Staff Development Center

Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Facilitating Teaching - Learning Process Beyond the Class

Selected Topics

Edited by

Udith Jayasinghe, Ph.D

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Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I write this foreword to the latest publication of the Staff Development Centre (SDC) under the theme of "*Facilitating Teaching – Learning Process Beyond the Class*". The launching of this publication is coupled with the Certificate Awarding Ceremony for the 5th batch of the Certificate Course in Staff Development conducted by the SDC.

The SDC has impacted the teaching in higher education not only at the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka but at most of the other National Universities through the training of academic staff participating in the Certificate Course in Staff Development. Facilitating the teaching and learning environment and the process beyond the classroom is considered an important aspect that helps both teachers and students to achieve the goals of higher education. .

I take this opportunity to complement the SDC for their achievements since inception towards the improvement of the staff of the University system and thereby improving the undergraduate education. Thus, the SDC plays an important role in producing quality grandaunts to meet the needs of the country and the region. While congratulating the Staff Development Centre for launching yet another batch of trained academic staff members to meet the challenges of higher education, I wish the participants and the Center well for their future endeavors to reach higher levels of achievement.

Prof. A. N. F. Perera
The Vice Chancellor
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Preface and Acknowledgment

Facilitation of teaching – learning process beyond class is part and parcel of producing the desired undergraduate with the right attitude. University is undoubtedly considered a place to acquire universal knowledge, not only the subject knowledge but also all relevant experiences and other skills to behave well in the future society. The first article in the book looks into this phenomenon in depth paying attention on the true meaning of education in the process of creating a self controlled person in protecting social order.

Sir Ivor Jennings once stated that: "the fundamental task of university is to produce men and women who are capable of fulfilling any function in the world". Molding one's state of mind is essential in this respect towards the needed attitudinal change. The second article in the book discusses the importance making use of the adult psychological theories in producing an "ideal" student.

What actually is academic advising and how can it be used effectively? The third article offers a bold answer to this important question. It highlights the distinction between student counseling and academic advising including theories, applications, role and challenges of an academic adviser in facilitating the teaching – learning process.

The fourth article looks into the important aspect of mentoring to assist students with their personal, family, educational, mental, health and career problems. This focuses in detail on the theories of counseling, skills and scope of a student counselor.

There was never a doubt that libraries facilitate learning and support the teaching – learning process, effectively. The fifth article of the series covers the specific area of the management

of a modern library to be a service institution to fulfill its prime objective of enabling the user to make the most effective use of the information available.

The sixth article discusses a topical issue of social networking in creating a stress free environment for the students in particular and to make use of which as an effective communication tool in facilitating the teaching process and expanding student knowledge.

Numerous factors are seen to create "stress" in students. The seventh article look into the types and symptoms of stress factors commonly seen among university students and more importantly the strategies of overcoming which towards reaching the goals of learning.

With the developments of high technology and globalization, social, cultural, educational aspects of life become different and get better in terms of time space and communication. Distance Education, under these circumstances, provides fast, easy education opportunities for everyone overcoming these limitations. The eighth and final article sheds light on the use of student feedback to promote effective distance learning program among students minimizing the communication barrier.

We would like to convey our very special thanks first to, **Prof. A. N. F. Perera**, the Vice Chancellor of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka for his continuance guidance and support extended to us throughout his tenure to accomplish this difficult task. Our sincere gratitude is extended to the **authors of eight selected articles** published in this book for their hard work and commitment. Among many who have supported us throughout the process, we thank very specifically, **Mr. Kapila Ranaraja** (Computer Application Assistant) and **Ms. Maheshi Anupama** (Technical Assistant)

of the Dept. of Agribusiness Management in the WUSL for their untiring efforts to bring all articles into one format to produce the book in this fine quality.

