

They say, good teaching is learnt

MOMENT OF KNOWLEDGE Teachers' training helps in creating a better classroom environment and ensures effective learning among students, observes Rama Natarajan

Teaching is a profession that thrives on change. And, the key element in any change or development is accepting the challenge to change. A good teacher knows that there is always room for improvement and that there is such a thing as resting on past laurels for too long. For, a smart class needs a smart teacher. One may have years of teaching experience but there is always the danger of redundancy if one does not upgrade. Therefore, it is imperative that a teacher takes up training programmes or workshops to learn new teaching methods and improve on the job.

How's it done?

The first step is to identify the need and adapt to change. Professional development is vital in all fields. It helps an individual recognise changes in the work environment and learn to fit into a system. Because change is the only constant, professional development is an ongoing process throughout an individual's career span. Therefore, the purpose of teacher training should be to aid in adopting new technological tools to enhance classroom lessons and to be able to deliver in a language that the present generation understands and appreciates. Teaching requires one to be aware that the profession deals with young minds, and a classroom comprises students from a variety of backgrounds with different learning abilities, therefore it is vital that the teacher is innovative and is able to cater to all students properly.

Keep up with trends

As a teacher, if you want to make a difference and develop your own skills, as well as ensure quality teaching, then it is important to incorporate the latest research and practices into each unit of the lesson. That apart, there will also be a desire to grow and move up the academic and career ladder, rightly so. It helps if the teacher takes up different workshops and courses which not only help him or her improve subject-knowledge but also improve the ability to teach in an effective manner. Eventually, the teacher will be equipped to teach higher grades and

be eligible for a promotion too.

Empathy is key

It is imperative that an educational institute contributes to the holistic development of a student as against merely disseminating knowledge. Schools and colleges should be equipped to deal with the challenge of teaching students who learn in different ways and paces. That said, there is also an increasing need to keep stress levels of both teachers and students in check, from kindergarten to the undergraduate level.

How does it help?

Professional training of teachers has many advantages. To begin with, the various programmes act as a skywalk, connecting the existing know-how and newer trends in technology, the system and the society. Training makes one efficient on the job. It also helps the teacher focus on self-improvement and thereby, makes it easy for him or her to identify the hidden talent and potential of a student. There is also the opportunity to lead by example. Being aware of the skills required in the workforce in the current day and age will help you teach the same to your students and thereby, equipping them with the required skills as well.

Soft skills & personality

Personality development programmes including education in fair practices and sound values are always a good base to build on. There are also other programmes such as classroom management, differentiated instructions, basic child psychology and adolescence psychology that can be explored, as they add value to the entire teaching process. Besides, gaining popularity is leadership training and teaching English to non-English speaking students. Equipped with the knowledge from various workshops, the teacher will be comfortable in a multicultural environment and be able to handle learning disabilities and a host of other challenges that arise in a classroom.

Any classroom has three dimensions to it. The first is the material order of things; the second involves the human factors

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— the teachers and students; and the third dimension is the social interaction between the actors. What is important here is the goal of education, which is to provide equal opportunities and social justice, and to ensure economic and technological progress of society. A recent welcome move towards this end was the introduction of smart boards in 500 classrooms in government-aided schools across the state. However, the need of the hour is to train teachers and facilitate a quality learning environment. With technology on the front seat, each day is a challenge with newer inventions which render the old tools obsolete just when one is comfortable with them. As a result, the learning process never stops, neither for the students nor for the teachers.

Also, to make the job easier, some international schools insist that their teaching staff undergoes a special training programme to teach, assess and evaluate the students in a class. This makes the entire process organised

and effective.

What's in it for colleges?

So, what do the college lecturers stand to gain from specially formulated development programmes? An educationist in a college is a lecturer, a professor, a dean or director, because of his or her expertise in the specific subject or experience in guiding and counselling batches of students year after year. That being said, every educationist will agree that they enjoy attending conferences, seminars, webinars and workshops because at the end of the day they take home something new—a learning that has perhaps helped to remind them that to motivate others they have to keep their passion for their subject and job alive.

