


A SOFT SKILLS HANDBOOK *for* EDUCATORS

Developed in partnership with the
Commonwealth Students' Association

1st Edition



**A guide for teachers,
parents and supporting
adults to help children
learn and practice public
speaking**

BY BENJAMIN ST NICHOLAS FRASER

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Author: Benjamin St. Nicholas Fraser

Contributor: Commonwealth Students' Association

Focus on skills building

The Commonwealth Secretariat has, therefore, maintained its focus on skills building – even through the stormy months of the pandemic. What our engagement with various regional bodies, grassroots groups and young people around the Commonwealth has told us is that we were already on the right track. We see skills building in the frame of lifelong learning, putting innovation, digital skills, and flexibility at the heart of our programmes.

This is why we have developed toolkits which provide policy recommendations, advice and resources to not only strengthen early childhood education programmes but to help countries reform their education systems in line with international standards, so they are effective for all age groups.

Our approach recognises that it is not just about the diplomas, degrees or technical expertise that would tick the boxes on job applications but **also those ‘soft’ skills** such as fostering interpersonal relations and developing negotiating strategies which are critical for personal success and personal resilience in challenging times.

This is an extract from a statement entitled "Empowering young people for our new normal" by the Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC, Commonwealth Secretary-General published July 20, 2021

<https://thecommonwealth.org/news/opinion-empowering-young-people-our-new-normal>

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INTRODUCTION

Kids Speak International and the Commonwealth Students' Association have partnered to provide soft skills empowerment training and certification to 500,000 teachers across the Commonwealth by 2030. Our goal is to impact the lives of 500,000,000 children and youth by 20230 by helping them unlock the value and potential of their voices.

This handbook is to be used by educators, parents, and supporting adults who are keen on helping children in their space develop critical soft skills. While this book focuses on public speaking and communication, it is vastly applicable to other soft skills- negotiating, leadership, interpersonal skills, and critical listening.

Education systems must be transformed to meet the needs of the 21st century. Students need more than numeracy and literacy skills, degrees and diplomas to be globally competitive. To become effective employees, employers, innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders, students need soft skills. This Handbook is an easy-to-read guide for educators, parents and supporting adults on how to help children learn and practice the skill of public speaking. It addresses the relevance and importance of soft skills training and offers simple, inexpensive impactful strategies and approaches.

At the time of the writing of this handbook, the author, Benjamin Fraser, served as the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Students' Association. The Kids Speak Funbook was already published and during CSA's November 2022 series of strategic planning meetings, it was agreed that soft skills development would be an advocacy priority during the two-year term. The soft skills resources being developed are part of a comprehensive advocacy strategy led by the CSA to promote the recognition of soft skills, the transformation of education through non-formal education and the decolonization of education.

It is our aim to translate our resources in the major languages spoken across the Commonwealth.

THE COMMONWEALTH STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

CHAPTER 1

The Commonwealth Students' Association (CSA) endorses the Kids Speak Funbook as a strategic tool for building soft skills, personal development and nurturing mental health for children and youth.

The CSA represents the educational interests of 1.2 billion young people under age thirty across the 54 countries in Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific.

The CSA Endorses the Commonwealth Alliance for Quality Youth Leadership. Promoting non-formal education and learning is key to transforming education. Non-formal education curriculum designed to improve a range of skills and competencies.

The CSA prepared a Summative Statement to be circulated to Ministers and Senior Officials of the 10th Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting (CYMM). Though the CYMM was postponed and the summative statement was not circulated, its contents are relevant to educators who will read this handbook.

The Commonwealth Students Association works to promote the interests and well-being of students from Commonwealth countries. The organization engages in a variety of activities to achieve its goals, including:

- **Advocacy:** The CSA advocates for policies that promote the rights and welfare of students, including access to education, mental health support, and gender equality.
- **Capacity building:** The organization provides training and support to student leaders, empowering them to effect change in their communities.
- **Networking:** The CSA facilitates connections among students from different Commonwealth countries, promoting cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.
- **Campaigns:** The organization runs campaigns to raise awareness about issues affecting students, such as climate change and student safety.

