



LEARNING LIFE SKILLS THROUGH THE 'BOOKLESS-DAY'

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Abstract

A day to the college without any books and still maintaining the high learning curve, great isn't it, the very thought is exciting. This model is a thought provoking process with lots of activities to help the students improve his or her IQ (Intelligent Quotient), EQ (Emotional Quotient), SQ (Spiritual Quotient) and SI (Social Intelligence). Soft skills are life skills because it is directly related to the character of a person. To keep motivated and focused on the goal is a tough task because of the alluring, dazzling distraction around. All the activities are planned to help the student introspect his/ her thought process, and the whole process provides an opportunity to bring a change in the life of an individual.

Keywords: *Soft Skills, Life Skills, Character Building, Personality Development.*

Introduction

Engineers are technical people, so it is evident that they should be technically sound, but certainly this is not the only thing which they should emphasize during engineering. To get a job of an engineer, one has to be technically strong and to move up over the career ladder and lead a wonderful life, one has to be good at soft skills. Soft skills are life skills because it is directly related to the character of a person. To keep motivated and focused on the goal is a tough task because of the alluring, dazzling distraction around. A vital factor to be on the right track is to introspect oneself. Introspection provides the opportunity to 'relearn' from time to time. To 'relearn' is to 'undo' the wrong postures, links, traits that got into your life-knowingly or unknowingly. Martin Luther King, Jr once said, the goal of true education is to teach one to think intensively and critically i.e. Intelligence plus character.

The technical universities of the world which were only looking into the development of technical skills have now raised the bar with the globalization and now included language skills in their course structure mainly to improve the students oral and written communication skills. Helping the students master presentation skills, public speaking, writing reports, short documents, minutes of the meeting, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, etc. the grossly neglected skills are life skills or soft skills, i.e. skills dealing with the students' personal traits like individuality, intuition, creativity, team building, leadership skills, etc. All these skills are related to the psychic process which cannot be learned just like the way one learns technical skills or language skills. So, a different methodology has been put forward to improve the life skills of students.

A Bookless-day Model

A day to the college without any books and still maintaining the high learning curve, great isn't it, the very thought is exciting. To be a free bird enjoying the life without any strings has always been a dream of everyone, and now that would be a reality. This model is a thought provoking process, which helps a person improve his IQ (Intelligent Quotient), EQ (Emotional Quotient), SQ (Spiritual Quotient) and SI (Social Intelligence). At times when we tend to do routine things differently, we force our brain to think differently and this activity promotes us to have an out-of-the-box thinking (lateral thinking), and raises our IQ level. Man's success depends on the way he balances his personal and professional life and this depends on the emotional quotient (EQ) of the person. Life skills depend on character-building, the change in the outlook and the thought process can only happen when one really thinks about change and that should come from the depth of the heart, and this depends on the spiritual quotient (SQ) of the person. Social Intelligence (SI) is the ability to get along well with others, and to get them to cooperate with you. At times SI is referred to as 'people skills', our success or failure depends on the way we respect and treat others.

Community development programs help the students to look at the issues/ problems of the society and the interactions provides an opportunity for practical applications of the theory and builds an emotional bond with the society around us. This will help the students to be broad minded, and sense that they have the moral obligation to help his/her hapless brethren, and such random unselfish activities are payback cheques from the motivated energetic young minds. The payback system works wonders because we are paying the society, what we have earned from the society, and the society was generous in accepting us and taking us into its fold. We pay what we have- quality time, invest knowledge, be a humanitarian, etc. the students earn rich dividend in the form of wisdom. This model will help the students' gauge the problems of the society and help them turn into true citizens of the country.

Objectives of a Bookless-day Model:

1. To be aware of the new learning tools and techniques.



2. Imbibe life skills through activity sessions.
3. Improve interpersonal skills and develop leadership qualities.
4. A paperless day to improve concentration and memory.
5. To live and lead a high quality life.
6. To maintain a balanced emotional life, away from all kinds of extremism.
7. To positively contribute to the development of society.
8. Bringing ethics into once life.
9. Improve the decision taking ability.
10. Learn event management skills.

Outcomes of a Bookless-day Model

1. Recognize the latest technological advancements.
2. Apply life skills to bring a change in the thought process.
3. Understand the characteristics of team building, leadership, interpersonal skills.
4. Illustrate event management skills.
5. Create a positive attitude towards life.
6. Examine the decision taking ability.
7. Understand the significance of ethics to lead a high quality life.

Activities/ Sessions in a Bookless-day

1. e-Learning Resources
2. Life Skills Activities
3. Meditation
4. Community Development Programs and Reviews (CDPR)

Note: For all the above activities, faculties are only facilitators and students are the active participants/ executors.

Schedule

A possible schedule to accommodate all the activities on a single day preferable to have on Saturday. All the activities are fully packed with energy and to stimulate creativity among the students'. The sessions are practical applications and certainly not a regular theory class. At the end of the day the students' would feel that the day was a wonderful learning time, looking beyond the traditional outcomes and the students would crave for more...

