

THE “TYPE-WRITER”

Life is a journey that teaches us so many things. It perfectly fits the label of a great teacher – it teaches us to discover ourselves, our surroundings and more importantly, the beauty of living.

As human beings, we tend to forget easily and overlook a lot of teachings that life has taught us. It is funny how we can remember so much but at the same time forget so much throughout our colorful journey in life. Science has a thousand reasons on why we behave like this but I have learned a simple reason behind this behavior.

Throughout our lives, we are influenced and molded by our environment and surroundings. Situations change the way we behave, how we react to things, the values that we carry, the things we remember as well as the things we forget. In most cases, it is not that we have completely forgotten the things we have learned rather we have set them aside somewhere in that vital organ we call our brain.

In order for us to remember, we just need something to trigger the memories that are already stored in our brain – a mere switch to turn it back on. Looking at it from this perspective, we are not that different from computers – the intelligent machine that we humans are so proud of and depend on so much.

Just by clicking and pressing the peripherals attached, we find our way to the most valuable information we seek.

This works in the same way for us humans. The main difference is that our switches come in various forms. It can be in the form of a reminder from a dear friend or a well-intentioned stranger, or a significant event (which can be either good or bad, sometimes totally unrelated to us). The switch is different for each individual.

The more important lesson is whether or not the switches would trigger us fast enough for us to learn and benefit from it so that we don't repeat the same mistakes again.

Any knowledge that is acquired but is not practised does not add value to our lives. Acting without the right knowledge brings us nowhere. It takes both to make it work – without either one of the elements we will usually end up at a dead end or get pulled backwards. This simple yet oh-so-important point, which has always been there but yet not fully practised tantamount to a loss of opportunity to utilise such knowledge.

So, what is left for us to do in order for us to remember all the meaningful knowledge that we have learned along the way? All the teachings we have learned through good and bad experiences, teachings that were shared by our loved ones, our friends, our teachers, our mentors.

How do we capture all of it and take them as guidance for the rest of our lives and ensure that we don't lose it along the way? Making sure that we don't continuously make the same mistakes and instead add value to the meaning of our lives?

Perhaps there are so many methods for us to do this, but I find writing them down to be one of the most effective method around. Strangely, I had indirectly learned this from my late grandfather, someone who is principled and

lived his life guided by values and discipline. Typical of a historian, he wrote almost everything that happened in his life. I remember seeing him with his typewriter, going at it for many hours. This was a common sight whenever I was at his place in Alor Star, Kedah.

I was very young back then and clueless of what he was doing. At the same time, I was very intrigued and always wondered why he was so engrossed in it. I had no idea what he was actually typing and who it was for. Later I found out that he was actually compiling sayings from various leaders, the Quran and hadiths as well as his own opinions based on knowledge he had acquired throughout his life into some sort of a scrap book. He made many copies of it (he actually literally typed many copies of it), meant for quite a sizable audience.

The compilation was meant for none other than his beloved children and grandchildren. His dedication caught my attention and increased my respect for him a notch higher. The thought of him going through all the trouble at his age back then (80 years old as written on the cover of the compilation), diligently compiling reminders for his family and reminding everyone to always be good and to always treat each other well – well, it really touched my heart.

I have read it many times. There are so many teachings that he shared in the compilation. Most of it might not seem new to us, things that were taught to us since we were young but taken for granted.

I came to understand more of his noble intention, to ensure that his children and the following generations continue to live with good principles. I decided then that I wanted to follow in his footsteps and try to do the same for my loved ones; my children, my family, brothers and sisters – anyone who wants to read the jottings of what I have learned along my journey in life.

I also found that writing was, and still is, the most effective way of compiling and distributing knowledge to mankind. As Islamic knowledge and

science evolved, coupled with the wider spread of Islam across the lands, writing became a main method used by Islamic scholars to record and share their knowledge on various aspects of Islam to be benefited by everyone.

It came to a time where relying on the earlier discipline of passing knowledge orally was no longer effective. As Islam expanded beyond territories, the reach became larger geographically and dissemination of accurate information became more critical.

Chances were not taken by previous leaders and scholars to just continue relying on the earlier method of oral transmission. This may be due to many reasons: declining quality of memorisation, the limited ability of humans to store and retain large amount of information, evolution and development of societies and not forgetting the continuous attempts of certain people abusing the oral method for their own selfish agenda by falsifying and creating lies and slanders.

The decision to start compiling the holy Quran in writing was made as early as the time of the first caliph of the *Khulafa Ar Rashidin* (the rightly guided, righteous caliphs), Abu Bakr as-Siddiq. His efforts were continued and improvised further by his successors. It was finally completed by the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan, which gave birth to *Mushaf Uthmani*, the standard Quran compiled in *Quraish* Arabic dialect that is still being used until today.

It was not too long after that we saw the great efforts of hadith scholars (*muhaddithin*) such as Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim, spending their lifetimes compiling numerous hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) while identifying and categorising their authenticity, all for the greater good of mankind. This was a necessity considering the decreasing number of hadith narrators with a chain of narrations continuing up to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

Today, we benefited so much from the dedicated efforts and works of the earlier generations – made possible through writings.

I have never really enjoyed writing and I don't believe I am good at it as well. However, considering that it is one of the best methods to leave behind something meaningful, I will give it a try and see how it turns out in the end. I have no idea when I would stop writing. When I started to pursue this intention (or more accurately, attempted), I was only 25.

I stopped many times along the way and now at 34, I am trying to give it a more serious shot at it. There is still a long way to go. Many things that I could not even imagine of experiencing have yet to happen, which makes it impossible for me to be an expert in the many areas of life.

Hopefully, I would be able to jot down as much learning as possible throughout my journey and share it with anyone who is willing to read them. I might not be the smartest person and my knowledge might not be much compared to many others, but I just wanted to share and hopefully many others would be able benefit from it as much as I have.

"Type-writer" – two distinctive words that describe the method used to compile this book. I don't actually write using a pen – I have a terrible handwriting and my hands get easily tired after writing for a long period of time. What more after being so used to typing on a keyboard for years, which I find to be much more comfortable and enjoyable.

So I can conclude that I am not actually a writer, but a type-writer: a writer who types his work, literally. It is also a dedication to my late grandfather and his typewriter, the person who inspired me to start this compilation in the first place.

I must say that my life has been colourful ever since I was young. I have tasted many ups and downs; I have broken down emotionally numerous times due to the failures, pains and challenges that I went through.

I met a lot of brothers and sisters along the way, some remained close and some drifted away. Among them, I have been blessed with many special brothers and sisters who have so generously shared their valuable knowledge and experiences with me. I was a nobody then (still am at this point of time), but there have always been people who have continuously guided me and reminded me to always be on the righteous path in life, praise be to Allah. This was both in my earlier and also the later "reverted" days. You will understand more about the latter part later in this book.

I must take this opportunity to thank all of them, my teachers, for the valuable knowledge passed down to me. It has built the foundation of the principles and values in my life. I assure you that I would not let all your teachings go to waste. My inexpressible gratitude for all you have done for me, thank you.

May Allah bless and reward with you for all great things you have shared and done for me.

Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing.

Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States