

REDEFINING SUCCESS

The Known Face of Success

The word 'successful' is attributed to people with power or money, well placed in society, and forging ahead. When a person is spoken of as successful it is generally his or her status which is meant.

In the school context, it refers to general proficiency: prizes, rank, academic honours, and scoring the highest marks. And a 'successful' teacher is the one whose class gets the best results.

In these situations success means getting ahead of others. It is perceived as the reward at the end of the competitive struggle, and the tougher the struggle the greater the feeling of success.

Marilyn Monroe

Marilyn Monroe was a famous actress, tons of fan mail, everyone's idol, lots of money, much sought after, yet she ended her life with an overdose of sleeping pills. What happened? Did success as it is usually perceived, satisfy her? Or was there an inner dimension to her life that this type of success did not reach?

Lack of success claims many suicide victims every year among students. Surely there is something wrong with the concept of success that demands such sacrifice? Perhaps if someone had redefined success for them they would still be alive and looking forward hopefully to their future.

Redefining Success

But there are other meanings to success. Interestingly teachers, in a number of schools in India and abroad, when asked to describe a happy moment in their childhood, mentioned 'success'. For them success meant much more than winning a prize or coming first. It was the recognition which went with success, the satisfaction of being praised by others, and the sense of community that gave success its power to make them happy. Perhaps deep within us, it is this desire for happiness which gives success such power over us.

Many parents who push their children too hard during admissions, fail to see that real success lies in happiness and that happiness lies in relationships of kindness, peace of soul and freedom and loyalty. If this is kept in mind, then the other kinds of success will cease to have the power to destroy, in fact it will cease to have any meaning at all.

Galway's Flute

James Galway, the world renowned flautist never entered a competition in his life-he fell in love with his flute and played it all day. He got into trouble as a ten year old boy in Belfast because he neglected his household chores to play his flute. At no stage did 'successes as it is understood here enter into his scheme of things.

'Success' for him was to perfect his flute playing and because he gave his all to his flute, other types of success came to him. He was invited to join world famous orchestras, his music is published on

tape, he is intentionally recognized-but he was not affected by it. He would have gone on playing his flute even if he had not been successful.

Success is not linked to competition, nor necessarily to material possessions. In fact if we get entrapped in the things that 'success' can bring we could forever be on a treadmill of discontent, for someone else may have something more or better. On the other hand we need the motivation which comes from success but of a different kind, the kind that lies deep within ourselves and comes from the knowledge that we have done our best.

I must Know I've Done My Best

Manideepa Banerjee who topped her class in sociology at the Tata Institute of Social Work when asked how it felt replied, "Good, I was happy, but it would not have mattered even if I did not get the position-as long as I knew I'd done my best."

Kamalika, 15, a student of Class X explained to parents at a recent Parent Teacher Association Meeting "If I who normally get 80% in exams, can set myself a goal of getting 90% I have some hope of succeeding. On the other hand, if my friend Ajita who normally gets 40% is required to do the same she will not even try, as she knows she cannot hope to reach that level. But she will surely try and even succeed if she sets a goal of 45or 50% for herself." This is the secret of always being successful-to set attainable goals and works towards them, regardless of what others around are doing.

The present educational system has a tendency to set impossible goals especially for children undermining their self confidence in such a way that they spend the rest of their lives comparing themselves with others and feeling less good than they can or ought to.

The Other Face of Success

Teachers can help their students to find a truer meaning of success: one that includes achievement of the goals they set for themselves and not those set for them by others; one that broadens it beyond mere academics to include all aspects of life.

Success means even being able to take failures. Jesus Christ who founded one of the leading world religions, died on a cross as an apparent failure-yet out of that came such a power for good. Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi and so many others died apparent failures and yet in that very failure lay their greatest success. A failure may sometimes be the very stepping stones to success which a person's needs.

Community Success

Community success is success too. It is measured by how many people you can take forward with you. Its value lies in the fact that it develops a person, and integrates him or her into society. It increases the chances of doing well since everyone helps everyone else.

Someone Asked

What do you think gives you life-long happiness? And in the long run, is not that the real meaning of success?

***"Avoid motivating your
Students, Instead,***

**Lead them to an
Addiction of their own greatness.”**

-Eric P. Jensen

Ensuring Success for all in the Classroom

1. Help each child to recognize that success is not about scoring good marks, but about relationship and happiness.
2. Help each child to experience success by teaching him/her how to set attainable goals.
3. Help each child to continue to grow by always setting new goals once the earlier ones are achieved.
4. Help each child to recognize failure as the other face of success and to utilize it as a stepping stone to the future.
5. Help each child to define success for himself/herself and to liberate oneself from the chains of undue preoccupation with winning and/or competing.
6. Help each child to develop her inner life dimensions so that she becomes sufficiently secure to be able to view the various models of success objectively and not get entrapped.