



ST. XAVIER'S COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (AUTONOMOUS)

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PALAYAMKOTTAI - 627002.

PRODUCING EMPLOYABLE TEACHERS: PROSPECTS, CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES



Principal
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(Autonomous)
Palayamkottai - 627002

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Contents			
Sl. No.	Title	Contributor(s)	Page No.
1.	Communication - A Base Line For Effective Teaching	A. Srinivasacharlu	1
2.	Applying Smart board Technology in Classrooms : A study	Dr. C. P. Sonamble	8
3.	Challenges in Teacher Education	Jasmin Asaf	13
4.	Strategies for Enhancing Student Employability	Rev. Dr. S. Amaladoss Xavier	18
5.	Communication Skills: The Base for Employment	A. John Lawrence	19
6.	Producing Employable Teachers: Prospects, Challenges and Strategies	Rev. Dr. Nirmala Devi	22
7.	Life Skills and Coping Strategies in Adolescents	Dr. Jayadeva M.D	26
8.	Integrating Soft skills for Better Employment Opportunities	Dr. A. Joycilin Shermila Dr. K. E. Valarmathi	31
9.	Work skills Needed For A History Teacher	Dr. M. Antony Raj	35
10.	Soft Skills and Coping Strategies	Dr. M. Vasimalairaja	39
11.	Gender wise Analysis of Soft Skills of Secondary Teacher Education Students	Dr. S. Arockiasamy	42
12.	An Able Teacher: Transforming Problematic Student Behavior into Resources	Jayashree Raj Dr. Lawrence Soosai Nathan	46
13.	Stress Management: Coping with Stress and Strain	V. Flower let Rev. Dr. D. Thomas Alexander	47
14.	Essential Soft Skills for Prospective Teachers	S. Shunmuga Narayanan Dr. H.Deepa	56
15.	Challenging in Teacher Education	P. Mahendran T. Jebamani Selvasingh	61
16.	Barriers to Effective Human Communication	Dr. Y. Daniel	67
17.	Curriculum Modifications for Special Needs Learners	S. Benitta Jebamani	71
18.	Impact of Teacher's Personality on Quality Instruction	Dr. N. Theresita Shanthi P. Sophie Angelia	75
19.	Personality Development- A Path to Success for Teachers	S. Jebasheela Jenifer Dr. E. C. Punitha	80
20.	Communication Skills - An Essential Soft Skill For A Teacher	Dr. A. Punitha Mary	83
21.	A Study on Soft Skills of Higher Secondary Students in Tirunelveli District	G. Frenela Angeline Dr. C. Ramesh	87

Communication Skills – An Essential Soft Skill for A Teacher

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The term soft skill has become a popular word in career contexts. According to Hewitt Sean (2008) soft skills are "non-technical, intangible, personality specific skills" which determines an individual's strength as "a leader, listener and negotiator, or as a conflict mediator". Soft skills are not a substitute for hard or technical skills, but they act as harmonizing skills that serve up to unlock the prospective for highly effective performance in people even with good hard skills. Soft skills are those skills that add more value to the hard skills adorned by an individual. As a matter of fact not a day passes without the press pointing out the need of this skill which facilitates young graduates to be employable. Employers make a distinction between soft skills and hard skills. Hard skills refer to one's education, experience and expertise, while soft skills are defined as a set of skills that influences how one interacts with others. They include such abilities as effective communication, creativity, analytical thinking, diplomacy, flexibility, change-readiness, problem solving, leadership, team building. Out of many skills, communication skills form the basis of soft skills.

Need of Soft Skills for Teachers

Though children spend relatively less time at schools, it is the classroom from where a child is best ready to pick up learning skills and knowledge. So the teachers who can play an active role in helping their students learn and nurture such skills. Soft Skills

cannot be read out from the book. So it is very essential that the teachers themselves display it while dealing with the students. They can demonstrate these skills by embedding empathy, active listening, fuelling up team-work through positive feedback and encouragement. Teachers need to have soft skills to be able to give instructions to their students that are suitable for the students' learning styles. While keeping an eye on their students' learning curve and applying methods to bring it high have been job responsibilities, it is now even more important to discuss ideas with other teachers, parents, alongside teaching the students in the classroom. Teachers need to be life-long learners. They need to keep their eyes open for students' development, what would fit their learning styles and what would fit their learning needs. This can take place through constant monitoring of their students' performances, discussion with other teachers, and also exchanging feedback with parents/guardians. It is therefore necessary that they have proper soft skills to do all these.

Soft Skills of A Teacher

Teachers need more soft skills since they are handling the young generation. Some of the important soft skills are Communication Skills, Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills, Cultural Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, Team Work, Social Media and Networking. Among these soft skills, communication skills form the basis of soft skill. The four basic skills are listening, reading, speaking

and writing. Listening and reading are called receptive skills and speaking and writing are called as expressive skills. In the context of career skills, these four skills constitute overall communication skills. In this paper, we will discuss about the importance of communication skill for a teacher.