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TEACHING BEYOND THE SUBJECTS FOR THE RECONSTITUTION OF SOCIAL ORDER

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An educated person refers to an individual that has access to optimal states of mind regardless of the situation he or she is in. That person is able to perceive accurately, think clearly and act effectively to achieve self-selected goals and aspirations. In other words an educated person is self controlled and he/she will not react on impulses and emotions. Therefore, in simple terms education can be defined as "the process of becoming a self controlled person".

According to Russell (2006)[1] the purpose of education is civilization. He further explains that this definition is partly individual and partly social. It consists, in the individual, of both intellectual and moral qualities: intellectually, a certain

[1] *Russell, B. (2006). Education and Discipline (www.zona-pellucida.com/essay-russel.html)*

minimum of general knowledge, technical skill in one's own profession, and a habit of forming opinions on evidence; morally, of impartiality, kindliness, and a modicum of self-control. In communities, civilization demands respect for law, justice as between man and man, purposes not involving permanent injury to any section of the human race, and intelligent adaptation of means to ends.

If these are to be the purpose of education, there is a question. Is today's youth truly educated? Although a considerable number of new universities and other educational institutions where knowledge is created and disseminated are being established in the recent past; everyday hundreds of people are being killed, many public and private properties are being destroyed, robberies and several other forms of misbehavior are widespread.

The present day youth is well equipped with the knowledge of novel technologies, advanced physical and biological sciences and so on however, are there peace, harmony and happiness in the world today? Is there respect for law or justice

between man and man? Something has definitely gone wrong somewhere somehow.

Therefore, proper education needs immediate attention of all those who are responsible for the reconstitution of social order. In my point of view, teachers can play a vital role in this regard and I believe that teachers can make a difference by inculcating discipline and self control in young minds.

Teaching in an educational context is strongly connected to the betterment of individuals. It is, therefore, impossible to talk extensively about teachers and teaching without a language of morality. Teachers are potentially the single most important asset in the achievement of the vision of a democratically just learning society. They must more than ever before, be more than transmitters of knowledge. The influences on the quality of education are mediated by who the teacher is and what the teacher does.

Teachers have the potential for enhancing the quality of education by bringing life to curriculum and inspiring students to curiosity and self directed learning. Teachers can also degrade the quality of

education through error, laziness, cruelty or incompetence. For better or worse, teachers determine the quality of education.

This article pave a way to rethink our profession and personal renewal to help the students to develop emotional intelligence which includes the sensitivity to the emotions of all aspects of life such as self awareness, self control, team focus, influencing others and building relationships and how personal attitudes and expressions will influence success and personal satisfaction to make the world better. Several issues in which the teachers have a role to play are discussed here with a special reference to self control.

Discipline for Self Control: Can Teachers Make a Difference?

In the Webster's New World Dictionary, discipline is defined as the development of self control, character, orderliness and efficiency. The most important goals of education are the development of self control and character that will lead to a positive and productive life. Therefore, it is clearly visible that discipline has a purpose that extends beyond just controlling the classroom.

Self control is one of the most important outcomes of education and one of the basic pre-requisites for a democratic society. Academic knowledge and skill in the most advanced technology will be of little consequence if the citizens of a society do not possess self control.

The individuals exercising self control are demonstrating "responsibility". Furthermore, students who experience a classroom where there is both mutual respect and discipline learn to become responsible individuals who are able to make wise choices about their lives[2].

We live in communities which require co-operation, and it would be utopian to expect all the necessary co-operation to result from spontaneous impulse. The existence of a large population on a limited area is only possible owing to science and technique; education must, therefore, hand on the necessary minimum of these.

[2] *Savage, T. V (1991) Discipline for Self Control, New Jersey: Pretence-Hall, Inc.*

The educators who allow most freedom are men whose success depends upon a degree of benevolence, self-control, and trained intelligence which can hardly be generated where every impulse is left unchecked; their merits, therefore, are not likely to be perpetuated if their methods are undiluted.

Education, viewed from a social standpoint, must be something more positive than a mere opportunity for growth. It must, of course, provide this, but it must also provide mental and moral equipment which students cannot acquire entirely for themselves.