Week	1 st period	2 nd period	3 rd period	4 th period	5 th period	6 th period	7 th period
Saturday	Meditation	e-Learning Resources	Life Skills Activities		Community Development Programs and Reviews (CDPR)		

1. Meditation

Starting the day with meditation is a nice way to start a day. Meditation helps to reign over one's senses. When the senses are under our control, we have a control on the inputs to our brain; thereby we can really dictate the outcome of any work we wish to accomplish. Life becomes simple and loving, without major ups and downs (extremes), a smooth transition of thought process begins. The students with high energy levels will channelize their energies and from aggressive, violent individuals turn into assertive leaders.

There are different types of meditation; I am not going into the details of practices. Whatever be the methodology adopted, it is always nice to focus one's energies on a focal point, be it be an image of God, or on the breathing patterns, or by any other way, which deems fit for you. Ideal meditation time is in the morning, that's the reason why we started the day with meditation. Meditating for half an hour to one hour will produce wonderful results.

2. e-Learning Resources

Knowledge is strength, the opportunities in our life is directly proportional to the knowledge gained, greater the learning, greater the opportunities. Learning is a continuous process to stay ahead of the general competition and lead a comfortable life. Newer teaching methodologies and latest technical developments are bringing 'life' to the learning process and making the whole learning environment user friendly.

Technology is rapidly changing to catch the pace; we need to effectively use our time to get the desired results. Computers have revolutionized the learning and working environment. e-Learning applications and processes include web-based learning, computer based learning, virtual education opportunities, and digital collaboration. e-Learning addresses and takes into its fold all the learning styles, thus effectively delivers content to the satisfaction of the tutor and the learner. It is self paced or instruction led and includes media in the form of text, picture, animation, streaming television and sound. The corporate sector is using e-Learning modules to train its employees and abreast them with various technical advancements.



By discussing about new tools, technologies and techniques of learning, the student can venture into fringe subjects of his domain and add value to the regular academics. This will definitely add value to research potential of students. Each student should be aware of all the technical advancements that are happening around him, this motivates the students to pursue higher studies and contribute to the development of technology and help him understand the future of these newer technical marvels.

The students are provided with the topics and asked to deliver content on different e-Learning modules, discussing in detail about the scope, procedure, importance, impact, methodology, of the e-Learning module. This is an awareness programme about the latest technical advancements, to help the students be in touch with the rapidly changing technical fringe sciences.

3. Life Skills Activities

Life skills reflect the character of a person, that's the reason why it becomes tough for anyone to refine his/her life skills. We can learn the content know the right behavior, posture, mannerism, time sense, interpersonal skills, intra-personal skills, etc., but cannot imbibe into our life without the determination to do so.

The third year and fourth year students are the facilitators in conducting the activities of life skills. To teach team work, instead of delivering a lecture, planning a series of activities- games both indoor and outdoor to bring the different aspects of teamwork to the fore is important. A thorough in depth analysis of each and every activity followed by some Do's and Don'ts in a team work can be dealt at the end. The first hand exposure to the nuances and then looking into the remedies of the issues will create a wonderful impact on the student's psyche. Each person is unique and the strength and weakness vary from person to person, helping the student's analyze his weakness by referring to his/ her natural instincts will show a way and also highlights the need to transform. Understanding the need to refine the life skills is the initial point to change or transform. This provides an opportunity to look at one's life from a different angle and this stimulates the new thought process.

4. Community Development Programs and Reviews (CDPR)

We owe a lot to the society because the society is equally contributing to our success. By getting in touch with the society we learn the real time issues/ problems of the society. This activity provides the student a rich practical knowledge and adds to the theoretical knowledge, which is learned in the regular classrooms. This interaction acts as a stimulus for the otherwise morbid learning process. This activity will bring the anxiety level down, increases the confidence level, reduces the signs of depression and enhances the moral values of the student, thus an individual with intelligence and strong character is born.

Each branch/ team of students should take up a village, make regular visits, interact with representatives, officials, and with different sections of people and prepare a definite road map and address the issues of the village. Once problems are identified each team will address the problem, by thorough analysis, this analysis is first discussed internally during review sessions. The tough problems where governments invention is required is discussed with the government officials and public representatives. The whole process helps the students understand his/ her motherland know in and out of the system, above all provides an opportunity to stand rock solid on one's feet especially at all odd times.

The students can actively participate in the regular government programmes. For Example the civil engineering students can participate in the flagship programme of the Telangana Government- Mission Kakatiya. Mission Kakatiya is an ambitious initiative of the Telangana State Government. It is a program of restoring all the tanks and lakes and to bring back lost glory to villages in Telangana State, India. Mission Kakatiya gets its name from Kakatiya dynasty, which ruled Telangana, and build a large number of irrigation tanks to tide of drought. Swaach Bharath is a wonderful programme from the central government, which the students can participate. The review meetings are conducted every alternate week to know the status of the work, the rich experience is shared with all students by interactive review sessions. In this session the students have to submit a project report which will be a reference material in the college library. Each team have to present their work progress through seminar presentations and defend their course of action.

Conclusion

This Bookless-day Model is an out-of-box thinking process to improve IQ (Intelligent Quotient), EQ (Emotional Quotient), SQ (Spiritual Quotient) and Social Intelligence (SI). It depends on the creativity of the concerned faculty to add as many activities as possible to get the desired effect.

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