Need for the Skill Based Curriculum to Develop Leadership and Communication Skills

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Abstract

There are two ways to improve the quality of education. First, one is to improve the quality of content continually and the second is to change the methodology of teaching while the content is improved periodically. Considering the kind of population, quality issues and challenges India is facing in the academics, the second way is suggested as we still follow the University affiliation method which constrains colleges from being totally independent in academic matters.

This research paper talks about how to turn the suggestive curriculums of Universities into lessons/sessions, which build skills and lead to turning our learners into good communicators and leaders. The paper simplifies the cognitive theories, principles of educational psychology and Social psychology and the pedagogic theories like multiple intelligences and Higher Order Thinking Skills and suggests some practical tips to making classroom teaching more attractive and interesting. The paper suggests methods of how skill based approach to teaching can lead to developing leadership and communicative abilities.

This paper will suggest methods for building better learning experiences based on recent researches and proposes of some techniques through which we can make learners more employable and relevant to the current market.

This paper addresses issues related to making proper lesson plans and the kind of classroom activities which college teachers conduct and leads towards striking proper balance in power issues between student teacher roles to avoid domination, which will bring-out the hidden abilities of the learners.

Introduction

There is a great challenge and a threat posed to the growth of Indian economy in the new millennium. Namely, it is low employability rate among Indian graduates. In the words of the former honorable Minister for Human Resources Development Dr Shashi Tharoor, in an address at Asian school of business in the 2nd week of January 2014, spoke of the 4 challenges faced by the Indian Education system and explained how the first two focus areas of the policy hindered the later two focus areas of Higher education. In his words, he called them 4Es. In the 66 years of Independent India Governance had to address the Quantitative issues in academics and it resulted in qualitative issues.

- Expansion
- Equity
- Excellence
- Employability

“ The country has managed to adequately address ‘expansion' by setting up schools, colleges and other higher education institutions; and ‘equity' through policy changes that extended educational opportunities to people who were left out. However, there has been little focus on ‘excellence' and ‘employability' which have been to India's detriment, he said.”

It is time to explore the possible measures to be taken towards the holistic development of the learners. There are hurdles to overcome but no excuse can serve as a right reason for poor performance in the global market where only quality matters. .

Beyond the Number Game

The kind of numbers often presented when it comes to academics do not matter anymore because the numbers are exploding. The total number of enrolled graduates in colleges doubled between 2001-2011 from 860000 to 16975000. If the number can double by every decade, then there is a huge requirement of several more thousands of colleges and universities. What if the literacy rate also increases with time in the next two decades apart from the increase of interest in the youth towards Higher education? It is evident and expected that there will be a 40-50 million Indian graduates in the market each year. In the past numbers were a reason given and an excuse for the poor performance of the academic system. In the current era this reason cannot be given, because the explosive numbers are already expected and the preparing to meet the future needs without compromising in the quality is the responsibility of all the stake holders.

	1950	Current Statistics	Forecast for 2023
Universities	30	677(as of 2014)	1500
Colleges	695 (23per Univ.)	37204(as of 31st march 2013)	75000
Students	3,97,000 (504 per college)	169.75 lakh(as of 2011)	4,50,00,000
Girls	43000 (12%)	70,49,000 (43%)(as of 2011)	2,25,00,000 or above
Literacy	18.33	74.04%(as of 2011)	90%

Synergy between Industry and Academia

It is time that the industries play an active role in developing educational institutions. It has been repeatedly recommended by experts that industry academia partnerships be built for working hand in hand towards providing quality-learning experiences. Very few premiere institutions are able to attract the attention of the industry. There are centers of excellence and sponsored laboratories where industries pilot their new projects and concepts but they are often not the true recognition of the academic excellence but are driven by the need of the launch pads for the industries. Students are often found exploring known/popular avenues for their careers. There are many areas, which students are not aware of and they do not get exposure towards many career options that are available. Education institutions need to help learners know and understand various career options available and the new avenues that are opening up in the market.

Industries need to share the responsibility of formulating quality curriculum and updating the syllabuses periodically. Industries sometimes progress at a faster rate and they need to share their learnings with academia, if this does not happen, the possibility of indigenous technology becomes less and the market costs increase. The other challenge is, that the future employees for the industry come from colleges. The colleges are the suppliers of the manpower who are going to play a key role in quality output/production. It is like a farmer not preparing the ground/field properly but expects a great yield because of the quality of the seeds and great weather that year.

Increase in Entrepreneurial Training

It is important to develop entrepreneurial skills in the students as the growth of the number of colleges and the number of management students is exponentially increasing and the rate of development in the market is not matching with this growth rate. Every year creating a 3, 60, 000 new managerial positions or 9 00,000 new engineering positions in the market takes real big leap in the economic growth rate. As a result many Management and engineering graduates get under employed and that effect falls on the whole of the Indian Job market

One of the major challenges of the academia in most parts of the world is that they are not abreast or ahead of the industry. Academia has to struggle to win the confidence of the industries thereby rarely we find industry chairs and industry sponsored laboratories in colleges.