The willingness to take a fair share of necessary work and to be obliging in small ways can be considered the things that lack in today's society. These values can be inculcated in the minds of the students during group activities or they can be broadly discussed during lecture breaks.

Group activities provide the students with golden opportunities to learn team spirit, leadership qualities, togetherness, sharing, caring and the importance of listening to the others.

Especially, the importance of selflessness should be taught to the students because the root causes of most of the crimes and behavioral problems are jealousy or malice that occurs simply due to lack of self control.

Another way to transmit human values is these can be openly discussed as special topics. Qualified resource persons may be invited to give guest speeches on this issue; there the present situation of the society, reasons and methods to overcome this problem can be discussed in detail.

Religious activities also can be arranged such as meditation programs or preaching to help students to develop self control. Cultural activities / art / drama / music / dancing also will give opportunities to transmit human values to the students.

Present day students are generally over ambitious and self centered. Thus they always forget the needs of the others and blind to the harm they are causing to the peace and harmony of the society. The teachers can play an important role here making them aware of their mistakes in above ways.

Without considering only the subject matter and effective dissemination of knowledge now it is high time for the teachers to think beyond those as the social order is highly threatened due to misbehavior of youth.

If the following relational qualities can be established, discipline will never be a problem as it will be automatically built up within the minds of the students making them self controlled individuals[3]:

- ***Respect***: teachers and students treat each other with respect and authentic courtesy.

- ***Caring***: encompassing but going beyond respect, caring is more particularistic and pro-active in that it acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and reaches out to initiate positive interaction, rather than being expressed only as a response to another.

[3] *Raywid, M. A (1993) Community: An alternative School Accomplishment In: G. A. Smith (ed.) Public Schools That Work: Creating Community. New York: Routledge.*

- ***Inclusiveness***: there are continual attempts to ensure that all participants are drawn into the whole range of interactions and none are left as outsiders.

- ***Trust***: members of a genuine community trust one and another to the point where they are prepared to disclose themselves and their work to their colleagues because they know that such disclosure will be beneficial to their relationships and improve their work as teachers and learners.

- ***Empowerment***: both students and teachers feel empowered in a community because they know their voice will be heard and their feelings will count when it comes to expressing their concerns.

- ***Commitment***: a strong sense of attachment and a high level of investment of energy are features of a community.

Thus, it is the responsibility of the teacher to establish such a learning environment to teach the human values without much effort which will

definitely make a positive difference in the minds of the students.

Passionate Teaching: Love Your Profession

Teaching is a values-led profession concerned, at its heart, with change, directly for the betterment of pupils but ultimately for the betterment of society as a whole. It is a continuous activity of encouraging or fuelling attitudes, orientations and understandings which allow students to progress rather than to regress as human beings. Passionately committed teachers are those who absolutely love what they do. They feel a personal mission to learning as much as they can about the world, about others, about themselves and helping others to do the same.

All effective teachers have a passion for their subject, a passion for their pupils and a passionate belief that who they are and how they teach can make a difference in their pupil's lives, both in the moment of teaching and even years afterwards. Passion is associated with enthusiasm, caring, commitment and hope. For teachers who care, the student as a person is as important as the student as a learner.

Teaching is moral in the sense it is designed to benefit mankind, however, teachers may often blind to their influence on students. Perhaps they are too busy with subject content coverage or finding effective ways of knowledge dissemination. This is where passionate teaching becomes very important, because passionate teaching is clearly teaching beyond the subject which provides the student with real education.

Educationists have identified five major virtues of a passionate teacher: (1) honesty; (2) courage; (3) care; (4) fairness, and (5) practical wisdom. If the teacher exhibits all these qualities the students too will learn them ultimately creating a better world. Thus, it is the responsibility of all teachers to rethink about the way they teach to make sure that they truly contribute to make a positive difference in the society.

