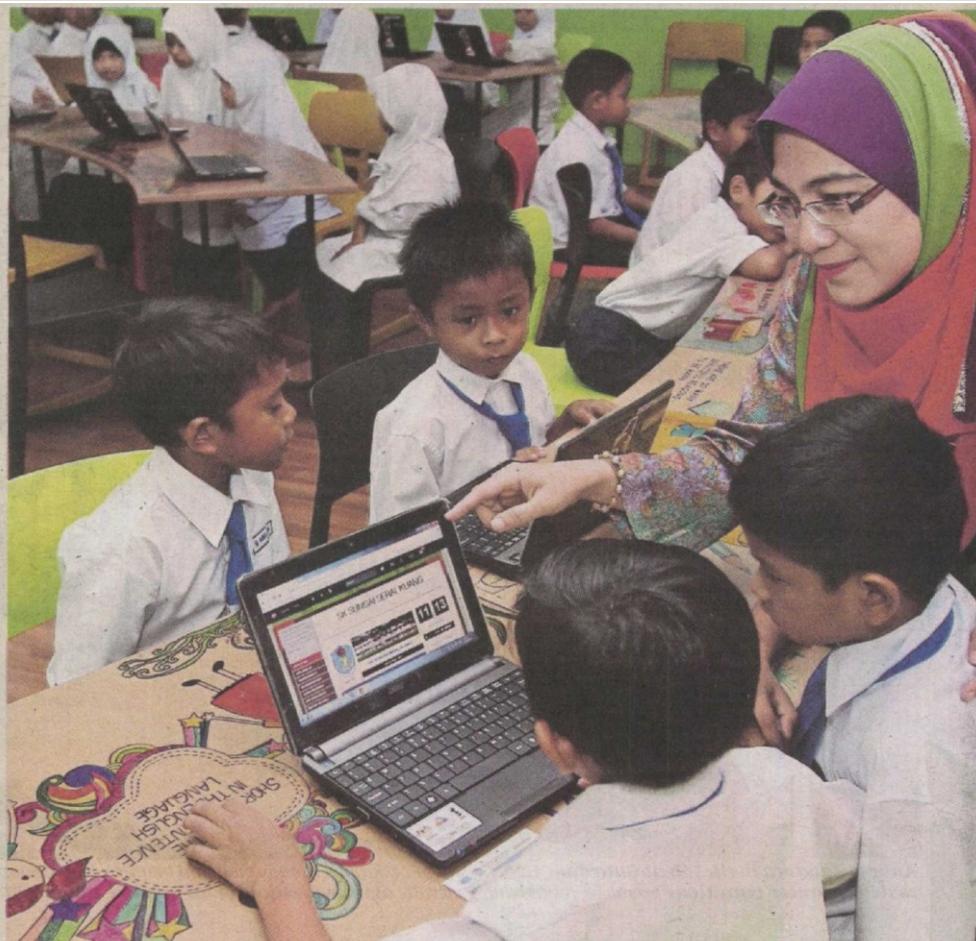


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Teachers must realise the **impact of their words, action and relationship** on their students.

TEACHING PROFESSION

Teachers make or break society

AS I reach the final phase of my post-doctoral studies, I keep asking myself how I am going to contribute to my beloved country when I return to Universiti Malaya.

It is always nostalgic to end one chapter in your life and start another with new hopes and resolutions. I remember what I used to tell undergraduates who began as freshmen to then become Moral Education teachers.

My most popular sentence is "You will have the knowledge, capability, skills and values to either make or break society".

The students would look shocked but my example was of how a positive teacher can transform the life of a student and how a negative teacher can turn a student into what society sees as a

troublesome member of society.

My example included how other professionals like doctors may write wrong prescriptions and the worst scenario is the death of a patient.

However, in the teaching profession, if the teacher does not inspire students and keeps belittling them, the students may end up hating the teacher, school and education system.

It may lead to the students dropping out, not being able to fit into society, yet wanting to live like anyone else.

Do teachers realise the impact of their words, action and relationship on their students?

I had the experience of being an assistant researcher in a prison and while writing down details of the inmates, I gently asked the inmates, what made them do what they did and end up in jail.

They cited broken homes, parents' divorce, peer influence and others.

The biggest shock was when one inmate said if not for his teacher who kept calling him a "pencuri", he would not be in jail.

He explained that he had once stolen his friend's money and ever since then, his teacher had labelled him "pencuri", and his friends did the same. Eventually, he dropped out of school in upper secondary.

With no education and skills, he committed petty thefts, then bigger ones and eventually he got caught and was put in jail.

Thus, my heart goes out to such students who do not have good role models at home and teachers who cut them off from society by labelling them or treating them badly.

Teaching is not like any other

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profession as it deals with individuals who come from different backgrounds, with different aspirations.

To expect every student to be studious and do well in examinations, be well-behaved and become the pride of all teachers is idealistic and superficial.

Teachers are also human and might get angry or emotional when faced with challenges in their daily work.

However, there is a greater need for teachers to understand what is happening to students as they struggle with their own physical, emotional and spiritual development.

I return more mature but filled with humility and vision that every teacher who goes away from my class should have the strength and wisdom to teach anywhere, anytime, and include every student in their teaching.

This will be my vision when I come back.

Teachers I educate should make and not break society.

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