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# Making a difference in the classroom

## EDUCATION

Sunday, 10 Jun 2018



Dr Jasvir (standing) with the in-service teachers at the ELTC.

THE opportunity to learn from passionately curious teachers and being able to touch lives, said Dr Jasvir Kaur K Amar Singh in response to my question on what she loves about her current job.

Dr Jasvir is an academic lecturer at the English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC), Education Ministry.

It involves negotiation in changing minds to the limitless possibilities in making a difference in the classroom and beyond.

She believes that teaching is about making an impact because we strive for progress and not perfection.

It fills a large part of her life and it's more than a pay cheque as it's a career she truly loves.

Moving to ELTC has transformed her from a teacher to a trainer.

Dr Jasvir finished her PhD on infusion of Socratic questions in mind maps in the teaching of writing.

According to this Socratic believer, the person who was responsible for paving this opportunity was her postgraduate supervisor, Prof Shameem Rafik-Galea. She advised her to embrace uncertainties.

Embracing change in work and life is paramount to growing as an individual and being a better teacher than we were yesterday.

Nevertheless, change never seems natural or that easy.

We seldom keep resolutions and we often retreat into our comfort zone.

Dr Jasvir has had many teachers and mentors. She was taught to be fearless on what could go wrong and to focus on how to make it right.

The journey is filled with ups and downs but difficult roads often lead to a new destination where the sense of satisfaction can overcome the weariness and anxieties, said Dr Jasvir who leads a simple life.

I asked about her PhD journey.

She explained her PhD journey was filled with many excitements, challenges and road blocks.

She was lucky to have a supervisor who shared her passion for thinking skills.

She paved the way and opened doors of opportunities where she had the chance of meeting and learning from thinking gurus like Tony Buzan, David Perkins, Edward DeBono, Howard Gardner and David Hyerle.

She became intrigued with Socrates and read extensively about him and the different categories of questions.

She tried to integrate the method during her writing lesson.

It seemed that her students found it strange that their opinions, views and ideas mattered.

They finally had a voice and she was listening to their unique thoughts, experiences and knowledge in their areas of interests.

By empowering students, we can engage them further in learning, providing a more democratic learning experience and of course, finding the most powerful resource in the 21st century classroom.

This inspired her to infuse Socratic questions in mind maps to realign her students' thinking processes where they seek clarification and test assumptions as part of their daily discussions.

Her thesis is a true story of her personal journey of a teacher who sought a strategy to teach writing effectively and an exploration to test her hypothesis for the reliability and validity of Socratic Maps.

Happy Teachers Day!

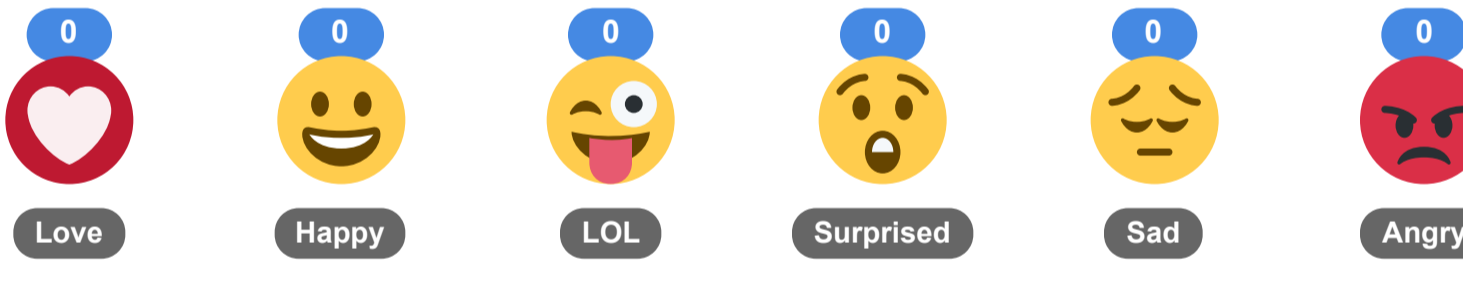
**SUMATI MUNIANDY**

Johor Baru

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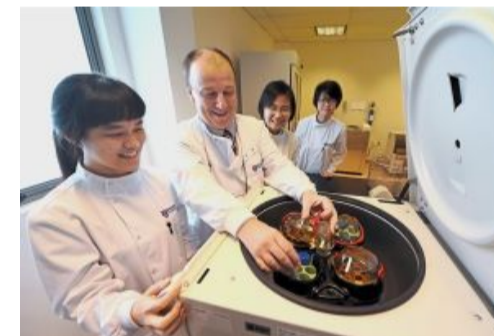
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