USE OF ADULT PSYCHOLOGY TO MAKE AN EFFECTIVE GRADUATE

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University can be considered a place to acquire universal knowledge, not only the subject knowledge but also all relevant experiences and other skills to behave well in the future society. The final product of the university is the graduate, but it is obvious that to capture a right market for this product it must be a quality product that is able to fulfill the expectations of the customers.

Sir Ivor Jennings – the first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Peradeniya, for example, stated that: "the fundamental task of university is to produce men and women who are capable of fulfilling any function in the world that may fall to their lot, citizens of high intelligence, complete moral integrity and possessing energy, initiative, judgment, tact, and qualities of leadership". This statement provides a yardstick against which the university education can be measured.

Qualities of an Effective Graduate

The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) of University Grant Commission in Sri Lanka (2010) formulated the benchmarks for the Graduate Profile of the different degree programs, which are functioning in the Sri Lankan University system. According to that, the qualities of a graduate are discussed using on three main criteria, namely: (1) knowledge, (2) skills, and (3) attitudes.

Thus, any graduate should be equipped with sound subject specific knowledge on the principles and the satisfactory subject specific practical skills, competent and innovative with appropriate managerial and entrepreneurial skills and capable of fulfilling the manpower requirement of the nation in contributing towards sustainable and environmentally friendly, social and economical development.

Skills can be in two forms such as subject specific skills and generic skills. Intellectual skills that are ability to apply subject specific knowledge to analyze information / situations solve problems

and make recommendations based on lines of evidence, practical skills and research skills are considered as subject specific skills.

The communication skills, numeracy skills, information and communication technology skills, interpersonal / team work / leadership skills, self management and professional development skills, creative thinking, analytical and logical thinking and adaptability skills as generic skills. Altogether all these skills could be considered as soft skills.

Other than knowledge and skills, the QAAC of the UGC has stipulated certain attitudinal aspects that have to be imprinted on the student mind in order to be an effective graduate. Accordingly, instilling a rational view on ethical, environmental and social issues related to the particular subject area and improving personal qualities such as honesty, loyalty, teamwork and cooperativeness, respecting views and opinions of others, punctuality and commitment to work, positive intent and adaptability to diverse social cultural and work situations are considered as attitudinal aspects of the graduate profile.

Therefore, it is clear that without any controversy, once all these three aspects bloomed in the student's mind definitely that person could be considered as an effective graduate who will be fitted with the society needs.

Whether national university system of Sri Lanka is capable of producing graduates with such qualities? Many claim that, despite those effective ways and means of transferring knowledge are identified, available for use and are applied to some extent, still the national university system has not been impregnated in students in an expected level. This led into the typical question of: "what might be the reason for this". Reasons for this could be explained in a simple manner.

We know that if we plant quality seeds in a field free of weeds with proper application of fertilizer, at last we could get expected harvest. However, same result could not be observed if we plant such quality seeds in a field with full of weeds even with proper application of fertilizer.

Thus, when we closely examine the students' mind at the time of their entrance to the university, we could realized that their mind is also just like a

field with full of weeds. Therefore, there is no use of getting effort to transfer knowledge into students' mind without restoring their mental equilibrium just as removing weeds in the field.

Nature of the Students Entering to University

The university students, according to the biological and psychological aspects, are in late adolescence and early adulthood or in other words, they are young adults. Now they are transition to adulthood, which is a complex process in which youth who have been dependent on parents throughout their childhood start taking definitive steps to achieve their self-independence.

Other than that they are also posses all other psychological characters that are associated with youth such as getting of quick decisions, aggressive nature, willingness to be prominent within a same age group, quick reactions in the challenging environment etc.

Given those, we must realize that youth is the critical stage of life, as it is the stage where person can be directed to be a great person in the world as

well as to be a worsen person who involve in criminal cases in the society.

The students have already passed their childhood and the secondary education level and privilege to enter the university has taken by qualifying the more competitive national level examination.

