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Live&Learn

Success beyond certs and titles

A year-end reflection on learning, growth and purpose

AS the year draws to a close, I find myself pausing not just to look back on the past year, but to truly reflect.

This year has been a tapestry of experiences, challenges and unexpected lessons.

One recent moment left a lasting impression: the privilege of addressing the graduating cohort at Lancaster University as their honorary graduand.

The opportunity was more than just an honour; it was a mirror reflecting my own beliefs about learning, growth and purpose.

Standing before those graduates was a reminder of why learning matters, not just in classrooms but also in life. I felt a deep sense of hope for those young people, and also a responsibility to share some thoughts and reflections that have shaped my own journey.

Education is more than a certificate. It is a key – a tool that opens doors, whether one is stepping into a first job or reinventing oneself decades later.

But knowledge alone is not enough. It becomes powerful only when paired with courage, ethics and empathy. These values transform information into impact.

This year also reminded me of the beauty and necessity of uncertainty. We often fear it, yet some of life's most meaningful opportunities arrive disguised as detours.

The world is changing faster than ever, and adaptability is no longer optional but essential.



Positive impact:
Knowledge becomes powerful only when paired with courage, ethics and empathy.
– 123rf.com

If we can grow without losing our values, we will not just survive change – we will be the change.

And then there is curiosity. It is easy to think of learning as something that culminates in a diploma or a degree, but the truth is that the most important classrooms are the ones without walls.

Books, travel and conversations with people who see the world differently – these are the lessons that shape us long after formal education ends.

In life, everyone wishes to be successful. We chase titles and pay cheques, especially after graduation. Yes, we need to survive and support ourselves and our families, but these should not be our only goals.

Success should also be measured by positive impact, in the kindness we show, the lives we help lift, and the moments we choose to step up instead of looking away.

Small, thoughtful gestures serve as powerful reminders that compassion does not need

to be grand to be impactful.

It is often the simplest acts that leave the deepest impressions, creating change in ways numbers and accolades never could.

Amid these reflections came a deeply personal moment: the loss of my mother at the age of 100.

A century of life is a gift few experience, and her presence was a steady compass through many seasons of change. Saying goodbye was bittersweet. While grief lingers, gratitude over-

whelms it.

I am thankful for the wisdom she shared, the resilience she embodied, and the love that shaped who I am today. Her life reminds me that longevity is not just about years, but also about the grace and purpose with which we live them.

Looking back, I am grateful for the opportunities I was given, the people who inspired me and the challenges that taught me resilience.

I am reminded that learning, serving and growing are journeys without finish lines. Perhaps that is the best lesson of all.

The most meaningful chapters of life are the ones we keep writing.

As we turn the page to a new year, I invite you to pause and ask yourself: What did this year teach me? Who and what am I grateful for?

Gratitude has a quiet power; it shifts our perspective from what is missing to what truly matters.

In a world that often feels uncertain, taking time to appreciate the lessons, the people and even the challenges that have shaped us can light the way forward.

Let this season be more than just celebration; let it be a moment of thankfulness and renewed purpose.

To all readers of *The Star*, I wish you a blessed season of giving and a Happy New Year.

Prof Datuk Dr Elizabeth Lee is the chief executive officer at Sunway Education Group. A veteran in the field of private higher education, Prof Lee is also an advocate for women in leadership. She has been recognised both locally and internationally for her contributions to the field of education. The views expressed here are the writer's own.