Summative Statement

10th Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting

January 23–25, 2023, Islamabad, Pakistan

The **Commonwealth Students' Association** calls on Youth Ministers and Senior Officials to

i. implement systems that recognize and validate learning and soft skills gained in non-formal education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels

ii. further the agenda of the decolonization and transformation of education by prioritizing and promoting non-formal learning in education and youth policy

iii. support the bold actions of the CSA by integrating the educational materials jointly published by the CSA in softs skills curricula for primary and secondary schools and non-formal training programmes. The CSA seeks to partner with governments to purchase and circulate at least one million copies of the materials at the commencement of the Year of Youth.

1. *Heads also noted the value of digital skills, vocational and trade skills, non-formal education, and lifelong learning, emphasising the key role which education and skills play in the drive towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.*

-Communique of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting "Delivering A Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming" Rwanda, 2022

2. **Sustainable Development 4, Target 4.4** records the commitment of Governments to, *"By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship."*

3. Education Ministers *"acknowledged the contribution of non-formal and informal learning in building the resilience of young people and the role of youth and community workers in delivering non-formal and informal education."*

-Nadi Declaration on Education

4. Education Ministers at the **21st Conference of Education Ministers** affirmed that they *"recognise the important contribution of non-formal education and its role in the development of young people's knowledge, skills, and competencies for employability, digital and life skills, as well as experience in working in teams, problem-solving, and being creative and entrepreneurial."*

5. The **Transforming Education Summit 2022** calls on Governments to *"implement systems that recognize and validate learning and skills gained in non-formal and informal ways to ensure all individuals have opportunities to continue learning and access decent work throughout their lives."*

6. *Employers overwhelmingly agree that young employees need soft skills, such as communication, creative problem-solving and entrepreneurial thinking. International development practitioners offer soft skill curricula to support youth in education and non-formal training programmes.* - **World Economic Forum, October 2020**

7. The learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has worryingly set back learning outcomes in both developing and developed countries at all educational levels with . COVID-19 put 1.6 billion children out of school (**World Economic Forum, 2020**).

8. While governments have implemented remedial programs to address numeracy and literacy, we are concerned that the pre-pandemic soft skills gap will be exponentially widened if deliberate actions are not taken to streamline soft skills curricula in classrooms and youth programs. Students must earn the hard skills of reading and counting but if they are deficient in soft skills like communication, leadership, teamwork and problem solving they are at risk of being left behind in the job market.

9. If we do not act now, unemployment and underemployment levels will increase among youth by 2030. The employability of youth who emerge from our education systems is threatened by a lack of soft skills. In a **2012 McKinsey survey** of employers in nine countries, 60% of 2700 employers said that new graduates were not ready for work citing gaps in soft skills as a major issue.

10. Beyond work-specific skills, emphasis must be placed on developing high-level cognitive and non-cognitive/transferable skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, communication skills and conflict resolution, which can be used across a range of occupational fields. In a similar way that students obtain credits, certification and report cards for vocational and Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, there should be standardized recognition of soft skills.

11. Soft skills can be directly taught and they can also be learned through non-formal education which involves extra-curricular activities such as sports, volunteering, youth clubs, student government, and internships. The transformation of education must involve an integrated system that equally prioritizes the training, assessment and certification of the technical/hard/STEM skills and soft skills, at each level of education.

12. Non-formal education is defined as structured programmes outside the formal education curriculum designed to improve a range of skills and competencies. Education ministries should not be left to shoulder the burden of facilitating non-formal education alone. Youth ministries are hubs for non-formal education through the various programs that naturally fall within their purview – youth clubs, youth parliament, youth service corps, and youth councils.

13. The infrastructure to support non-formal learning and opportunities for extracurricular participation provided by Youth ministries are already in place but Youth ministries must see themselves as stakeholders in education who hold a critical role in the transformation of education. Youth and Education ministries should partner to expand the system of recognizing educational outcomes beyond STEM and implementing soft skills curricula.

14. We are ready to collaborate with governments to provide resources to upgrade their soft skills curricula through the use of educational materials (books, digital animated series, interactive e-learning platform) jointly published by the CSA. You may contact us at **chairperson.csa@gmail.com** to organize a meeting ahead of the CYMM to discuss a partnership.

WHY IS AN EARLY INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC SPEAKING IMPORTANT?

CHAPTER 2

How early is too early to start being deliberate about helping a child develop the skill of public speaking? If you accept that at the heart of an effective public speaker is confidence and self-love then you would agree that it is never too early. The methods of teaching should be commensurate with the age of the child. Early childhood educators wouldn't give their students Dale Carnegie's "How to Develop Confidence and Influence People by Public Speaking". Typically, primary-level students may not be eligible to join their local Toast Masters. Is it ever too late for an individual who was not exposed to training and opportunities to practice public speaking?

