

National Entrepreneurs Day



Two Valuable Lessons for School Founders

Lesson - 1 Standing Close to the Object will not Give its Whole Picture

On this day of Entrepreneurs, I reluctantly celebrate 30 years of my entrepreneurship. Reluctantly because I never considered my work a business. For my raw mind providing education was a service to humankind and an arena to be conquered. It was a battle between my values and the collective values of parents, teachers, students, and, importantly, the Government. I set out to develop a perfect school – a seat of knowledge, a temple of learning, leading from ignorance to bliss. I want to share two lessons that I learnt in my 30 years of professional life.

Vidyanjali was more than a job. I was involved in creating and building up an institution that developed future generations. Every day I faced a new challenge. I could not trust anyone and resolved to micromanage. I knew something was not right but could not pinpoint what it was.

Then, one day, I learnt an essential lesson from Dr Gururaja Karajagi - one cannot have a whole picture of an object if stood close to it. To know about the entire earth, you need to travel away from earth into space. If you are stuck in a place, how do you learn about the earth? Similarly, if you want to know about your school, get detached and study it from a distance without any strings attached. The lesson was simple but a bitter pill for me. I could not imagine separating myself from Vidyanjali, but I slowly learnt to maintain the distance and analyse it better.

Dr S Rekha Reddy





Lesson - 2 Charity versus Service

Now, I am proud of being an entrepreneur. It was not so a few years back. I wouldn't have considered myself an entrepreneur since Vidyanjali was never a business for me. I was shameful when anyone addressed me as a businesswoman. I was severely apologetic for collecting the basic tuition fee, which was far less when compared to the facilities provided. At the same time, I had no answer for running the school without collecting this fee, without the Government's or any other organization's financial aid. Because of a constant shortage of funds, my decisions would not result in the intended outcome.

Then, I learnt the fundamental lesson of Business Management – the difference between Charity and Service. I had to think whether my school was a charitable institution and sought financial support from other NGOs or a service industry capable of funding its development. Our school was not a charitable institution. Then, what is the meaning of a service industry? An excellent example of the service industry is hospitals. They provide service but charge for the services offered. There is nothing wrong with this. I was astonished, cursed myself for understanding this valuable lesson after twenty years of my entrepreneurship. This lesson, had I known earlier, would have saved years of living on the edge constantly.

My lessons
may help the
school
founders who
have
difficulties
trusting others
and letting go,
and who are
offended when
called
businessmen/
women.