

## Another purpose of education

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One afternoon, my Professor at the University of Pretoria suggested that I apply for a training programme, which was sponsored by the Government of Israel. In 1997-1998, I was able to study in Israel, where I learned about new agricultural production methods for dryland areas. In 1999-2001, I was offered another scholarship by the Government of Japan. In Japan, I learned about methods for measuring the levels of industrial pollution in our environment.

In Israel and Japan, I was also very interested in other aspects of their societies outside my immediate university environment. In Japan, I was fascinated by a Japanese man called Yukichi Fukuzawa, who died in 1901. Although he did many things for the Japanese society, I was very interested in one aspect of his life. He started a private tutoring school, which evolved to become one of the leading private universities in Japan.

In 2017, when I moved to Cape Town with my family, I had no idea that because of my experience in Japan I would start a private academy that is providing tutoring services to help learners succeed in their primary school and high school studies. The satisfaction that I get from operating K Academy in the past two and half years is amazing. Initially, we called it Khayelitsha Academy. Later, we changed the name to K Academy, when we started to tutor learners in other parts of Cape Town. Now, we also tutor learners in other parts of South Africa, including Gauteng, Free State and the Eastern Cape.

We started the K Academy for two reasons. First, we wanted to help learners succeed at school. Second, we wanted to provide income to tutors that we employ.

On a weekly basis, we produce and send weekly reports to parents, informing them about our “overall impression” about their children and we offer “advice to parents” on actions that they should take to support their children’s studies at home.

Like many South African parents, parents that register their children to our K Academy are very motivated and hardworking parents. What we have never anticipated however, was that, our weekly reports could be the only window through which some parents get to really see their children. Below, we share our recent experience with parents that got to see their son through our reports.

We learned from one of the learners, that I will call John (not the real name of the learner), that his school does not allow learners to bring school textbooks home after school. We assumed that this was because John’s school does not want learners to lose or damage textbooks at home. So, we advised the parents to either buy textbooks for John or write a letter to the school requesting the school to allow John to bring textbooks home in order to catch-up with school work. When the parents could not buy textbooks, they decided to write a letter to the school.

What we did not anticipate however, was that, our recommendations would unearth deep rooted secrets that John was hiding from his parents. It turned out that it is not true that the school does not allow learners to bring textbook home. It also turned out that John has been served with a warning letter of suspension or dismissal for bad behavior at school.

For the next K Academy lesson, John was one hour late. When he eventually arrived, the tutor suggested that they have a chat, instead of the lesson. The tutor and John took a walk around John’s

neighborhood, where the tutor pointed out to John various jobs that people were doing on the street to make a living. John was very clear that he did not see himself doing any of those jobs when he grows up. The tutor pointed out that the path John was following at the moment could lead him exactly to jobs that he does not want, unless he takes a different path by making better life choices.

Coming back to my story of Israel and Japan, not only did these countries provide me with education, my life is permanently connected to Japan because 17 years ago, I married a Japanese lady and we have children that are enjoying happy lives. I would not have had access to these life changing experiences, if I did not follow through at school and university. I followed this path because of the choices that I made in my life. That is why we are helping learners like John succeed at school.

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