"It is noble to teach oneself, but still nobler to teach others – Mark Twain"

Teaching Philosophy Statement – Damayanthi Herath

There are certain moments in our lives, where a thought strikes us, and it strikes hard such that it changes our behaviour. One such moment for me was the day I watched "The Last Lecture" by Randy Pausch. Ever since, I began the habit of wondering, "What would my last lecture look like and who would I have in the audience"? It made me think what I wanted to be as a teacher.

Theoretically, learning is defined as the permanent change in behaviour, and everyday I feel fortunate that I am involved in a career promoting learning and a career pushing me to be learner. For me it means that a change is possible, a change that can have positive impact on our lives, a change helping to engineer effective solutions to the challenges we face.

My objective as a teacher is to **promote independent thinking via a safe and fun learning environment**. I perceive myself to be "seeking to be an edutainer". I define safe learning environment is an environment that is free of any judgement on the student's behaviour and aimed towards positive progress of the student. I define fun learning environment as an environment built around the passion of a student; an environment where student don't feel like they are at a school/university "learning", they are having fun while gathering necessary knowledge and skills for a positive impact on others around, and they shall continue to do so once they graduate to be professional engineers.

To achieve that objective, I try to incorporate "LEARN" into my teaching (Figure 01).

As a teacher, I believe in the quote attributed to Gail Godwin: Good teaching is ¼ preparation and ¾ theatre.

I measure effectiveness of my teaching in 2 keyways: Via student feedback, Via what they have become at the end of the course. I try to gather former as frequently as possible using various norms. At times they would pass small paper notes with feedback, submit an online form or use a web-based application to provide me in class feedback. To measure what student have become at the end of the course, I use measures of student attainment of course learning outcomes. In addition, I seek peer evaluations in most of the work I do.

Every year, I am excited to see a group of students entering the engineering faculty and fascinated to see a group graduating from the same. Infact I connect with both incidents emotionally. It is great to see how the bunch of enthusiastic rather carefree individuals turn into a set of responsible engineer through a process I get to be a part of. They give me an assurance that life only can get better and wiser, and THAT is why I am happy to be in this profession. In addition, it keep me young at heart!

L : Lessons

- It is a must to have proper set of lessons, covering the essential aspects of a subject, so that students develop confidence on the content. I try to include updated material into the course as well as provide effective references to the students for further reading.

E:Expression

- It is a must to a platform/s for students to express themselves. I try to incorporate Qand A and interactive applications to enable students discuss the taught material with the class in class.

A: Appreciation

- Good become better when appreciated and encouraged. I incorporate formative assessments so that students can evaluate themselves regularly. Also I try my best to appreciate the effort they put in class for learning in various ways.

R: Reflection

- Students are to reflect on their and others work I incorporate paired work so that student can learn from each other

N: Natural

- The learning should feel natural, as it is integrated into their lifestyle, changing their behaviours permanently. As university academics, we face the (good) challenge of teaching a young and energetic group every day. I try to incorporate tools and method s that the students would find comfortable and natural when designing class exercises.

Figure 01: My strategies in class to achieve my objectives in teaching