

2016 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize]

## **Educate to Integrate**

(Original)

*Preethika Raviraja*

*(Age 18, India)*

*Tipsglobal Institute, Tamilnadu*

Things we do are either out of compulsion or out of interest. But there is a huge disparity between them that grows with our indifference. The only way to integrate the need and the interest to do things that matter is through education.

Today's educational system, especially in a country like India, is more of a business rather than a beneficial service. It is mostly about rote learning and scoring high. With the number of perfect scorers getting inflated year after year in the board examinations, the quality of learning is falling steeply. The teachers want their students to score, for it would improve their salary package, the schools want their students to score; for it would promote their admission demand; the parents want their children to score, for it would make them proud in the society. Ultimately, the kids are lost in this vicious background. How can we expect such kids to contribute to the societal well-being and global challenges when they grew up, if they had already been stressed into the world of themselves? This shows the need for integrity with the outside world.

Few months ago, I was on an educational trip to the US, it is where you could find carbonated drinks at half the cost of tiny bottled water. For someone like me, who doesn't enjoy carbonated drinks, it is a curse. I was given the choices to either suffer extreme thirst after long hours of walking or dig a deep hole in my wallet every now and then. That's when I truly felt the depleting water resources on this planet. I have been writing essays on 'Water Conservation' for years and won prizes too, I also made lot of posters for my school on 'SAVE WATER', but none of it made me care for the leaking taps and overflowing water tanks until when I experienced the real thirst and the need for water. Now I use only half the amount of water I previously used for bathing, also I don't wash off the last sip of water in my bottle. It might be a small step, but I believe that a few liters of water I save each day would make a

pond of fresh water for my grandchildren. I cannot blame my education for my earlier indifference towards water depletion, for it had been yelling at me about it for more than a decade. So, it is all about self-realization that fulfills the educational needs. It is the exposure to the thing that needs change brings in the solution.

It is not just about foreign exposure, but there are a lot of issues that could be felt at our closeness. We can start from our home and neighborhood. Let the schools teach children about global warming not with mere paragraphs of text but by having a couple of classes under the tree shade and couple others under the sun. It would make them think ten times more deeply on the problem than any texts could ever do. Exposure integrates us to the issue; it makes us personally responsible for the problems we are exposed to, which in turn bring in the solution that can never be so thoughtfully realized with compulsions or incentives; it is done only when we feel the need for it and take steps to change it.

This form of education would encourage our exposure and would significantly reduce our indifference towards issues that matter. Not just to address global challenges and local issues, but also the subjects that would predominantly shape the attitude and behavior of the kids could be taught this way.

The methods could get better with practice, but the primary notion is to expose the kids to the problems so that they would discern the needs and fill in the gaps. Let the issues be global or personal, none of it would get a solution until we feel the need for the change and change it. Let us bring in the change.