Nitika, a young lecturer who is doing her PhD in Principles of Teaching, had this to say. “I did a value addition programme to help rethink my teaching strategies and to help some really brilliant students combat their fears and low morale, which I found was stifling their self-expression.” There are a number of online professional development courses which are neatly categorised to narrow your search to a specific subject and a specific branch of specialisation.

Earlier, programmes like bachelors and masters in Education, a pre-service requisite, were the main determinant of how teachers performed in a classroom. Today, the approach is more professional. We have technology-driven classrooms and the teacher education curricula have undergone a transformation. All educationists are invested with the power to connect learning to real-life situations, to motivate and to guide the youth to become instruments of change.



FAST-PACED Online learning is designed in such a way that the professional can bring his or her new learning to work immediately.

Want to upskill? Go online

A P Ramabhadran

Today, the information technology (IT) sector is witnessing a significant amount of growth. With a contribution of nearly 7% towards the GDP, the technology sector is a vital cog in the professional and economic sphere.

An interesting observation here is the increase in the demand for niche courses, and it is surprisingly high in tier-two cities. What does this imply? That Indian learners have only been waiting for a viable learning option and have clearly found it in online education? There is no denying that online education is a growing trend and is creating opportunities which were never explored before.

Improving is must

Today, the option to upskill is no longer an option, but a need of the hour. There is a clear movement towards skilled talent in India. The job market is fierce and does not hesitate in giving lesser challenging projects to experienced professionals who are reluctant to keep pace with the growing momentum towards upskilling.

Upskilling can be attained in three ways: on the job learning, campus education and online executive education. While you are considering which of these three ways is most suitable for you, keep in mind some of the key features of each. On the job learning provides opportunities to work on projects where you can learn new skills.

The other option, campus-based education can prove to be a good option to learn evolving technologies and enhance employability, especially for evolved professionals with the dedication and motivation to take a full time or part time programme. It is important to note that professionals look for more than just training; they also expect better networking opportunities and bringing their learning to work almost immediately.

And, there lies the secret of online learning. Recent studies have shown that online learning is growing at a fast pace and has many students registering for a variety of learning programmes. What is so attractive in it, you ask? To begin with, it is about being progressive. The demand for professionals with six to 12 years of experience remains as strong as ever, but employees with such experience consistently need to add to their skill sets to stay up with the changing times.

Having said that, before choosing an online course, it is essential to look for these three pillars that build a trustworthy brand:

■ **Curriculum Design:** A comprehensive curriculum designed in collaboration with industry experts and veteran academicians is critical. So, look for a combination of university and industry as-

sociations. Remember, online platforms are a lot about technology and features, but knowing how to blend a good user experience with an understanding of how people learn and what experienced professionals need, is what makes a good online programme. So, do not go for just a technology platform but look for the design of curriculum.

■ **Andragogy:** A working professional needs 'instance-based learning'. Andragogy in the design of the curriculum, an easy search capability and a group discussion board are critical elements of the programme that you select. Content that is short, quick and easy to learn videos interlaced with expert live webinars, quick but deep thinking quizzes are all part of the learning methodology which can integrate well to provide you with a great learning experience.

■ **Corporate network:** The strength of the corporate tie-ups with the brand is important to assess two areas: a) Is there a possibility of getting a connection to open up new opportunities and b) does the programme have practitioners who can combine the concepts and bring them to life in practice.

Today, a rising number of intelligent professionals are finding value in online skill development programmes. Activities like projects, discussion boards, and learning cohorts have allowed them to indulge in group activities, discuss problems and provide viable business solutions. Online programmes also provide an active, interactive, and dynamic setting for students to grow their knowledge and skills.

How effective are they?

The value addition of online executive education can be determined by the extent to which the course helps you bring a new approach to solve existing business problems: whether it introduces you to newer ideas and technology with an ability to apply them in real-life scenarios or not. Online programmes have the additional benefit of creating learning paths which you can design or choose from standard templates. The benefit of a learning path is that you can choose modules progressively depending on your starting point and it encourages you to go back and forth depending on what learning you require at various points of time, and moving closer to instance-based learning.

