

Idiom by Lon Yan

誤人子弟

wu4 ren2 zi3 di4

An Ontario teacher was recently suspended for a rather unusual reason – disrupting an immunization clinic and scaring students by saying the vaccine would kill them.

The science teacher maintained his stance during his disciplinary hearing, describing the immunization exercise as “assault and battery” and said he felt “obligated to go do something about it.”

So he was found guilty of professional misconduct by the Ontario College of Teachers, who also asked him to take courses on professional boundaries, ethics and anger management, which was clearly needed as, true to his character, he stormed out of the hearing room and did not return after hearing the ruling.

The idiom “誤人子弟” (wu4 ren2 zi3 di4) came to mind.

“誤” (wu4) “to cause harm to,” “an error,” “mistake,” “人” (ren2) “people,” “子” (zi3) “son,”

“弟” (di4) “younger brother.” Literally, “誤人子弟” (wu4 ren2 zi3 di4) is “to cause harm to other’s sons and younger brothers.” “子弟” (zi3 di4), as a term, means “juniors,” “children,” “the younger generation.”

“誤人子弟” (wu4 ren2 zi3 di4) means “a lazy or incompetent teacher hampers students’ progress”. The idiom can also mean “(of media) to propagate errors,” “to lead people astray,” but it is most often used in respect of teachers.

Lazy teachers who teaches nothing are bad. Feeding wrong information to student is worse, and scaring them in the process is worst.

“誤人子弟” (wu4 ren2 zi3 di4) is probably the worst thing that you can call someone in the teaching profession, and teachers who managed to earn themselves this label should consider changing profession.

Terms containing the character “誤” (wu4) include:

誤會 (wu4 hui4) – misunderstanding

誤導 (wu4 dao3) – to mislead; to misguide

誤差 (wu4 cha1) – an error; an inaccuracy

錯誤 (cuo4 wu4) – wrong; a fault; a mistake