

IMPARTING LIFE SKILLS TO TECHNICAL STUDENTS

Abstract

Students opting engineering courses is increasing year by year as there is an increasing demand for technical students all over the world. Even parents want their wards to go for engineering courses dreaming of better career opportunities for their children. The government initiation to encourage technical education has laid a path for increase in the technical institutions in our country. But the question arising in many minds is that whether these students coming out of these institutions are capable enough to be employed or are they employable? As many surveys indicated that only a few students are found to be employable. The reason for this condition is either they lack technical skills or communication skills. Both these skills are required to get an employment and also to survive in the competition in their career. This means the students should gain overall development during their course period.

The expected overall development of students can be achieved with the united efforts of the teachers and the students. Engineering students during their four year course period, come across many problems small or big causing many issues like losing self-confidence, fear of facing others, unwanted comparisons, reduced self-esteem and so on and so forth. Here imparting Life skills can play a major role for the overall development of engineering students. This paper aims at imparting Life skills to engineering students under Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad, Telangana state and proposes core Life skills, teaching methodology and the benefits.

Keywords: Employable, overall development, self-confidence, self-esteem, life skills, Imparting.

Authors

P. V. Vinitha

Research Scholar
Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation,
Vaddeswaram, Andhra Pradesh, India.
Assistant Professor
Vardhaman College of Engineering
Hyderabad, Telangana, India.
pvvinithasuresh@gmail.com /
vinitha_pv@vardhaman.org

Dr. K. Usha Rani

Assistant Professor
Department of English
Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation
Vaddeswaram, Andhra Pradesh, India.

I. INTRODUCTION

The global market is constantly changing with the technological innovation all over the world. This has impacted on our personal life, professional life and more on education system. To handle the increasing dilemmas and hurdles of life, the present generation students need to learn life skills. At home, schools, colleges and work place, we are forced to undergo lot of stress and frustrations due to the changes introduced at all these places. So students have to be taught to be flexible and adaptive to any changes.

In the state of Telangana, a good numbers of engineering colleges under the Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad are offering technical course like B.Tech, M. Tech, M.B.A etc. Here the focus is on students pursing engineering course in these colleges. Even here it is noticed that not many students are succeeding in the job selections due to lack of required skills. The companies, which offer placements, look for technical / subject skills, communication skills in the candidates. As per the JNTUH curriculum, English Theory and English Language Lab is prescribed in B.Tech course. In the first year, English is taught as a theory subject and English Language communication skills Lab as a practical subject. In one semester in the third and fourth year each, Advanced Communication skills Lab is included. Apart from these, individual college impart special training like campus recruitment training, placement training etc. But still the expected level of overall growth is not seen in the students.

There are various reasons for this. Most of the students come from vernacular medium and rural areas. These students find it difficult to cope up in the initial stages of the course as many of them won't have expose to speaking English in day to day life. When they start attending the classes, they find it difficult to understand the concepts taught in English medium. New technical subjects and practical subjects become difficult for them to understand as teachers mostly use English to teach in classes. Another problem identified is new diverse environment makes them scary. Meeting variety of personalities, age factor i.e growing years of their life, unwanted attractions of life, and comparisons with others make them more and more disturbed. Here taking decisions become difficult, leading to other problems. Sometimes they stopping attending classes with fear of failure, sometime unwanted attractions of life drag them out of their regular schedules leading to problems like not studying properly, having backlogs. They start getting into depression, taking hasty decisions and stop sharing their problems to anyone. These things stop these young minds from ending up failures.

Here the role of subjects taught as well as teachers play a major role. JNTUH has clearly instructed the affiliated colleges to have to follow mentoringsystem, in which a mentor will be allotted a group of students in each class. Teachers meet the allotted students in regular intervalsto know the students and mentor them accordingly. Coming to the subjects taught, English language labs are already prescribedfor the improvement of communication skills. Most of the colleges take up placement training during the course toprepare the students ready for the market. Still the students face problems to communicate clearly and to excel in placement drives.