One of the most popular comments from adults who have been introduced to the Kids Speak Funbook is "I wish I had this when I was younger. I've met principals, corporate executives, politicians, lawyers and teachers who've shared with me their fear of public speaking. I've also met several excellent communicators who almost always attribute their skill to training and opportunities they were exposed to when they were children.

An early introduction to public speaking is a long-term investment for success. When anyone unlocks the value in their voice they become unstoppable. Your voice is connected to how you see yourself in the world, the weight of importance you place on your thoughts and sharing them with others. The level at which you demonstrate ownership of your ideas is connected cannot be divorced from their delivery, verbally or non-verbally.

I can't stand to watch capable, intelligent people deny themselves of opportunities because they've subjected themselves to a damning, sometimes self-deprecating but ultimately limiting perspective about why public speaking isn't "for them". Don't make excuses for why you should exclude yourself from opportunities for growth.

9 Reasons Why an Early Introduction to Public Speaking is Important

1. Confidence Building:

- Public speaking helps children develop confidence in expressing their thoughts and ideas in front of others.

2. Communication Skills:

- Early exposure to public speaking nurtures strong communication skills. Children learn to articulate their ideas clearly, use appropriate language, and convey their messages effectively.

3. Critical Thinking:

- Public speaking encourages children to think critically and organize their thoughts logically. It promotes the development of analytical and reasoning skills.

4. Overcoming Fear:

- Public speaking can be intimidating for many adults, let alone children. Early exposure helps children overcome the fear of speaking in front of an audience, fostering resilience and adaptability.

5. Leadership Development:

- Public speaking is often a component of leadership. By starting early, children can develop leadership qualities and learn how to influence and inspire others.

6. Enhanced Social Skills:

- Engaging in public speaking activities exposes children to social interactions, helping them develop strong interpersonal skills and the ability to connect with diverse audiences.

7. Lifelong Skill Development:

- Public speaking is a skill that remains valuable throughout life. Starting early lays the foundation for continuous improvement and mastery of this essential skill.

8. Career Readiness:

- As children grow older, the ability to speak confidently and persuasively becomes increasingly important for success in various professions. Early exposure prepares them for future academic and career challenges.

9. Empowerment:

- Mastering public speaking empowers children to have a voice and make a positive impact on their communities. It instills a sense of responsibility and the understanding that their words matter.

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 3

A classroom slavishly fixated on numeracy, literacy and the traditional hard skills education systems are known to pride themselves on is unfit/unprepared to produce children who are competitive globally competitive as employees, job creators and leaders. 21st Century classrooms that do not plan for soft skills development are unprogressive and in need of decolonization. There are thousands of degreed adults who cannot function in the work environment because they lack critical soft skills.

The most brilliant student who likes to complete the group assignment alone will find it difficult to maintain a job that doesn't box require them to exist on an island alone. Jobs that don't involve team work whether virtually or in-person are almost non-existent. Graduates with the highest GPA will have decorated transcripts and resumes but employers are looking for more than just certificates.

Teachers play a crucial role in the development of soft skills in students. Soft skills, also known as interpersonal or non-cognitive skills, encompass a range of attributes that contribute to an individual's ability to work effectively with others, communicate, and navigate various social and professional situations.

Teachers serve as role models for students. By demonstrating strong soft skills in their interactions with students and colleagues, teachers set a positive example for behaviour and communication. A positive and supportive classroom environment is essential for the development of soft skills.

We encourage teachers to adopt a holistic approach towards developing soft skills in their students that includes:

1. Modelling effective communication both verbally and non-verbally. Teachers should encourage students to express themselves clearly, actively listen to others, and provide constructive feedback on students' communication and interpersonal skills.

2. Group activities and collaborative projects facilitated by teachers that encourage teamwork and interpersonal skills. Students should learn to work together, share ideas, and resolve conflicts in a constructive manner. Teachers can create opportunities for students to practice public speaking and presentation skills. This could involve class presentations, debates, or other speaking engagements.

3. Incorporating activities that promote empathy and understanding of different perspectives. This helps students develop compassion and interpersonal sensitivity.