The pathetic situation with our current education and assessment system is that we have already stolen the freedom and time of students that if otherwise can be used to develop their humanistic feelings, spiritual qualities, cooperativeness, creative thinking and strength to face challenges, which are important to be a person who can cope up with the society and instead generated a mechanical or robotic person at the end of their secondary education.

When we examine this matter with the certain psychological aspects; usually child is born with nearly 400 billion neuron cells and if not stimulate those cells they can be degraded gradually with their age. Therefore, when we highly restricted students from their childhood to a framework of education, part of the brain responsible for

education will be highly stimulated while rest of the regions of brain responsible for humanistic and spiritual aspects will be gradually destructed. Thus, once they are in adulthood they will fail to get correct decisions under the certain challenges due to inability of all regions of brain to be coordinated.

When a student with this mentality enters to the university, it is obvious that he/she will face a unique set of circumstances and it is a transition period in their lives where many changes are occurring. Often, students leave their parents and guardians to live in dormitory settings.

In this new setting, students are given greater personal responsibility and will have to learn to cope with new challenges without the immediate guidance of their parents. Students will also have to leave behind their old friends and associate with new ones.

Other than that, as the vast majority of students come from rural areas with poor and lower middle class backgrounds, they are also with the financial problems and language problems especially English language. Furthermore, throughout the university period, especially towards graduation,

students often face uncertainty regarding their next steps in both their professional and personal lives. This condition will be worsening once they enter into the university with heavy load of academic work that they have to carry on.

All these conditions are prevalent in the incoming student population in varying degrees and they are always struggling with all these circumstances to come up with the solutions. As we closely examine the mindset of students, we can realize that it is just like a field with full of weeds as explained earlier, which is not in a position to acquire knowledge.

Psychologists explain that all these circumstances the students face give rise to mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, stress, etc. as they did not train their mind to cope up with different situations or challenges that they are facing in their day-to-day life.

Once they are caught up with such mental disorders, they express their mental crisis in different ways such as acts on violence, emotional distress, suicide or by addicting to the alcohol and drugs.

Setting Student Mindset Correct

Psychology is the science of the mind and behavior**.** The mind is highly complex and enigmatic. Thoughts, cognition, emotions, memories, dreams, perceptions etc. cannot be seen physically. However, virtually all our actions, feelings and thoughts are influenced by the functioning of our minds.

Therefore, for a psychologist, human behavior is used as evidence or at least an indication of how the mind functions. The only possible way to understand the mentality of the university student is, therefore, close examination of their behavioral changes.

Now it is obvious that students, at the time of entrance to the university, are with a pressurized mind. Therefore, before directing them towards the academic work, certain period of time has to be allocated for them to adjust their mind. It is better if we can allocate at least 3 months for that.

During this period, they can be directed to different social, cultural, spiritual and sports

activities where they can build up their personality, through the development of self-confidence and self esteem which have been lost with their secondary education. In this regard, it has been realized that especially sports activities will greatly support for the success of human life through the different types of profiles.

With these activities, responsibility can be given for them to organize short trips, drama competitions, religious activities where they can build up other generic silks and attitudinal aspects which are expected to be in an effective graduate.

According to the psychological aspects, unlike academic activities through these extracurricular activities, they will gain an opportunity to stimulate nearly all regions of their brain, which is important to cope up with the challenges that they meet during their lifetime.

However, it has been realized that, although required facilities are available in the universities for students to involve with these extracurricular activities, only a limited number of students are participating with these activities.

Under these circumstances, the main responsibility to direct them towards these activities is with the hands of teachers. More concern should be given to the students who are reluctant to participate in these activities and to get the maximum participation of students we may introduce a rewarding system for participation, which is also consistent with the concept of motivation of human through rewarding.

However, there will be another group of students, who are still expressing their reluctance to participate in such activities. This is may be due to the prevalent of certain mental health problems with these students. The question arises as to how we can identify such a group of students at the initial stage.

It is possible to capture this group of students with a close examination of students' behavioral changes, as it is a mirror of their mind. Once we have identified such a group of students they can be directed towards the counseling programs.

When they are entering into their academic activities, in order to get rid of uncertainty regarding their next steps in both their professional

and personal lives, students should be made aware about their degree program, importance of the degree program, how it will fit with society needs and what are the professions that they can enter after their graduation. Through this, students can be motivated to follow the degree program effectively.

In addition, the curriculum should be adjusted in a way to provide adequate time for students to continue their extracurricular activities concurrently with their academic work.

Also, the close examination of students' behavior should be continued by the teachers with the analysis of their academic records until they leave from the university as graduates. It would also be a good practice to incorporate new course units such as survival skills, career planning, psychology, motivation and personality development etc.

It is clear that if we are able to implement all these psychological activities successfully in the current Sri Lankan university system, it is possible to fill up the void space in Sri Lankan economy for the spirit of well-educated younger generation.

When take all these things into a single image, it could be explained with the following Pali extract.

"Sarancha saratho gnathwa – Asarancha asaratho
Thesaran adhigachchanthi – Samma sankappa Gochara"

"Persons who are trained their mind to think fruitful things as in a fruitful way and unfruitful things as in unfruitful way will be gained success in their life".

EFFECTIVE ACADEMIC ADVISING FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

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Higher education in Sri Lanka is at a turning point because of opening the system to international market through increasing quota for the admission of foreign students to state universities, and encouraging foreign universities to offer degree programs in Sri Lanka in collaboration with local institutes. In addition, the influx of local students to the higher education stream has increased dramatically.

This is due to increased intake of students to state universities, opening up of new universities with new degree programs and increased number of private institutions offering degree programs within Sri Lanka and in collaborative foreign institutes. Thus, inter-and intra-institutional competition in higher education sector in Sri Lanka is far from being a typical.

Increased influx of students to academic institutes is a common trend worldwide since highly qualified personnel are required to cope up with the demands of a rapidly changing technological society. While the new recruitments to educational institutes has increased the attrition among students and collage dropouts has also been increased proportionally.

Attrition and college dropout are two major factors known to hinder student success and especially, institutional development via negatively affecting on finance and reputation of an institute. Many educationists suggest that institutes should pay more attention on improving student support services to help successful completion of degree programs than increasing the number of student intake.

Attrition and student retention in academic institutes has not been scientifically researched in Sri Lanka. Since higher education in Sri Lanka is finding itself under the microscope of internal and external scrutiny, it is timely to revisit the factors contributing to student success.

Student success and achievements is crucial to all stakeholders (parents, students, educators, employers, and public in general) of higher education. In the public eye, it is the success of students that translate into the success of an academic institution. A successful student is the one who learnt what is required to know to be successful both professionally and in his/her personal and civic life.

Therefore, it is important to facilitate student immersion and engagement in the learning process for his/her success. Setting high expectations, offering support and feedback, facilitating frequent student contact with faculty are among the means of involving students in the teaching-learning process at institutional level.

The Process of Academic Advising

In the traditional view, academic advising is a method to help the students choose a program of study and help them with selecting and courses. Although academic advising is being acknowledged as a function integral to the success of students as well as the institutes the nature and

who should do the academic advising is not clearly identified by many academic bodies.

In addition, there is confusion between student counseling and academic advising. Historically academic advising comprised of functions such as assisting students on program choice, selecting courses, and scheduling classes, informing them about rules and regulations of the institute, and providing approval signatures. Therefore, the role of advisor is little less than an administrative figure and many faculties view it as a clerical job to be performed, which carry extra burden.

In the modern world the academic advisor can be easily replaced with a computer program if the role of the advisor is only to help the student with program and course selection and scheduling. If the depth of advising is defined by these functions then cognitive development of the students cannot be expected by academic advising.

Unfortunately, the academic advising in most of the institutes is still operating at this level. A well structured academic advising process is essential to achieve student success.

