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COACHING IS A VITAL TEACHING TOOL

THE 21st century has many creative avenues and one of the popular changes in education and business training is coaching.

Coaching is defined as a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change.

It is different from training because it "draws out" rather than "puts in". When I reflect upon my years of providing courses for in-house and teachers-to-be, I realise that I was using more coaching strategies rather than training strategies.

Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, a prominent

advocate of critical pedagogy, states that students are not empty vessels. When they come to school, they have been exposed to their home and local cultures. Thus, teachers need to see them as individuals who are unique and help bring out the best in them.

They are there for a purpose so teachers must apply appropriate coaching methods to nurture innovative, creative and divergent thinking that improves all aspects of the students' lives.

Two fundamental intentions at the heart of coaching are awareness and accountability.

The International Coach Federation defines creating awareness as the ability to integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information and to make interpretations that help the client, in

this case the students, gain awareness and achieve agreed-upon results.

The thoughts and feelings that are used in coaching come from the students.

Accountability is an effective instrument to help in the coaching process to enable a change of habits.

When a teacher uses coaching strategies in the classroom, it builds accountability, which improves the chances of success. Because students are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, the principle behind accountability will work with any kind of action step. Thus, the basic support structure in a coaching relationship is the progress report.

In Malaysia, the good news is that teachers are already coach-

ing their students via formative assessment.

In coaching, it is essential that we pay attention to the needs of those we are coaching. Active listening is essential. We need to listen to the voices of those we are coaching as they want to be heard. It is tough with educators who feel that they have so much to give as educators and students are not listening to them.

We have to ask ourselves whether students are given a fair chance to be heard.

Are we responding to their voices? Are we relating what we teach to their understanding and their questions? Do we provide them space to voice their opinions?

Our cultures are powerful enough to shape our expecta-

tions of ourselves, and engagement with others.

I think it is time that teachers and lecturers in teachers' training institutes were exposed to coaching strategies.

When I attend coaching workshops, I realise that I have been using some of the strategies and tools.

But humility and cultural sensitivity is essential here to remind educators that they have to venture into this new dimension and apply what is practical based on our multicultural, and multireligious background.

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