4. Presenting challenges that require collaboration and creative thinking to stimulate critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

5. Exposing students to diverse learning experiences, encouraging them to adapt to different situations and be flexible in their approach to tasks.

6. Assigning tasks with deadlines, encouraging planning, and providing guidance on prioritization to help students develop time management skills.

7. Relating soft skills to real-world scenarios, helping students understand the practical applications of these skills in academic, professional, and personal contexts.

8. Adopting inclusive teaching practices that acknowledge and appreciate the diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and communication styles within the classroom.

DEBUNKING THE ELITIST APPROACH TOWARD PUBLIC SPEAKING

CHAPTER 4

I am concerned by the number of educators who do not see the usefulness of public speaking for children who are not prefects, debaters, class monitors and students councilors. I went to a school where the children who demonstrated an aptitude for communication were usually the ones used for debates, speeches, to do the vote of thanks, welcome and class presentations. The opportunities to learn and practice public speaking are typically concentrated within the group of students who come natural skill. This perpetuates the view that if you aren't born with the skill; if you're not a natural then you can't do well at public speaking.

I am careful not to speak against any teacher. I give honour to all teachers. Nor am I suggesting that there are teachers who deliberately hold students back from opportunity though some students may argue otherwise. What I am clear on though, is the need for a wake up call for 21st century educators to be deliberate about distributing opportunities to learn and practice public speaking among every student of the class.

I encourage teachers to ensure that no student is sidelined. Soft skills are not for the elites. I invite every teacher to reject the view that soft skills are training and resources are for private schools, wealthy families, vocal students and elite groups. Even if your school budget or the community you serve can't afford to purchase certain resources, there are many creative strategies that this manual will explore which you can use which do not require additional funding or contact time.

Public speaking is a skill that can benefit individuals from all walks of life, and it is essential to debunk the perception that it is reserved for elites or certain privileged groups. Teachers can promote a growth mindset, emphasizing that soft skills are not fixed traits but can be developed and improved over time through effort and practice.

Public speaking is a form of communication, and communication is a universal human experience. Everyone, regardless of background or socioeconomic status, engages in various forms of communication daily. Public speaking is not limited to a particular social class or educational background. It is an inclusive skill that can be developed by anyone who is willing to put in the effort to improve their communication abilities.

Tips for Teachers

1. Role Models from Diverse Backgrounds:

- Highlighting successful public speakers from diverse backgrounds can challenge stereotypes and inspire individuals to believe in their own potential.

2. Focus on Authenticity:

- Public speaking is not about conforming to a particular elitist style. Emphasizing authenticity and genuine communication breaks down barriers and allows individuals to connect with their audience on a human level.

3. Public Speaking in Everyday Life:

- Public speaking is not limited to grand stages; it happens in everyday life. Job interviews, family gatherings, and community meetings all involve some form of public speaking



I WANT TO HELP MY SHY STUDENT

CHAPTER 5

I don't know what it means to be shy. I probably should invite a few persons who were shy as children to share their experience. I can share what I've observed and what I suspect. Shy children hide from being seen. If they are not sought out they will remain in hiding. While they stay in the unsafe crevices of the dark corners they hide in, opportunities are being gobbled up by the bold and outspoken students.

The shy child is not unintelligent.

"The shy child doesn't have anything to say." That's not true.

They'll grow out of it. Many don't.

The shy child may actually be afraid of their own voice. The shy child has probably been silenced by some form of abuse, grief or experience too difficult for them to process in the innocence of the childhood.

Every shy child is an opportunity leave an indelible, lifelong impact. It is the kind of impact that makes adult achievers cry when they see their childhood teacher.

Helping a shy student become more confident requires patience, understanding, and a supportive approach. Here are some strategies you can consider:

1. Create a Safe and Supportive Environment:

- Foster a classroom environment that is welcoming and non-judgmental. Ensure that your student feels safe expressing themselves without fear of criticism. Provide positive reinforcement and praise for effort, improvement, and participation.

2. Get to Know the Student:

- Take the time to understand the student's interests, strengths, and areas where they may feel less confident. Building a personal connection can make the student more comfortable.

3. Gradual Exposure:

- Introduce public speaking tasks gradually. Start with small, low-pressure activities that allow the student to become accustomed to speaking in front of others. Gradually introduce challenges that stretch the student's comfort zone without overwhelming them.

