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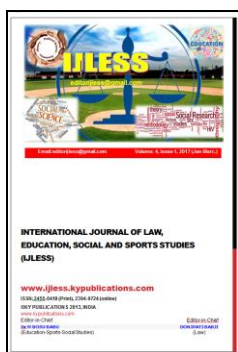
(Law)

'SELF-CONCEPT', NEED OF THE HOUR

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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**ABSTRACT**

Unemployment among educated youth is a global issue that needs to be addressed at the earliest. Development in computers has made the world a global village. But the issue of unemployment still needs to be addressed. A solution has to be obtained for this issue right at the kindergarten stage by lifting the self-concept of the little ones alongside his education. Unemployment among educated youth can be reduced, in fact completely eradicated by the third or fourth generation. Self-concept is the need of the hour.

Self-concept of the child is influenced by the self-concept of teachers, classmates, schoolmates, parents and other elders around him. Thus, self-concept of teachers has to be dealt first who will in turn deal with the self-concept of the child along with that of his classmates and schoolmates. School leadership plays a very important role towards this need of cultivating a positive self-concept in teachers, parents, and all adults who influence the child. Lifting up the self-esteem of teachers should become a priority. The Principal, vice-Principal and management have to work towards providing an ideal atmosphere for development of positive self-concept of all individuals connected to the welfare and success of the school and its students.

Key Words: Self-concept, nurturing, school, stakeholders, leadership

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty, problems and crime are rampant among youngsters more so among educated young people in the society today. Unemployment, socio-economic conditions, hunger, desire to enjoy, etc. are some of the main reason for this which cannot be and will not be denied by anyone, anywhere. Unemployment is not just a problem in India but a worldwide issue. We speak so much about the developments in Science and Technology: artificial photosynthesis, artificial brain, artificial uterus, cryonics, regenerative medicine, tissue engineering, head transplant, robotics, drones, carbon nanotubes, nanowire batteries, spintronics, optical computing, radio-frequency identification, electromagnetic weapons, smart city, etc. to name a few. The IT boom has changed the economic status of people like never before. The advent of the internet has virtually reduced the world to a 'Global Village'. In spite of all these developments, unemployment is still an issue that needs to be addressed. Can the present situation of unemployment among the youth be done off with or at least reduced? The answer to this question is in the affirmative. Yes, of course the situation of unemployment can be done off with if we start now and work on lifting the self-concept of the current 'school-going generation'. If an attempt is made towards this with strong desire, determination and dedication, then, by the three or four generations down the road unemployment could become something of the past.

Starting now, the concept of instilling positive self-concept in to the minds and hearts of the present school-going generation must become a top priority among adult generation across the globe who is involved in shaping the

lives of the growing generation so that the global scenario of unemployment will change slowly, systematically and steadily. The so called 'adult generation' should include all adults who have direct or indirect contact with the child during his growing-up years. That sounds too good to be true. Taking an initiative at the earliest towards this goal is very important because ultimately the aim of 'education' is to create employable individuals, who are able to adapt to any situation gracefully, by the time he completes his higher education.

The global employment sector looks for individuals with a positive self-concept. The world today is looking for highly efficient people who are able to perform their tasks well because it reflects directly on the name of the company, which truly matters. No CEO would compromise on the standards of his company just to employ someone who is not employable. In India an average adult, 22 to 25 years of age who has completed his graduation or post-graduation or for that matter any higher education, is expected to seek a job and become independent thereby fulfilling his duties as a responsible adult citizen. As an adult he needs to become responsible for all his actions and truly accountable. Accountability and adaptability are two qualities that every youngster needs to develop by the time he completes his education. It is expected of him to perform well from the time he steps into a company for interview and then after appointment, day in and day out, he has to continue performing effectively and efficiently to survive in the company and more so to climb up the ladder of success. It is here that the positive self-concept of an individual plays a vital role.

What is self-concept? Why is it so important? Self-concept is, by definition, the individual's cognition or feeling about himself. It involves the perception of himself involving his attitudes, feelings, and knowledge about his skills, abilities, appearance, and social acceptability. The self-concept that the individual has built up during his growing-up years determines the extent to which he believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy. If he has to be sufficiently confident about his own self, and be encouraged to perform well, he has to develop his self-concept at some point in time during his journey of life. 'Sky is the limit' is often quoted to encourage people achieve their maximum capacity and climb up the ladder of success. However, that limit can be achieved only if the 'foundation' is strong. Along with education, self-concept needs to be cemented into the educated while creating the 'foundation' in the early years of his life. Just like a tall structure requires a strong, deep and firm foundation and systematic structural engineering all through the way, an individual has to develop his self-concept while he is yet in school along with his education starting right at kindergarten. What does structural engineering got to do with the development of self-concept in an individual? Who is responsible for laying the strong, firm foundation of self-concept and who will systematically nurture it as the child grows up to become a young man? These questions are sure a matter that needs in depth research and discussions because the self-concept that is nurtured and built up all through his 15-year period at school, from nursery to kindergarten and all through higher secondary will determine how successful or satisfied he will become at the end of his life journey.