Skill Based Curriculum

Current academic curricula may stand among the best when it comes to what to teach, but when we consider how to teach what is suggested in the syllabus there aren't many clues related to how the given syllabus need to be executed in the classroom. It is often assumed that the exhaustive and suggestive syllabus given by universities have to be covered by each paragraph in the classrooms. In fact, the very purpose of such recommended text book is to strengthen the basics and lead to advanced learning. The time is often a constraint when it comes to teaching vast syllabuses. It is time to pay more attention towards developing the skill levels through flipping the traditional methods into modern ones.

Teach through multiple sources and not from classroom instruction alone. Connect the course objectives and course outcomes with the methods being used in the classroom. Why should a concept be taught and how is it going to be useful and for how long are the key concerns of a teacher. Based on the key concerns how much time should be spent on a particular concept will be decided. When it comes to using a method of teaching, it is essential to connect the method with the competencies they can develop. If a method used does not develop any competency, then the teacher might be using a method that will serve only a limited purpose and may not be serving multiple purposes during the valuable class time. Developing skills is the basic aim of classroom learning especially those skills that make the learner community more employable.

Learner Centricity

It is important to draw the attention of the learner towards the lesson. Using simple methods like using analogies to introduce new concepts and conducting classroom activities like role-plays and pair work will bring in added advantage to the learning process. Focus on secondary aspects like ranks and marks need to reduce and the focus on quality of learning, ability of application of the learnt concept and practical approach to learning need to increase. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the learning process is enjoyable. When the learner sees development in him/herself, the chance of one losing interest is very low. It is interest that helps learners pursue higher qualifications. Teachers need to use methods that interest the learners to grab and retain their attention.

Developing Leadership

The Faculty fraternity and the learner community together need to focus on futuristic learning and strategic planning of the learning process. Leadership is a bit different from all the academic competencies. Therefore, it takes special attention as developing leadership qualities at later stages will be less beneficial compared to those learnt early. Pre and post classroom activities need to include many teamwork and group assignments to enable the emergence of leaders.

Even during the class, there can be activities that encourage initiatives, entrepreneurial spirit and creativity. Classroom activities may also be designed to teach emotional balance and positive thinking and bearing with criticism.

Active learning methods as classroom activities

Creating classroom activities and assignments that motivate learners to be independent and self-learners who can continue to teach themselves and learn from surroundings as well. Advanced methods like brain storming, Mind Mapping and matching activities with the multiple intelligences of the learners in the class will make classrooms more active. These activities take away passiveness and make classrooms more active.

Communication Skills

Seminars and group discussions are recommended along with methods like reporting an incident of an event in writing, making a short video of an important happening around and reporting their ideas and opinions, discussions in the public forums or imitating a newsreader or a reporter are some of the creative methods of developing the communication skills of the learners

Need for better researches

Research is an outstanding way of creating academic leaders. When learners focus on social issues and concentrate on finding suitable solutions, there is evident leadership seen in them. Faculty members need to build awareness in learners towards the need for intensive researches beginning from the graduation level. When these researches are reported through writing research papers for publishing in journals and books, their ability to communicate their thoughts and ideas will increase. Their vision expands towards a better society.

A recent report on higher education India stated that there is an evident lack of interest in research among Indian graduates. This report is prepared by the chairman of UGC Mr.Ved Prakash and other senior members and it holds “It is also evident from the above report that there is lack of interest among students to opt for research projects that could be attributed to the reason such as they prefer lucrative jobs which could fetch them more money than spending years in doing research and getting very little compensation during that period. The reason could also be that there is lack of motivation to do research and the teaching community cannot shy away from the fact that they are not able to generate that motivation and interest among their students.”

Research is an out-standing way to build leaders and challenging them to publish papers is way to refine their communication skills.

Innovation as the Key

It is recommended that the colleges and universities opt for some innovative practices for developing skills of the learners. As it is time for bringing out innovative measures for excellence in academics. The very approach needs to turn skill based and attempt to develop competencies of the learners in everything the institutions do

Project works and internships need to be team oriented and not individualistic.

Help students participate in short surveys and demonstrations

Exchange of students across institutions

Global accreditations and exposure

Confidence building programs and measures

Conclusion

According to the book *21st Century Priorities in Engineering Education (page 62),* the four Pillars of Education are: learner centric teaching, research excellence, outcome based quality supported by accreditation and innovation and entrepreneurship. There is a dire need for discussing the third pillar (outcome based quality supported by accreditation) in an extensive manner. Teaching community need to act as change agents and ask the learners to be seeking for change towards good and the better of the society.

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