4. Set Realistic Goals:

- Work with the student to set realistic and achievable goals. Celebrate small victories, and gradually increase the complexity of speaking tasks as their confidence grows.

5. Seek Professional Help if Necessary:

- If shyness significantly impacts the student's well-being, consider involving a school counselor or a mental health professional for additional support.

6. Provide Preparation Time:

- Allow the student ample time to prepare for speaking tasks. This can reduce anxiety and enhance their confidence in delivering information.

7. Encourage Peer Support:

- Pair the shy student with a supportive peer during activities. Having a friend can boost confidence and provide a sense of security.

8. Involve Parents:

- Keep parents informed and involved in the process. Collaborate with them to reinforce confidence-building strategies at home.

9. Use Alternative Forms of Expression:

- Allow the student to express themselves through alternative means, such as written assignments, artwork, or multimedia presentations. This can be a stepping stone to verbal communication.

10. Public Speaking Games and Activities:

- Incorporate fun and engaging public speaking games and activities into the curriculum. This can make the learning process enjoyable and less intimidating.



How to use the Kids Speak Funbook

CHAPTER 6

The KIDS SPEAK FUNBOOK is a confidence-building and soft skills development tool that introduces children ages 6-12 to public speaking. The resource:

- Offers a child-friendly breakdown of the elements of speech planning and delivery
- Includes confidence-building exercises and positive affirmations
- Provides interactive public speaking simulations and practice tasks
- It is gender balanced, inclusive and diverse

It provides a systematic pathway to teaching and re-enforcing public speaking. It is useful in personal development classes, soft skills training, and formal and non-formal education. It is fit for the classroom and home. Siblings can use it amongst themselves. It is also useful in teaching oral literacy with the Language Arts curriculum. It is designed to facilitate independent reading and small groups. Some activities in lesson 7 may be too advanced for 7 - 8 year old children but allow them to try.

Teacher's are also encouraged to create peer groups and allow the students to practice the lessons. Peer feedback and discussion can provide different perspectives and insights that help children identify mistakes and find solutions. The teacher's role in this setting is to support independent learning.

The practice exercises expose children to themes such as anti-bullying; inclusion for persons living with disabilities; climate change; responsible social media use and access to clean water.

Discuss the speakers for today meaningfully. There are child and adult public speakers with inspiring stories. Use these stories to build confidence.

It is recommended that the book be used over a period of at least twelve weeks. Lessons 1 to 6 should be taught in separate classes and Lesson 7, the practice sessions should be spread across at least six weeks. See the table of contents on the following page.

The practice tasks in Lessons 1 to 6 combine practical application of the topic and confidence building.

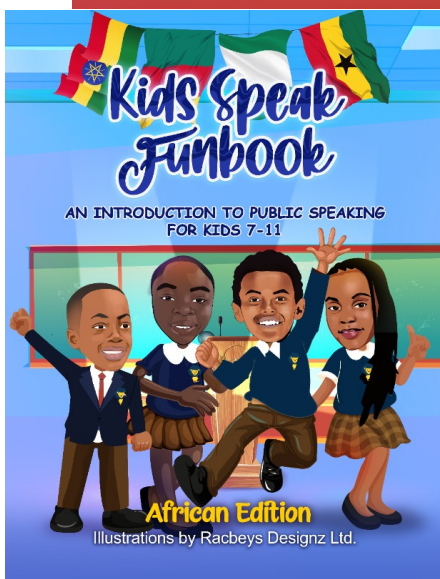
- Affirm the child as they practice.
- Allow the child to self-correct. You don't have to point out every mistake. Wait to see if it persists. Allow the child the opportunity to self-correct.

This is not just a book. It is a tangible demonstration of advocacy for non-formal education, soft skills development and recognition of the value of educational stakeholders at the elementary level.



WHAT'S IN THE FUNBOOK?

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SELF-CORRECTING

CHAPTER 7

“Mistakes are proof that you are trying.” Are you familiar with this saying. Effective public speaking should not be characterized by perfect. How we speak is an extension of who we are and because no one is perfect, mistakes are bound to happen. We need to teach our children to normalize recovering confidently from mistakes made during public speaking as well as learning from them. You don't need to stop the student at every mistake. In fact, you shouldn't.