Terry O'Banion (1972) described five dimensions that follow a logical sequence to be included in an academic advising process:

1. Exploration of life goals
2. Exploration of vocational goals
3. Program choice
4. Course choice
5. Scheduling courses

It is suggested that collages can use summer advising groups (during vacation periods), encounter groups, occupational classes, self-development classes, programmed guides, media and experiential sessions to help the students with goal exploration.

There are web-based tools and computer programs to help the advisor and advisee with remaining three dimensions. However, these tools should be used in a complementary way and not to replace any dimension in the advising process.

According to the present situation of higher education in Sri Lanka, majority of students are at step four when they enter the University and we as the faculty assume that students have already made

choices regarding life goals. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the process of exploration of life goals by students entering Sri Lankan Universities.

However, to summarize the present situation in Sri Lanka, we may see that the majority of students enroll in different degree programs without exploring life goals and their decision making is largely influenced by parental expectations, societal trends and their score at Advanced Level Examination (serve as a screening for University entrance).

As often reported in literature, students enter university without exploring life goals are more likely to stay disengaged in the learning process, unmotivated and less successful both in the personnel and academic lives.

Therefore, the higher education sector in Sri Lanka should formalize a method to extend the academic advising beyond university gates in order to guide the students in exploring life and vocational goals before they enter to the university. Then it is crucial for Sri Lankan universities to establish a well structured academic advising

program to help students once they are inside the tertiary education system.

Types of Advisor & Advisee Relationships

There are several models for academic advising available in literature. These models are based on different types of advisor – advisee relationships. Four most commonly practiced models are described here, namely: (1) Prescriptive advising model; (2) Developmental advising model; (3) Integrated advising model, and (4) Strength based advising model.

The *Prescriptive Advising model* is characterized as more hierarchical and authoritarian relationship in which students follow the prescriptive regimen of their advisors concerning course selection, degree requirements, and registration, without assuming responsibility for decision making.

The *Developmental Advising models* rely on a shared responsibility between the student and the advisor in which the advisor directs the student to proper resources. Thus, developmental advising facilitates the student's rational processes, his/her interrelationship with physical and social

environment, independence, behavioral awareness and skills for problem-solving, decision making and self-evaluation in addition to specific personnel or vocational decisions.

Developmental advising is more central to teaching. In the philosophy behind developmental advising, needs assessments, deficit remediation and problem solving are identified as the best ways to lifelong growth. Institutes that use this model of advising implement different procedures to assess areas of deficit in individuals and place students in remedial courses or provide special supporting services accordingly.

Integrated Advising model combines elements of both prescriptive and developmental advising models. Strength based academic advising is more in the line of developmental advising but differs from the latter by taking a more learning centered approach in advising and also by shifting advising sessions from areas of need to areas of talent and strength.

In developmental advising and strength based advising, advisor concentrate on student growth

and both parties learn during transaction process and student engagement in learning is improved.

Who Should Perform Academic Advising?

Who should do advising is a question that needs to be answered with great concern. The concept used in most of the institutional settings is "*every faculty member an advisor*". It is the most cost effective method but not necessarily the most effective method.

Education professionals advocate for faculty (instructor) advising emphasize that with this type of advising instructors are forced to learn more about the institution and students, and as a result, instructors will see students differently. At the same time, students will learn to see the instructor in a different way.

Some colleges hire education professional like counselors to perform academic advising. One advantage of using educational professionals is they are less likely to campaign for different degree programs or courses since they do not teach and therefore, remain as an independent body.

They also have special training necessary for helping students with identifying life goals. However, in the student's eye, counseling is often considered as a therapeutic process available to individuals with personal problems.

Some counselors themselves have this opinion and it undermines their potential as educators. As a result, only minority of a student community use counselor advising. Therefore, careful planning is needed to make counselor academic advising available to majority of students.

It is important to understand that there is a boundary to academic advising relationship created by the input of student to the advising in terms of effort to develop him/her self, and competencies of the advisor as defined by the depth of knowledge and skills, and area of expertise.