Making the students self-reliant can be one of the solutions for the above said problems. For this, imparting Life skills will be a great help to the students. Life skills are

inherent basic skills that help us to manage challenges we face in our day to day life. They tell us what to do and how to do things. As the world is changing fast, we need to equip ourselves with the required skills that will help us to meet the challenges of personal and professional life. Adolescence is a period of transition and a vital stage of growth and development. At this age, youth get easily influenced by their friends particularly and outside world in general. Fast physiological changes and psychological maturity takes place at this age only. At this period of life, potentials are increased in them but also they become vulnerable.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFE SKILLS

In the present constantly changing environment, having life skills is necessary to meet the challenges of everyday life. The changes in global politics, economies over the past few years have led to a drastic change in the life of human beings. The technology use has transformed various aspects of our life. These left a strong impact on our personal and professional life. Not only this, these have a great impact on education also. So, present day students should be compatible with these changes. The students are required to develop the life skills so that they will face problems encountered boldly during their academic life and also professional life.

- 1. Life Skills:** Life skills are those skills which enable an individual to be more competent in dealing with the day to day challenges in a positive way. Life skills refer to a large group of psychological and interpersonal skills that promote mental well-being. This leads to a healthy and productive life. These skills help in developing competencies and required social behaviour in individuals. They help to take right decisions, solve problems efficiently, think critically and creatively, communicate their opinions and feelings effectively, thereby building healthy relationships, emphasize with fellow beings. All these lead to handling their lives in a healthy and productive way.

Most important life skills for technical students to develop are Interpersonal Skills, Positive Attitude, Goal Setting, Time Management, Problem Solving Skills, Decision Making Skills, Stress Management, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Managing Emotions, Leadership Skill and Team Spirit. There are many life skills to be developed but at least the major life skills mentioned above if developed, it would be of a great help for the students.

- 2. Interpersonal skills :** They are the foremost skills to be learnt by students and professional. Human beings are social being. As we live in a society surrounded by many people all the time, it is important to know how to communicate. Communication is not only what we speak but how we speak also. Many fail in this aspect of life. Especially students coming from school level to college level find it hard to maintain good interpersonal relations as they will not know how to communicate properly with teachers and their classmates.
- 3. Positive attitude:** Being optimistic is very important as life is full of unexpected events, so it helps us to accept things as they come. As situations cannot be changed, we can change our reactions to them. It helps in moving forward by leaving all the bad behind. Especially students when enter or face new environments, they tend to get demotivated

and depressed. It helps in learning from the mistakes and appreciating things in life. So imparting positive attitude, students can get benefited to face the challenges of life and move ahead.

4. **Goal Setting:** Abdul Kalam said “dream is not what you see in sleep, dream is something which doesn’t let you sleep.” Everyone will have dreams or goals to achieve in life. Without a goal, life is meaningless. There is a definite purpose of everything in this world. Goal setting is planning and achieving the goal and making our dream come true. Teenage is the right time to set goals but the students will get confused. Even if they are clear about their dreams, but right path showing is important. So here family and teachers play a vital role. As a mentor, teachers can guide them how to set goals in a SMART way i.e., Goals must be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound. They tend to leave their goals in the middle when faced with difficulties, so goal setting skills if taught at college level, definitely it will help the students to travel in a proper way to reach their set goals in life.
5. **Time Management:** As said, time once lost is lost for ever. So time plays an important role in everyone’s life. Using the time available will lead us to success and to achieve our goals. Students who come to technical course need to learn how to manage the time as they need to complete many works during the course like completing assignments, record writings, mini and major projects etc. Apart from the prescribed syllabus related works, the students are supposed to actively participate in curricular and co-curricular activities like participating in seminar, workshops, conferences and also paper presentations. So they may find it hectic at times as a deadline will be given for the activities and as they will be doing these things first time, it may be very difficult for them to complete the tasks. So proper guidance from the teachers and parents, will be a definite help for the students. Some students leave the works in the middle unable to cope up the pressure in completing the works as they face trouble in using the time available for them. So time management is very important skills to be learnt.
6. **Problem Solving Skills and Decision Making Skills :** Life is not a bed of roses, so it is inevitable to face many problems in life. Students when they come across different issues, they become sad and go into depression and sometimes may take a wrong step. To avoid such unpleasant situations in their life, students should be imparted or trained to develop problem solving abilities and decision making skills. For this they should be taught to have an optimistic mind, patience, maintain rapport with others and self-confidence, so that they can solve their problems on their own. Taking right decision in time can save situations in life. So students can be trained to look at the given situation critically and look from different angles and not to jump to a conclusion immediately.
7. **Creativity and Critical Thinking:** Creativity is an ability to find solutions to problems in a different way. Creative person looks at world in a new way with curiosity and ask questions about whatever they see. According to Abdul Kalam, “Creativity is seeing the same thing but thinking differently.” Present world looks for creative people, so it is important for technical students to develop this life skill called creativity so that they can succeed in placements easily and later succeed in professional life and become good entrepreneurs and innovators.