Point out the mistake if it persists without their acknowledgement. Of course there are exceptions where certain mistakes should be addressed immediately but this shouldn't be the general practice. When a child recognizes the mistake on their own and corrects it, they are more likely not to repeat it. When you correct the child every time they make a grammatical error, glitch in diction, gap in logical flow or some sort of mistake in their delivery you break their confidence.

Offer specific and constructive feedback when children make mistakes. Instead of simply pointing out errors, guide them toward understanding what went wrong and how they can improve. Frame feedback in a positive way. Instead of focusing solely on what went wrong, highlight what was done well and suggest improvements in a positive and encouraging manner. Ensure that the learning environment is safe and supportive. Children are more likely to engage in self-correction when they feel comfortable taking risks without fear of judgment.

Teachers are encouraged to:

- Provide self-correcting materials or activities where children can check their work independently. This could include puzzles, games, or exercises with answer keys.
- Create routines for self-checking in daily activities. For example, before submitting homework, encourage children to review their answers and correct any mistakes they find.
- Ask guiding questions that prompt children to think critically about their work. Questions like, "What do you think went well?" and "How could you improve next time?" guide them toward self-reflection.

Unlocking the value in one's voice is essential to self-discovery. Supporting children's agency is about recognising that children have a right to make choices and decisions, and are capable of initiating their own learning.

CHILD-MENTAL HEALTH

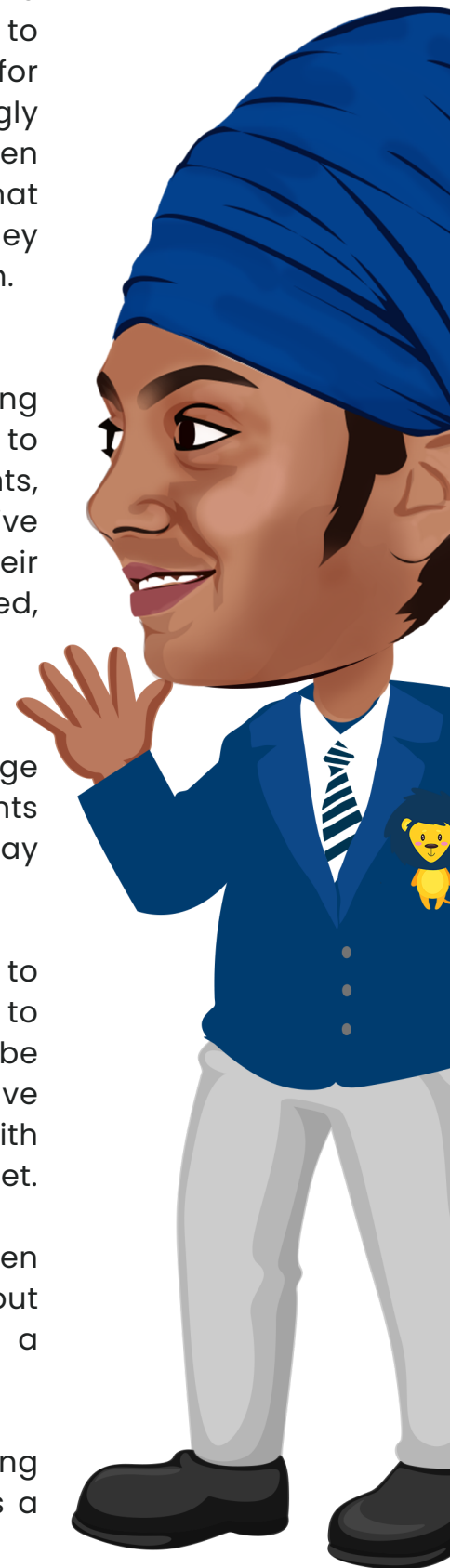
CHAPTER 8

Positive affirmations are spread throughout the book to reinforce confidence building. These affirmations help to encourage positive mental health. Having awareness for children's mental health is becoming increasingly important. With rates of depression and anxiety in children having increased by 70% in the past 10 years, it's key that parents, carers and children alike are aware of what they can do to help support and maintain good mental health.

Building a child's self esteem is crucial in combating negative self-esteem and insecurities. You can start to build a child's self esteem early on through compliments, support and teaching love and acceptance. Positive affirmations are a great way to remind a child of their value, daily. Positive affirmations, when seen and repeated, can help to combat insecurities and negative self-views.