Communication Skills of A Teacher

The art of communication involves listening and speaking as well as reading and writing. Teachers need to be highly skilled in all these areas to excel in their profession. Proficient communicators receive information, understand and synthesize it and express themselves at a high level. They make excellent teachers because they are able to transmit knowledge, skills and values at the same time they communicate their caring for the students entrusted to their care. They help motivate students to learn. Teachers communicate with students, parents, colleagues and administrators every day. Whether communicated face-to-face, on the phone, in print, electronically or through the public address system, the message must be constructed carefully and delivered clearly to be properly received.

Communicating to Students

Teachers must be skilled at listening to their students as well as explaining things clearly. Teachers need clarity of thought to present the material. They must be able to break down complex ideas into simpler parts and smaller steps to transmit to their students. They must be able to adapt their methods of communication to all students regardless of ability or learning style. They are able to "read" their students and adapt to the needs of the individual. Effective communication includes transforming the boring into the interesting and having good presentation skills.

Following are some of the communication skills that a teacher must possess so that they may have good presentation in the class.

Positive Motivation: This is one of the important things that a teacher must possess. In a class, students always have different kinds of taste and preferences over subjects. So it is the job of the teacher to create enthusiasm and interest in the minds of the students towards a subject. It is also a teacher's role to remove any fear and inhibitions that a student may have towards a subject.

Effective Body Language: This is the most powerful communication skill that a teacher must possess. Good presentation skills include a powerful body language supported by verbal skills. This can create a long lasting impression in the minds of the students. Thus, a teacher's lectures will inevitably become more interactive and interesting for the students. Besides, a teacher should maintain the volume, tone and rhythm of their voice during a lecture.

Sense of Humor: The importance of this factor has been regularly underestimated. A good sense of humor keeps the students active and interested in the class. A teacher who is dour and lacks humor doesn't contribute to the overall well being of the students.

Understanding the Students: Teachers should encourage students to communicate openly. There should be emphasis on cultivating a dialogue rather than a monologue. So while solving any kind of problems in the classroom, it is always wise to hear the opinions of the students also.

Team Formation: This is a good method where you can divide the classroom into small teams and ask them to solve different problems or complete assignments. This practice will increase not only the

interaction among the students but also among the teacher and students.

Technical Skills: It is also important that teachers should be up to date with all the latest teaching aids like computers, video conferencing and especially the use of internet. This will also help the students to keep up their interest in the learning process.

Communicating To Parents

A great educator does not only need to communicate with students, but should know the art of communicating with students' parents as well. Teachers must be able to express themselves both verbally and in writing in order to report student progress to parents. They need to explain the strengths and weaknesses of their students so that parents will understand the message and be receptive rather than defensive. This is especially important when the teacher conveys a difficult message about the student's misbehavior or learning problems. The message must be delivered clearly and with tact. Teachers should be comfortable communicating with parents regularly, with phone calls and informal notes in addition to formal report cards.

Interacting with Colleagues and Supervisors

Although teaching is often done in the isolation of a classroom without the presence of other adults, good teaching involves consultation with colleagues. Schools that see themselves as professional learning communities encourage teachers to plan lessons together and learn from one another. They take a team approach when problem-solving, especially for difficult students. This all requires excellent communication. Teachers stay abreast of new developments in education by reading journals, listening to new ideas from their

administrators and school board consultants, and sharing and discussing these ideas with colleagues.

Benefits of Communication Skills

Teachers are communicating with students, parents, colleague and administrator. It helps them to excel in their profession. Some of the benefits of good communication are

Students: Teachers who listen attentively to their students' questions and complaints are better equipped to meet individual needs and adjust lessons where necessary. Students are also more likely to be receptive when the teacher's body language and tone of voice indicate openness and encouragement. Appropriate use of audio-visual aids also can enhance presentations and make them easier for students to follow.

Parents: Reporting good news regularly strengthens the teacher-parent relationship and makes it easier for the parent to hear bad news when necessary. Skillfully delivered communication can earn respect from the parents and support for working together toward a positive outcome.

Colleagues: Taking a leadership role with other teachers in the school by chairing or co-chairing a committee provides the opportunity to enhance public speaking skills. Communicating with colleagues in this way may be very rewarding and personally fulfilling. It also shows initiative, which can lead to advancement or promotion.

Administrators: Teachers who are skillful communicators have a better chance of being heard by administrators when making a request, such as for a transfer, special leave or permission for a student event or field trip.

Conclusion

Students are the future of every nation. That is why the role of teachers is so important to the society. It is through a teacher that generations of youngsters are deeply influenced. Overall improvement in a student can be expected when communication skills for teachers is given due importance. Thus, it is important that communication skills become an important ingredient of a teacher's professional competency.

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