All in all, upskilling is undoubtedly the most important investment for professionals to survive the cut-throat competition in IT as well as non-IT sectors. The solution lies in choosing the right courses, which not only give you the knowledge related to the technologies of the future but the right engagement and opportunity to network with other learners.

(The author is with Manipal ProLearn)



QUALITY IS KING Teachers' training helps in improving subject-knowledge and teaching methodology in schools.

It's important to get the basics right...

MARKETING GAME For a marketer, it is important to know the basics of traditional marketing along with the digital variant of the profession, writes T N Swaminathan



GET IT RIGHT Traditional marketing practices also mould professionals with skills required for the job.

Marketing jobs were considered to be dream jobs in the 70s and 80s. Invariably, you had to begin in field sales before moving up the ladder and taking up higher responsibilities. Over the years, marketing has been attracting creative individuals and enabling them to form an enviable career path. However, today, marketing, on the whole, is undergoing a sea change with every industry metamorphosing and offering various opportunities. And, with the advancement of technologies and evolving new fields including digital and social media, businesses are constantly transforming their functioning methods and deliverables, inviting more and more millennials to be part of this rapidly growing landscape.

Be it an aspiring MBA graduate or a professional planning for a transition, marketing continues to be a popular career choice even today. Notwithstanding the fact that marketing has a high rate of interest with multiple prospects, it is also laden with risks while making managerial decisions, especially to those who skip the basics and begin with digital marketing directly. True to the sentiment and time organisations are going digital. That said, an aspiring marketer needs to have a strong knowledge of the fundamentals before jumping

into the digital techniques.

Traditional vs digital

Marketing resides in the process of 'create, communicate, and deliver value to a target customer at a profit' (CCDVTP). To achieve this and ensure profitability, businesses work in two ways:

■ **Traditional Marketing:** This refers to the conventional methods of marketing using promotion of any product through print advertisement, newsletters, billboards, etc.

Historically, in India, traditional marketing has been successful through offline promotional methods, face to face selling, cold-calling, allowing direct connection with a consumer. Traditional practices also mould you with skills required for marketing—how to structure and value a product, how to interact with a consumer and improvise verbal communication skills. Whereas the digital method completely deals with a virtual world and lacks physical connect. A significant growth in recent years and new skill sets such as analytics, artificial intelligence, machine

learning and well paid secured jobs have been some of the benefits of digital marketing.

Integrating the two

Although the growth in online marketing has been phenomenal in recent years, tech companies and researchers are constantly looking at ways to offer digital services that surpass TV and offline space. With Netflix and Amazon expanding their market presence, TV is being consumed digitally these days. However, to sell these products and cater to the needs of consumers, a marketer should immerse and understand the language of things (value, consumer behaviour, pricing) as well as the Internet of things. And, this can be achieved only with a strong base of the traditional method. According to an Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) report, consumers rated that they still prefer Print and TV over digital media. Given that in India 91% is still traditional retailing and 84% is non-digital advertising, professionals, as well as millennials, should look at these advantages and understand the strategic side of going for basics.

Merging of technologies, cost factor, real-time engagement can be interesting, enticing millennials towards digital mar-

keting as a career. But, on the flip side, one must be aware of the fact that these are also leading to tech disruptions, exposing personal information, an example being the recent Facebook data breach. Balancing the right mix of both is one of the best ways to specialise in marketing. And, doing that in a classroom environment enriches one with more conversations, debates and live demonstrations of marketing techniques. The emergence of new tech skills is going to be a never-ending cycle. But, as a marketer, on a long run, bringing more skill sets on the table with basics in core marketing values, enables to strengthen your career and role in an organisation.

That said, there are plenty of career opportunities if one is planning to go for marketing, as the field itself is diverse. Some of the trending jobs in the market are marketing and sales specialist, brand manager, advertising specialist, research analyst, sales and business development, and if you are planning to shift into communications team in an organisation, with the digital skill set you will be able to land up in a post of a social media manager or an SEO specialist.

(The author is a professor, Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai)