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**Go Beyond Education to Professionalism -
Transition from Campus to Corporate**

Rupinder Kaur Gandhi, M.Phil., Ph.D. Candidate

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Abstract

The objective of the paper is to show how a trainer has to mould his teaching especially when he or she teaches communication skills and personality development, so that their meets the requirements of the corporate world.

The first part of the paper discusses the difficulties existing in the present teaching world. Campus training should not be confined to classroom teaching. The classroom teaching impacts you alone, while at work your performance impacts the organization as a whole, your bosses and your co-workers.

The second part of the paper deals with proper curriculum which will be entirely practice-oriented. Students will get acquainted with an environment identical to corporate world where they will be trained to meet the deadlines. They will be tested on everyday basis so that they become accustomed to performance reviews and not judge themselves in accordance with the scores in report cards. Emphasis will be on collective projects and critical reasoning.

Introduction

Business world is entirely a new world where companies and organizations talk in terms of profits and goal settings. Then why would any organization recruit candidates who are just

educated but not professionals? Today it is necessary for a progressive business school to have an edge to stand out from the clutter.

With a very little emphasis on practical knowledge and its implementation, Indian colleges have gained the reputation of churning out muggers minus brains to apply learnt knowledge. This paper tries to explore the present scenario existing in Indian campuses. Let us go beyond education and accept learning's co-operative and communicative approach.

English and communication have created a deep-rooted impact in corporate world. Corporate talk is in terms of profits and, of course business. Why would they recruit candidates who are fully equipped when it comes to core subjects but lagging behind as far as their communication skills and personality development is concerned?

Colleges and universities deserve a fair amount of blame for the lack of critical thinking and problem solving skills among graduates. We need to change the way we teach. Some of us keep saying this but, overall, universities have been slow to change when it comes to communication. No doubt communication as a subject is included in the regular curriculum of professional courses and is treated as a full-fledged subject with titles such as Professional Communication, Business Communication or Communication, etc.

But have we ever seriously considered the following question: Are the students really interested to study literature, especially Francis Bacon or O'Henry or Shakespeare in the form of a communication dosage. Certainly not! What will they do by filling page after page writing about the theories of communication? When at work, a corporate entity demands emotional intelligence, critical thinking and creative as well as sociable mind. If this is the case, then, why English should be treated as a theoretical subject where college pupils are required to get a green signal just to show good results in their mark sheets?

Problems in the Curriculum

The existing curriculum focuses on enhancing learning quotient. It includes the learning and evaluating the subject matter. The students receive considerable passive exposure to grammar, translation, vocabulary and semantic information from written sources, but little exposure to communicative situations, or required to actively use English (West and West 1997).

Why go far, this is in case of many business schools where students are made to mug up the entire lexicon and students feel proud of it when they come up with bombastic words like *Epicurism* which literally means devotion to food, drinks and pleasures or may be *valedutinarium* which means one who is anxious about health.

Students give 100% efforts to accumulate all these high sounding words in their brains but problem arises when it comes to its usage. They are not able to form sentences or even if they are able to do it, the words are certainly misused. For example, they can utter lines like, "I love eating that is why I am an Epicurism."

All students are taught the same material. English classes are not communication-based; rather it is directed towards student-preparation for only the university examination, which principally tests a student's general ability to memorize. The examination is far from being communication-based (West and West 1997).

Most of the lecture theatres are teacher-oriented and teacher-directed. Teacher's preparation and training do not emphasize communicative practices. Furthermore, classes are large (frequently 50-60 even 70 students in a class), which decreases the time for any student-teacher interaction.

Many business schools and professional colleges have started employing a soft-skill trainer who has a practical knowledge of corporate life. No doubt, they do expose students to foreign teaching methods and the ways of corporate life and at least to some degree of communicative language teaching. But a limited integration of such soft skill trainers with the official curriculum cannot meet the existing demand in the market.

Apart from the above problems in the classroom, there is a major challenge before a teacher of communication. It is a struggle for some students to learn the English language. For a teacher to make these students communicate in English is a big thing. This category of candidates always struggles to be on track. Some students are from vernacular background that are good enough in core subjects but are not able to converse in English. These students have a will power and capability to at least go through the English grammar and make them get acquainted with the rules but still struggle when it comes to the spoken part.

Result of the Combination of These Factors

Campuses have many students who lack confidence in using English. They have low motivation to learn to communicate in English and a high motivation to memorize English in a non-communicative form. Many students have very little or no understanding or ability to reproduce English sounds. In this respect, they are far away from being creative to meet the requirements of corporate life (West and West 1997).

The reputation and goodwill of most of the B Schools depend upon their internships and recruitment programmes. Thus, it has become all the more indispensable to bring a change and think beyond classroom teaching. Oral exams and other didactic interactions between professor and students are sorely needed.

Therefore, an activity based curriculum will surely help students to go through a smooth transformation and bridge the gap between campuses to corporate. English classes should centre upon activity based technique as a solution to get rid of rote learning that has paralysed our existing academic system in colleges.

The idea that student employability is enhanced by work-related and work-based learning has considerable face validity. Work-related learning is a loose term covering activities that are intended to contribute to a student's fitness for employment. It includes classroom activities that are designed directly to:

Teach propositional or formal knowledge that is of value in an occupation;
Develop something of importance in a particular occupation (triage or classroom management).

Foster generic practices, such as team-working and interpersonal fluency (Knight: 103).

“The more you practice, the more fluent your English speaking is.” But the Indian education system does not leave room for any practice.

Activity-based Curriculum

A curriculum which can surely meet the shortcomings of the existing one is entirely an activity based curriculum. It has been designed keeping in mind some of the objectives which are as follows:

Objectives

1. To inculcate the ability to listen to and read instructions and then carry out those instructions.
2. When asked for information, the individuals should be able to respond both orally and in writing.
3. Reading activities will include comprehending what has been read.
4. Students will be able to become sharp thinkers and will be able to make sound decisions.
5. To make a student think critically, act logically and evaluate situations to make decisions and solve problems.
6. To effectively bring good personal skills in an individual which will make them more confident and they will deal with others honestly and openly displaying respect for themselves, their co-workers and their supervisors.
7. To foster a team spirit in the students so that they are willing to work within the culture of the group.
8. To imbibe positive attitude and to make them take initiatives to learn new things to get the job done.
9. To ensure that the students have good communication skills so that they gel well within a team, and can effectively communicate their ideas.

The objectives mentioned above have been framed after keeping in mind a vision of the ever widening and ever changing market trends. The curriculum which is entirely activity based is certainly a contrast to the existing one.

The demand of the corporate says where learners develop in confidence and self esteem they are more likely to achieve.

The Basic Layout of an Activity Based Curriculum

Module 1: Practical language skills

1. Basic vocabulary with activity games.
2. Expanding headlines.
3. Developing proverbs into paragraph.
4. Explaining common processes.
5. Writing formal and informal letters.
6. Using punctuation.
7. Writing specific instructions.
8. Describing jobs.
9. Preparing resumes.
10. Completion of a given story or situation.
11. Summarising.
12. Writing reviews (books and movies)
13. Report Writing
14. Proposal Writing

Module 2: Recognizing the Impact of Soft Skills

1. Reviewing case studies.
2. Share and discuss ideas and challenges with peers.
3. Presentation skills with help of visual aids.
4. Mock interviews.
5. Role playing.
6. Small group or pair work which includes activity oriented works like:
 - a) Preparation of invitation cards.
 - b) Preparation of a speech for an occasion.
 - c) Preparation of an article for a newspaper or any college magazine dealing with day to day issue.
 - d) Preparation of work sheets to meet deadlines.
7. Writing Formal Emails

Module 3: Interactive Communication

1. Group discussion.
2. Extempore and quizzes.
3. Games on team building, moral teaching and leadership games.
4. Object talking.
5. Formal conversation between a pair and a couple of students.
6. Stress interviews, discussions on newspaper reading.

The curriculum thus framed will surely upgrade the communication and presentation skills. This practical-based language classes will benefit the students, both in their early professional careers and in their social interactions in the business environment.

Soft skills provide students with a strong conceptual and practical framework to build develop and manage work thereby enhancing their future prospects. With practical training students will improve their skills in communication, the effective use of English business correspondence, time management, interviews and inter-personal skills. In short, it is a career visioning and planning curriculum.

Creating Appropriate Context for Follow Up

To have a disciplined approach towards this new curriculum, there are some conditions to be followed:

1. The training of the students requires proper conference rooms for group discussions and platforms for role playing and extempore. These interactive activities are not fruitful if done within classrooms.
2. Topics and issues, and situations should be selected on the basis of situations and conditions which a student may come across as an entry-level candidate in corporate world.
3. Teachers' active participation in noting down the words pronounced incorrectly is must. And if the students have used new words and proverbs, we as teachers need to have a check of its usage too.
4. Grooming of the students begins with a preliminary test in the English language to determine their level of competence in the use of English for effective communication both oral and written.
5. A special class for those students who are really weak in English so that extra activities and discussions are taken.

Conclusion

Therefore, this curriculum is just a step towards a corporate world. It is s a reply to recruiters who think 'Students need to upgrade their skill, upgrade and restrain themselves, rather than get disappointed'(Krishnan in *The Hindu*). It is not a student's fault, but the greatest hole lies in the existing teaching system. One way to give super-shine to one's career is having great communication skills. Speak well, write well and understand corporate etiquette. Work diligently on the following - How to speak publicly? How to speak in social gathering? How to make effective presentations? How to write powerful e-mails? And this is what an activity-based curriculum proposes to do, i.e., to make the students good communicators.

In this practical way of teaching, students will surely take an initiative which is the best way to learn, get noticed and grow. Everybody has problems, but only few take the trouble to solve. Problem tacklers are loved in any company. Hence, this is how the gap between campuses to corporate will be narrowed.

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Rupinder Kaur Gandhi, M.Phil., Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Professional Communication
Graphic Era University
Dehradun 248001
Uttarakhand, India
placid.rupinder@gmail.com