Critical thinking skills help to analyse or evaluate a situation through observation and proper reasoning. Students get easily influenced by different things at this age, so they need to be trained to look and think critically about any personal life related or academic related situations. This helps to avoid blindly believing things or people and taking decisions on own. Both creativity and critical thinking helps in developing mental abilities of an individual.

- 8. Managing Emotions:** Emotions are nothing but our feelings which affects our behaviour. Our actions and behaviour effect our relations. All humanbeings will have emotions like love, hatred, fear, anger, acceptance, surprise and so many other emotions. On given situation, we exhibit related emotions. Students in their youth get easily influenced by various things and may find it difficult to manage their emotions. This leads them to face number of problems. Compasions with other, lots of study related work, dead line given to complete tasks, friends, and other relations are a few situations which may cause emotional outbursts in students.

Stress is another emotion which most of the people face now a days. When faced with difficult situation and failure to solve those issues can put people in stressful situations. Students sometimes fail to score marks; fail in exams, projects or placements; fail to keep up the expectations of family, institute or society; get criticism from others. Any of these can put a lot of stress on their inexperienced and little minds. Here an important life skill called Stress Management helps the students to overcome any kind of stress.

Teaching how to accept situation as it is, appreciating others, having self-confidence and controlling emotions in all situations is going to be great help for students. Learning this basic life skill definitely helps them during their college days and also later.

- 9. Leadership Skill and Team Spirit:** Now a days, organisations look for candidates with leadership skill and team work ability. Students need to learn how to work with different people having different mind sets, which is not that easy. They need to identify their abilities and become leaders from college level itself. During project work or programmes, they have to work in groups, where in some may find difficulty in mingling with others because of new environment, shyness, lack of communication skills etc. So from the course beginning, if taught how to work with other students, definitely they become more confident. This helps in developing their leadership qualities as well as team spirit. Motivating them to work in groups, understanding each other, accepting mistakes and appreciating others can be a great help for them.

III. LIFE SKILLS AND BENEFITS

- To find new ways of thinking to sort out problems
- To build confidence in them
- To improve their communications skills and convincing abilities
- To recognise the impact of their actions and teach them to take responsibility for their actions and stop blaming others
- To think critically in any situation and find options, make decisions
- To develop a greater sense of self-awareness and empathy for others.

- To accept things as they come positive or negative
- To control emotions of any sort
- To develop leadership qualities and to be a team player in their academic related projects and any assigned works.

Many students, even after working hard to get good marks, still struggle to get jobs. Any employer looks for not only subject knowledge but also some employability skills in them like Confidence, problem solving abilities, leadership qualities, team spirit, time management, flexibility, adaptability, self-motivation. Learning these life skills not only benefits the student individually but also helps to be a good human being who empathises with others, respects our society, respects diversity, develops negotiation skills. There by making him a good individual, a good professional and a good citizen.