Tips for Teachers

- Start the day with positive affirmations. Encourage children to say or think about positive statements related to themselves, their abilities, and the day ahead.
- Foster open communication and encourage children to express their feelings. Affirmations can be tailored to address specific emotions or challenges they may be facing. Help children understand the power of positive self-talk. Teach them to replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations to build a more optimistic mindset.
- Create affirmation boards or journals where children can write or display positive statements about themselves. This visual reinforcement can be a powerful reminder.
- Integrate affirmations into daily activities like getting ready for school, mealtime, or bedtime. This creates a consistent and positive routine.



THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN THE DECOLONIZATION OF EDUCATION

CHAPTER 9

Decolonization is the process of undoing colonizing practices. Within the educational context, this means confronting, dismantling and challenging the colonizing practices that have influenced education in the past, and which are still present today.

Teachers play a crucial role in this process by actively contributing to the creation of a more inclusive, diverse, and equitable learning environment. Decolonization of Education is a broad topic. The scope of this handbook's contribution to the ongoing efforts to decolonise modern classrooms concerns

- Promoting the local/native language language for classroom instruction which enhances quality education
- Promoting soft skills development which was not historically prioritized in colonial classrooms where students were not trained to innovate but to serve and provide labour for the proprietors of mass production

Tips to Teachers:

- Support and promote multilingual education. Recognize and value linguistic diversity, including languages that may have been historically marginalized or suppressed.
- Examine and challenge Eurocentric biases in educational content and teaching methods. Provide a more balanced approach that values and incorporates knowledge from diverse global perspectives.
- Create opportunities for students to share their own perspectives, experiences, and cultural backgrounds. Empowering student voice contributes to a more inclusive and collaborative learning environment.
- Analyze curriculum materials critically to identify and address colonial biases. Teachers can work collaboratively to revise and supplement existing curriculum content to provide a more comprehensive and accurate representation of history and culture.
- Foster critical thinking skills in students. Encourage them to question, analyze, and challenge information, allowing for a deeper understanding of historical events, power structures, and societal norms.

By actively engaging in these strategies, teachers contribute significantly to the decolonization of education, creating a more just, inclusive, and empowering learning environment for all students.

PUBLIC SPEAKING: ENGLISH, NATIVE TONGUES & ACCENTS

CHAPTER 10

Public speaking in native tongues and with various accents is an important aspect of embracing linguistic diversity and promoting inclusive communication.

In many post-colonial societies, knowledge and use of English language remains the benchmark for intelligence. The closer to a British or Western accent, the more intelligent. Teachers, do not perpetuate this in modern classrooms. Do not tell students to “speak properly” when in fact you mean “Don’t speak in the native tongue or the dialect; speak in English.” Do not restrict yourselves and the minds you are nurturing to “English” pronunciations of words.

Embrace dialects.

English is the knowledge of trade and proficiency boosts job prospects. It should be treated as a necessary subject not the determinant of intelligence.

Encourage students to embrace their accents and practice clear pronunciation to enhance audience comprehension. This doesn't mean eliminating the accent but rather ensuring effective communication.

Public speaking in native tongues acknowledges and celebrates linguistic diversity. It allows individuals to express themselves authentically and preserves the richness of their cultural heritage. Speaking in one's native tongue often creates a deeper connection with the audience. It can evoke a sense of cultural identity and authenticity that resonates with listeners. Public speaking in a native tongue allows for the inclusion of cultural references, idioms, and expressions that might not have direct equivalents in other languages. This enhances the richness of communication.

Instead of viewing accents as a hindrance, speakers can recognize them as a strength. Accents can capture attention, make a speaker memorable, and contribute to a more engaging presentation. Speakers can briefly address their accent at the beginning of a presentation, providing context and acknowledging the linguistic diversity in the room. This can create a positive and inclusive atmosphere

Kids Speak International and the Commonwealth Students' Association have partnered to provide soft skills empowerment training and certification to 500,000 teachers across the Commonwealth by 2030.

This handbook is to be used by educators, parents and supporting adults who are keen on helping children in their space develop critical soft skills. While this book focuses on public speaking and communication, it is vastly applicable to other soft skills.

Education systems must be transformed to meet the needs of the 21st century. Students need more than numeracy and literacy skills, degrees and diplomas to be globally competitive. To be effective employees, employers, innovators, entrepreneurs and leaders, they need soft skills.



LET'S WORK TOGETHER

NOT TO BE SOLD