

Mentor's Energizer

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Change Makers All

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"We can be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures."
(Thornton Wilder, playwright)



Please send your photos for inclusion in the Energizer.

The Bahá'í Academy wishes to thank our mentor of the month, Dr. Tejaswini Desai, for sharing her insights.

Using the model at right, please send your comments and pictures to: energizer@bahaiacademy.org

The term empowerment means many things to many people. Concepts of choice, freedom, agency, capacity, participation, autonomy, and increased resources, however, are common to virtually all definitions. Consensus can therefore be found around the idea of empowerment as a means of improving quality of life and expanding the basis of human well-being. In short, empowerment can serve as a mechanism for effecting deep and broad-based social transformation.

The process of social transformation can be explored at both the personal and structural levels. At one end of the spectrum, social change is seen as an outcome of the development of individuals, achieved through education, training, access to material resources, and the like. According to this view, structural change is assumed to be an automatic result of personal change. Unfortunately, this rarely bears out in practice, as even those who benefit from such resources find themselves participating in oppressive social structures. At the other end of the spectrum, the human being is viewed entirely as a product of society, and change is considered impossible unless social structures—mainly those related to political power—are changed first. Yet, too often, this approach has supported the idea that ends justify the means and has resulted in conditions of injustice and oppression.

Increasing the capacity of individuals and communities to build more just and equitable social structures requires a conception of social development that avoids these extremes. Individual and structural transformations are intimately related: the individual's inner life shapes his or her social environment, and that environment, in turn, exerts a profound influence on one's spiritual and psychological well-being.

The metaphor of the body politic, likening all of humanity to a single social organism, provides a useful framework for exploring empowerment as means to pursue the transformation of individuals and society. Implicit in such a conception are characteristics such as the interdependence of the parts and the whole, the indispensability of collaboration, reciprocity and mutual aid, the need to differentiate but also harmonize roles, the need for institutional arrangements that enable rather than oppress, and the existence of a collective purpose above that of any constituent element. Drawing on the above ideas, individual and collective empowerment can be conceived as the expansion of vision, capacity, and volition necessary for people to act as effective agents of human well-being and prosperity.

(15 Nov 12, BIC, <https://www.bic.org/statements/empowerment-mechanism-social-transformation>)

Meet The Mentors

Meet Dr. Tejaswini Desai, Associate Professor in Engineering Physics, KIT's College of Engineering, Kolhapur



What creative ideas have you tried in the classroom?

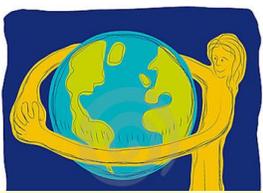
Friends, I will share my experience about my classroom teaching in few words. I am trying to use cooperative learning and participatory methods like role playing, poster presenting, pair discussion-share methods and I am getting wonderful response from the students. Problems are solved by the students who do not seek readymade answers from the text book. It is the students who tell me that they are benefitted in different ways by adopting these methods. The students share their experiences after participating in these activities and it helps to bridge the gap in teacher-student relationships. One important advantage of this method is its ability to enhance the level of understanding of the students. It also helps the students to learn different skills such as communication, artistic presentation, and team management and also helps to build their confidence.

What has surprised you about your students during the service learning activities?

Initially as I introduced Service Learning Activities few years back there was a mixed response. Some students participated wholeheartedly and showed great enthusiasm. These students learnt much more from practical applications of this activity. At the outset, discussion about various social problems, possible solutions and what was our contribution towards the society was organized and students actively participated and shared their views. But few of them were reluctant and completed the Service Learning Activities as a mandatory requirement of the course.

What challenges have you faced while mentoring your study groups and what did you learn from it?

It was a challenging task to make these students to think beyond themselves and make them work; and really I enjoyed it. To find time in the busy schedule of engineering was very difficult. The attitude of some students towards teaching - learning process was another challenge that I encountered while conducting the value education programme.



