



A Teacher's Reflection (Mrs. Gloria Pushpam David)

J/Velanai MMV also known as Velanai Central College provided the unique environment of a village school in which students could feel content, safe and sound. Relationship between students and teachers were based on acceptance and trust, developed in a small community of Velanaithivu. It's great the teachers took a great care towards welfare of the children and truly reflected the College motto, '*Lead, Kindly Light*'.

My husband, Mr Ignatius David and I, Mrs Gloria P David rendered towards the progress of this prestigious school, J/Velanai MMV from January 1955 to December 1964. Incidentally we were the very first couple to serve the college followed by Mr and Mrs A Alexander and Mr and Mrs S Jeganathan thereafter.

My late husband was in charge of athletics hence he chose to reside within the close proximity to the college to enable him to stay on after school hours and coach the students. The students took a keen interest. He coached both girls and boys in events like long-jump, high-jump, discuss throw and hurdles. The college excelled in sports and participated not only at the Islands Sports meets but also at the Public Schools' meets. The students performed remarkably well and carried away quite a few trophies. If my recollection be correct I recall students by the names of Anandarajah of Karampon, Kayts, Swaloganathan from Allapiddy, Thevaranee Sebaratnam to name a few earned fame for the college by participating at eh Public sports meet and obtaining trophies.

Ignatius David also taught English language to students of upper grade and was fond of his teaching skills. With my joining the Velanai Central College staff, the Home science was initiated into the school curriculum. There was no laboratory or equipment available for teaching the subject. I had to make-do with whatever materials were available. The pump room was converted into the Home Science laboratory. The students put up an enclosure adjoining the pump-room and built few open-fire places with bricks and clay. The first batch of twenty-six students of Grade VI in 1955 was presented for the GCE O/L examination in 1960 who offered Home Science and all the students obtained credit passes. The keen interest of the students was evinced by the students most willingly taking over the catering of refreshments at all the college functions. Academically too the students made noteworthy progress, so much so today we find these students spread far and wide holding prestigious positions.

These experiences of both of us were enthusiasm contagious and made me to think later in my life, "What are the characteristics of an effective teacher?". I could narrate a few excellent experiences that describe what such a teacher does to be effective. I couldn't help thinking about some of Ignatius's teaching habits which describe, 'great teachers engineer

learning experiences that maneuver the students into the driver's seat and then the teachers get out of the way'.

On one occasion, the principal Mr. V. Thampoe observed the students had proceeded with their class without the teacher's presence, by all getting up greeting as they normally do at the beginning of the class and started reading the subject which was due, while the teacher joined the class subsequently without any interruption. This amazing scene made me to think the teacher's role to be directing the students to learn rather than mere teaching.

Students learn best by personally experiencing learning that is physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. John Dewey had it right in 1935 when he espoused his theories on experiential learning. Today we call this constructivism.

For in my dearest memory the students of J/Velanai MMV are always in my heart and forever you will be. So it's with happy memories, I send this note, and with great hope and expectations for what next generations hold in store.

Gloria P DAVID
Retired Teacher