Discussion

How does the '15-year period' of school education become part of the foundation of education and in building accountability and adaptability in the educated community? A child joins Nursery at the age of 3 and then to kindergarten and continues through school until he completes his higher secondary at the age of 18. A total 15-year period of his life is spent at school along with his classmates, teachers and schoolmates. A typical "school day" starts at 8 in the morning and ends at 3 in the evening which is a whopping 7 hours of his 'active time' 5 days a week. Out of the remaining 'active time', he spends with someone known to him: may be parent/s, if they are unemployed or may be someone at the day care or may be grandparents at home. If both parents are working and if the child is really lucky, he may get a few hours of his 'active time' with them. Each individual mentioned above has an influence in the development of the self-concept of a child – be it the parents, grandparents, caretakers, teachers, classmates or schoolmates. Along with the influence of people, age and gender also plays a significant role in the development of self-concept. By the time the child becomes an adolescent he should have developed a positive 'self-concept' and become a confident individual. When we carefully analyze things, we see that the self-concept of his classmates, schoolmates and teachers has the greatest influence on a child who grows up to be a young adult at the end of his school life.

"As children move through early childhood to adulthood their sense of self becomes increasingly complex but reflects changes in their cognitive and social development" (Hunter, 2003).

Positive attitude needs to be cultivated into the minds of the little ones as right at early childhood. It has to be definitely started by the elders at home. Nevertheless, it can be started at least when the child is in play school and

worked on as he continues through kindergarten which is the best time as his brain absorbs every message that is put before him by his dear teacher. It is well known that brain development is most significant from birth to 3 and reaches 90 percent of its capacity before a child reaches the age of 5. The teachers at kindergarten level do not have the tension of completing portions or of upcoming exams. They are there to see that the child develops his skills of speaking, reading and counting along with social skills. At this stage the teacher or child has no tension. Therefore, it is the best time to focus on planting the precious seed of positive self-concept in the minds of the lively little angels. The teachers at this stage have to identify the personality-type of the child and handle each one carefully and delicately so as not to harm the good or smarter ones and at the same time build up the weaker or the slower ones.

As the child grows up age and gender of the child plays an important role in affecting the self-concept of the child. As children go to higher classes knowingly or unknowingly they get categorized as 'High Achievers', and 'Learning Disabled' depending on their performance in school. It is well known that the self-concept of the two categories differ a lot and it is therefore the responsibility of teachers at each stage of the child's education to take care so bridge the gap between the self-concept of the 'High Achievers' and the 'Learning Disabled' so that all children come out as achievers in some capacity. It sounds so simple when you say 'responsibility of teachers'. But there is a lot more to it than it sounds. As the child starts his schooling, the seed of self-concept that has been delicately planted by his teachers at kindergarten has to be continuously and carefully nurtured by all teachers in the upper classes till the seed of self-concept grows steadily and healthily till at last at the end of his school journey the wonderful fragrance of the flower of self-concept spreads and the child becomes a confident, independent and self-sufficient youngster with a purpose in his life and a goal to fulfill.

We have discussed so much about teachers and their responsibility in building the self-concept of children. Is it only the teachers who are responsible towards nurturing positive self-concept in the child? No, parents are equally responsible and need to jointly work side by side along with the teacher and with full cooperation towards accomplishing the ultimate goal of nurturing positive self-concept into their child. Otherwise, it will be a one-sided effort and will not bear fruit that will last a lifetime. It should be well remembered that the time and effort spent on building a positive self-concept is a lifelong investment and a necessity that is as equally important as educating the child. Along with parents, the other elders with whom the child comes in contact with as well as his classmates and schoolmates also have a great influence on building a positive self-concept in him. Negativity is a deadly parasite that needs to be treated with great care and with immediate effect from the adult community surrounding the child or for that matter anyone (his classmates or schoolmates) so that it does not spread to the child by any chance. If left untreated, the consequence is that negativity will not only spread to the child but can also become calloused in their mind which is really very sad and also very bad not only for the child but also the society at large. Though a very slow process it cannot be neglected. The best place to arrange for the treatment of negativity is in a school that the child attends where the adults and others in connection with the child becomes stakeholders.

Schools are the best platform where the need of the child can be well focused and addressed. As discussed above, teachers being the adult caretakers at the school play greatest role in influencing the life of a child directly because the child spends a whopping 7 hours of his 'active time' at school. Therefore, the self-concept of teachers has a great or in fact the greatest influence on each and every child under their care, be it a High Achiever or a Learning Disabled or some child who is average. Teachers need a great amount of patience because they are handling about 30 to 40 students at a time. Thus, it is very important that teachers have a positive self-concept so that they can help in the nurturing of positive self-concept of children. Teachers can motivate a child and develop his self-concept who in turn will influence his peers and other school mates positively. Thus, we see that it is a continuous chain of reaction. Therefore, it is very clear from the above discussion that the need of hour is to develop positive self-concept of teachers who in turn have a direct influence on the self-concept of every child under their care. This has to be done while the teacher undergoes his training at the teacher training education. Building a 'positive self-concept' has to be given greater importance during development of self as a person and as a teacher, through conscious ongoing reflection on a daily basis. It is extremely important in the life of teachers today because with the development of computer and free access to the internet life has become quite different than it once was. The impact of the internet access to the child has been felt and the only solution to this is in building the positive self-concept of the child which he is still in his junior classes. It is not just during the training that the self-concept of teachers has to be molded and lifted. There is something beyond the training.