So, imparting life skills will bring a great change in the engineering students' behaviour and their understanding. It will help them to have a positive approach towards one's self, their life, their own chosen engineering field. It will give away to the complete personality development.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The Life skills programme can be included in the syllabus of engineering course. JNTUH has prescribed English Language communication Skills Lab for first year and advanced Communication Skills Laboratory to third year engineering students. Likewise Life Skills can be prescribed as a part of English Lab or as a separate Lab. Apart from teaching the theory part, some activities can be designed for each life skills topic and students can be asked to do those activities during the lab sessions. By giving some relevant situations of life, they can be asked to respond from their point of view. This helps the students to think, act and react. It gives chance for them to learn from others also. Individual activities and group activities can be designed so that they can learn to work individually as well as a team. Here itself they learn the life skills like team work, adaptability etc. Activities like role plays, oral presentations, story -telling, group discussions, and debates can be used for this purpose.

Group Activities can be designed by teaming 7 to 8 students and a topic can be given to them by the teacher. Common problems or issues faced by them in daily life can be given as a topic and ask them to discuss and propose solutions. They may be asked to record the responses of the team. At the end of the session, the teacher can interpret the situation. This gives freedom to students to put forward their opinions. This develops confidence in communicating with others, problem solving abilities and empathising with others and critical thinking abilities among students. But this has to be done meticulously by the teacher. The teacher has to be very alert and pay attention on individual student behaviour.

Introducing Life skills as a theory subject in the curriculum could be another methodology. Here a written test or an oral test at the end of the semester with credits can be planned, so that students will be serious about the subject.

A Bridge course consisting of some life skills and with activity based learning can also be planned by the institutions so that it will be a great help for the students.

Whatever method or methodology is followed, definitely it would fetch good results and improve the students' abilities. The teacher should be a mentor providing some hints. The teachers should be given training in life skills so that they can impart the same to the students. In service trainings, workshops or attending seminars or conferences can be initiated by the authorities concerned. Developing programme syllabus, teaching manuals and activity worksheet requires a great deal of efforts from the teachers. Engineering colleges should provide necessary support in this regard to the teachers who are going to handle the subject. It requires patience, investment, and support from all quarters. It will be worth in all aspects as the benefits of imparting Life skills to engineering students will be praise worthy at the end.

V. CONCLUSION

Learning Life skills help the students to know their own personality and their stress patterns. Thereby, helping them to cope with their emotional, academic, personal and professional difficulties, which they may face in their journey of life. This enables them to manage their attitudes, use available time at best, proper planning, adjusting themselves to different situations. Understanding and empathising with others will be a good lesson that may be learnt during this learning process. Improving personal relationships and developing interpersonal skills would be a great help for these students.

Hence, it can be concluded that imparting Life skills to the technical students is essential. In this regard, proper planning by the affiliated universities and government is required. Framing of syllabus, providing correct course material, introducing practical tasks has to be carefully planned. Apart from this, the teachers should also be given proper training so that they can impart these life skills to students. Life skills have the ability to bring tremendous modification in engineering students' behaviour and their way to approach engineering field, job market and finally their life. So including life skills as a subject in technical courses can be a successful with the joint effort of university, institutions, teachers and students.

REFERENCES

- [1] Dinesh R & Belinda R (2014), Importance Of Life Skills Education For Youth, Indian Journal of Applied Research, 4 (12), 94-97.
- [2] English faculty of Government Polytechnics, A.P., Enhancing English and Employability Skills, SBTET, A.P.
- [3] Kher J. Tanuja (2015). An Innovative Approach To Impart Life Skills To Engineering Students To Enhance Their Personality, International Journal of Science, Technology and Management, 4 (1), 127-132.
- [4] Robert Nlussier, Christopher F. Achua Leadership: Theory, Application, & Skill development: Theory, Application.
- [5] SahooBallav 2013, Importance of Life Skills for Engineering Students, IEEE India Info. Vol. 8 (3)
- [6] <http://google.co.in>
- [7] <http://sbtet.telangana.gov.in>