World Embracing Vision

Change-making on a grand scale needs a world embracing mindset. How can we prepare our students to explore what a world embracing vision feels like? Let's think of this statement as a start. **"Let your vision be world embracing, rather than confined to your own self."**

Think Globally, Act Locally

You've heard the phrase: Think globally, act locally. This means that you should be concerned about the world and start working in your own neighborhood. To have a world embracing vision is greater still. We must look beyond our own interests and see the world as united and interconnected. In such a world, our own interests are best served by attending to the best interests of the whole. The whole world becomes our family. We would never let the members of our family go without food, shelter or education. We would never turn away if they were hurt, sad or lonely. Sometimes it's hard to be open-minded enough to see all the peoples of the world as one family—a family you love and want to help. On the outside, people seem so different. Their skin colors, languages, houses, clothing, food and cultures are strange to us. But, inside we're all the same, with beating hearts and loving spirits.

We all want to

Live a good life; have people to love; be a good person and a good citizen; be productive and achieve goals; have meaningful work; be happy. We were all created from the same dust. There aren't special atoms for Asians and others for Americans or Africans. We all share the same air, water, plants, animals and blood types.

Vision means to see

When our vision is "world embracing" we see that all people are "created from the same dust" and think of them as members of one family. Your needs are my needs and my needs are your needs. This is true whether we look upon the needs of individuals, cities, states, provinces or nations. All are interconnected. Think about embracing someone. When we embrace, we share our love, affection, caring and protection. If our vision embraces the world, we embrace all of humanity in a relationship of friendship, care and protection.



Back issues of the Mentor Energizer and the full Energizer Compilation are available on the website. If you've missed an issue, please feel free to download it at www.bahaiacademy.org

TEACHERS' ORIENTATION WORKSHOP:

MODULE "MORAL CAPABILITIES (FUNDAMENTALS)" OF COURSE: "FOSTERING PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT & SOCIAL PROGRESS"

BAHA'I ACADEMY, SHIVAJINAGAR, PANCHGANI, 3-6 SEPT. 2015

How can we see through all the senses?

Ryan Richards, a young blind man, recently said, "Sighted people operate by line of sight. They see, therefore things are real. I operate by line of touch, hearing, smell and taste. If someone says "over there is dangerous", and then they point a finger in the direction of "over there", I have no idea where "over there" is, so I freeze, unable to determine my reality except through the impressions and advice of others." If 33% of us learn by seeing and imagining, 24% of us learn by listening and verbalizing, 14% of us learn by doing and manipulating and 29% of us learn with more than one modality, what happens if we either take away or focus on one modality? It helps us strengthen the others.

Improving Visual Skills—On a normal day, give students three minutes to write down or describe to each other everything that they observe in the classroom or in a place outside. Now, change the lighting through colored drapes on the windows or colored light bulbs or simply by darkening the room. Spend three more minutes writing down their further observations. Now, have them close their eyes and describe the scene to a partner so that he/she can "see" it.

Improving Auditory Skills—Read off a list of four numbers, such as 1, 2, 3, 4 (to start). Have the student write them down the same way that they heard them. Now, read another set of four numbers and ask them to write them down leaving out one number such as: 6, 5, 7, 8, leave out the eight. Now, do it backward such as: write the following numbers in backward order: 9, 3, 4, 5, leave out the 9. Increase the numbers in the sequence up to seven numbers, leaving out one or two numbers both forward and backward.

Improving Kinesthetic Skills—Have students pair off, close their eyes and put an object in front of one of them. Using all of the senses except sight, describe the object so that the partner knows exactly what it is. Listen first and then draw it. Play different types of music to evoke different moods and ask the students to report their feelings. Do the same thing with smells. These exercises help people realize how the different senses affect us, even if we don't notice their effects at the time.

Putting them all together—In the middle of an activity, stop. Ask students to become aware of all of their senses. Take one minute to write down what they are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching at that exact moment. Do this once an hour to reconnect with the world around.

Next month: How can we foster both internal and external goals?