

Politicians no longer role models for Indian students

Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru are their national heroes but the present politicians do not influence Indian adolescents. A study has revealed that a majority of children don't consider politicians as their role models.

A team of psychologists carried out the study among 500 students from Delhi schools. The goal of the research was to develop a comprehensive understanding of the role models of children.

'Political leaders from the past and freedom fighters were role models for 13 percent of the students in contrast to recent political leaders who were significant role models for only two percent of the students,' psychiatrist Samir Parikh, who led the study, told IANS.

Parikh, chief of the mental health and behavioural sciences department, Max Healthcare, said: 'The study clearly indicates that the values and beliefs reflected by our yesteryear leaders are valued and have an impact upon children and adolescents.'

For students, the most significant role models were their parents. Thirty percent of them indicated that they look towards their parents as role models.

'We may feel that our children do not listen to us but for a large number of adolescents it is from parents that they learn how to behave and respond. Thus it is essential that as parents we display the behaviour and feelings that we expect our children to inculcate,' said Parikh.

According to Parikh, children learn what they see and by modelling the right behaviours we can encourage them to adopt good habits.

Teachers follow closely behind parents with 13 percent students indicating that they view them as their role models.

'This places a significant onus of responsibility upon educators to demonstrate appropriate behaviours and help in the overall growth and development of children and adolescents,' he said.

Children look up to scientists and entrepreneurs as their professional role models.

'Students stated that prominent scientists and entrepreneurs and business people too are looked up to for inspiration. They try to learn responsibility, focussing on work, achieving goals and ambitions from them,' said Parikh.

In contrast, only seven percent voted for the media. This finding may come as a surprise to those who believe that children are swayed by media personalities.

Sports personalities stood second lowest at six percent. This indicates the need to enhance the impact of sports personalities on children so that they are encouraged to take up sports, which is a relatively neglected area in our educational system, said Parikh.

'The results of the study were clearly indicative of the significant impact of people from various walks of life upon young and developing minds, and how they need to mediate the behaviours they

display, their thought patterns, and their emotional experiences,' he said.

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