spelling and grammar, the thematic rhyme has other value added propositions such as soft skills – confidence in speaking publicly, becoming better communicators, and open to sharing of ideas. According to the speaker, many children end up entering Year 1 without being able to hold a pencil in a proper manner. This could be due to sedentary lifestyle that involves little or irregular physical activity. Thus, the curriculum also helps with developing children’s fine and gross motor skills as the method forces students to move around and use various muscle groups to gesture the rhymes.

“Let’s Rhyme” consists of alphabet rhymes and thematic rhymes. The former has 28 rhymes – an introduction rhyme, 26 alphabet rhymes and a closure rhyme, while the latter has 40 thematic rhymes based on National Preschool Standard Curriculum. These themes are developmentally appropriate for the age and are socially engaging for students. As highlighted earlier, the main purpose of the rhyme is to encourage language acquisition and its further enhancement. However, the speaker believes that it is likely that the moral values are somehow embedded in the rhymes due to the ideals and principles that she believes in and how those principles are what needs to be imparted to the younger generation.

The speaker stressed that when one believes in something strongly with good intentions (i.e. to do good for others), there will be a way for it. She also believes in opening up one’s worldview and continuously learning from one another. It is due to this openness that she was able to broaden her product scope to reach more young learners who will eventually become leaders of the country. Concluding the sharing session, her personal hope is for the rhyme to reach a wider audience, even digitising the module into an audio/visual application.

Issues raised

1. While innovation can certainly be monetized and become an income-generating product, it is highly dependent on the innovator’s motivation and product purpose. The intangible outcomes such as patriotism and sense of responsibility can sometimes outweigh monetary gains.
2. It is not easy to break out entrenched stereotypes as it requires challenging perceptions that exists. It also requires one to be open to new experiences and actively listening to other people’s views.
3. Introduction of other cultural norms and religious beliefs at a young age can inculcate a collectivistic sense and allows one to embrace differences.
4. Inferiority complex and the fear to speak one’s mind are the most common factors hindering leaders from initiating changes.
5. Ideas are abound everywhere – leaders need to network, listen and exchange views with others.

About the Speaker

Puan Noorjahan Sultan is a preschool teacher in Malaysia with over twenty years of experience. In 2009 she pioneered 'Let's Rhyme', a method of English language learning based on alphabet and thematic rhyming. Not only does this method teach listening, speaking and language skills, it also conveys moral values, love for one's country, and cultural understanding. The rhymes cover forty different themes based on the national preschool curriculum. Her students have been very successful at various competitions and are frequently invited to give presentations to other preschools as exemplary role models. Noorjahan was chosen as a national trainer for preschool teachers and is involved in improving the educational syllabus of preschools. She is one of the finalists of the Varkey Foundation Global Teacher Prize Award 2016.

Contact

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