After the rigorous two years of theoretical and practical training during the teacher education training, it has to be considered necessary that the atmosphere at the work place should also promote to further strengthen the positive self-concept of every teacher under the school umbrella. The fact that the self-concept of teachers is very important at all stages in the life of a teacher has to be emphasized and stressed by the education board and maintained by all stakeholders of the school body so that together we can mold strong 'Global Citizens' with the best self-esteem for tomorrow. Not only the self-concept of teachers should be stressed on but the administrators and planners of the education should make it a point that stress is laid on the development of positive self-concept of every school-going child and also students of all levels of education for that matter. School is not just about the curriculum, syllabus, exams, marks or qualified teachers who will get matters in the curriculum across to the child. There is something beyond the curriculum, beyond the class work, beyond the home work, beyond the exams and marks which needs to be addressed. Once that hidden issue of self-concept is addressed it will reflect positively on the academic performance as well as the character of each child that passes out. It is here that the school leadership plays a very important role.

The school Principal and vice-Principal along with the school management should provide adequate opportunity and create the right atmosphere for the collaborative development of positive self-concept in all individuals who directly or indirectly comes in contact with the child. Discussions of matters concerning school or education cannot be complete without the mention of the stakeholders of the school. A stakeholder is anyone who is involved in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents, community members, school board members, city councilors and state representatives. When it is clear from this definition that the school can focus on parent and the community who are directly involved in the welfare and success of the school and its students, there is no question as to why creating a positive self-concept in the adult community related to the school should not happen. On the other hand, the society at large needs to become aware of the need of developing a positive self-concept in the current school-going generation so that together all can help the child to become independent, self-sufficient, confident, accountable and adaptable individuals tomorrow. In order to create a fertile ground for the teachers at kindergarten to plant seeds of self-concepts into the little minds and for teachers at the higher classes to nurture positive self-concept, parents and all other stakeholders of the school should feel the intensity of the need of at the earliest.

"[T]here is a great deal of research which shows that the self-concept is, perhaps, the basis for all motivated behavior. It is the self-concept that gives rise to possible selves, and it is possible selves that create the motivation for behavior" (Franken, 1994).

Conclusion

Therefore, it is crucial that the community understands that creating a positive self-concept in the present school-going generation is the need of the hour. Without the support of the community it is not possible to make a drastic change or create a positive trend towards achieving a positive self-concept in every individual at least by the third or fourth generation from today. The work done by each and every teacher right from kindergarten and all through higher secondary and right to the higher education should be appreciated. Teachers need to be respected, which seems to have lost, for the commitment they have taken to nurture every child under their care with positive self-concept. It is when the adult community practices this in front of the child that the child will learn to love and respect their teachers who have directly or indirectly helped them to become someone in the society. Not just teachers of their school but teachers in general which goes without saying. It is very important that the child along with his parents learn to appreciate the work done behind the scene to make each day at school happen. This attitude of appreciation by all other stakeholder for the hard work put in by the teachers will be a great encouragement for them.

Nothing should be taken for granted, because there is a lot of hard work put in to see that things happen the way it should and to avoid unnecessary problems and bad situations. It should become the motto and shared responsibility of every stakeholder to lift the self-esteem of every teacher in general. Self-esteem is defined as, the experience of being capable of meeting life's challenges and being worthy of happiness. In fact, it should become a collaborative effort to feel the depth of the issue and understand the necessity of providing a fertile ground so that the seeds of positive self-concept are planted in each child at home as well as at school at the early stages childhood and nurtured through the 15-year school-going period. It is a well known fact that the child of today is a citizen of tomorrow. In fact, he needs to grow up with the right attitude to become efficient and effective world citizens which is

the talk of the day. Yes, he needs to learn to become a problem solver throughout his life not a problem creator. Thus, without a shadow of doubt 'self-concept' is the need of the hour.

Nathaniel Branden, an eminent philosopher and psychologist stressed the importance of self-concept in his statement: "I cannot think of a single psychological problem - from anxiety to depression, to under-achievement at school or at work, to fear of intimacy, happiness or success, to alcohol or drug abuse, to spouse battering or child molestation, to co-dependency and sexual disorders, to passivity and chronic aimlessness, to suicide and crimes of violence - that is not traceable, at least in part, to the problem of deficient self-esteem" (Branden, 1994, p. xv).

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