In fact, a college should not fragment the student into personal, academic and vocational part by having different type of educators (instructor, counselors, etc) responsible for advising him/her to improve specific aspects because a student is a whole person.

However, when personal competencies and interests are not supportive of having one of advisor sharing the responsibility with student throughout the academic advising process, a team approach to advising would work best.

Counselors can help students with identifying life and vocational goals and instructors can provide assistance regarding academic decisions. Counselors, instructors and students can make use of web-based tools and computer programs to assist in the process of selecting courses, tracking progress, scheduling, etc.

Components of Academic Advising

A carefully planned academic advising process has three components: (1) Curriculum; (2) Pedagogy, and (3) Student learning outcomes. Since academic advising is identified as a method of teaching, it is important to have a careful plan in order to achieve desired results.

What advising deal with need to be identified when prepare the curriculum; students' individual learning styles should be addressed using myriad

pedagogies; and expected outcomes should be clearly defined and communicated to student.

Evaluation of the academic advising program is also crucial to make it an effective process. Surveys with different stakeholders (students, instructors, counselors, employers, etc) should be conducted and there has to be a mechanism that facilitates positive feedback to improve academic advising.

Challenges in Academic Advising

Professional advisors encounter several challenges in academic advising process, and some important once are explored below:

1. Very often stakeholders view academic advising as a remedial function. Students who attend one-to-one advisory sessions with academic advisors expressed their concern of being labeled '*remedial*'. In an announcement regarding academic advising, changing the language from *offering to help* vs. *offering to develop professional skills* improved the number of students registered for advising program.

2. Another challenge is to avoid falling to the trap that advisor do the thinking and writing for student or helping too much.

3. Equity is another serious issue faced by advisors. Giving more time to some students (e.g. weak in English, International students, etc) may give unfair advantage to them.

4. Students become abusers of the advising system is another major challenge for effective advising. Therefore, necessary precautions should be taken to avoid students become too much dependent on advisors.

5. Reaching students who follow online teaching programs is a great challenge with the globalization of education.

Although academic advising is a promising function that can be used to ensure student success in tertiary education it is important to understand that it is only a complementary tool, of which the performance is subjected to influence from factor

such as socio-cultural environment, resource availability etc.

Considering the role of academic advising play in student success, it is a mean by which faculty can contribute to the development of the institute as well as national development. With the recent development in the higher education sector in Sri Lanka, it is crucial to ensure the quality of education we provide to students and academic advising is a potential function we can use.

ACADEMIC COUNSELING TO ENHANCE STUDENT PERFORMANCE

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The Concept of Counseling

The American Counseling Association defines counseling as: "assist people with personal, family, educational, mental, health and career problems, where the duty of a counselor vary greatly depending on his/her occupational specialty, which is determined by the setting in which their work and the population they serve". Also, it is defined as: "the application of mental health, physiological or human development principles, through cognitive, effective, behavioral or systematic intervention of strategies that address wellness, personal, growth or career development as well as pathology".

Teacher as a Counselor / Mentor

Teachers perform multiple roles going beyond the dissemination of knowledge in the classroom.

Manager, Care giver, Adviser, Authority figure , Role model, Coacher, Master, Surrogate parent, Tutor, Problem solver, Sponsor, Ambassador, Mentor, Counselor and Facilitator are some of the roles expected to be performed by the teacher. Status of the counselor is an important role to be performed by a teacher.

Teachers are academic midwives who perform dual roles as a teacher and as counselor or a mentor. Students are influenced by not only by instructions but by the teachers caring and compassion.

A model teacher should be equipped with many skills such as presentation skill, analytical skill, communicational skill and interpersonal skill as he has to play a multiple role in the class. He/she must be able to build a good rapport with students through interpersonal skills.

Beside all other roles, a model teacher has to play a very important dual role in the classroom as a teacher as well as a counselor. It is not just the knowledge they held that made them such wonderful teachers. It was the personal and passionate way in which they communicate their

caring for the students. Students are influenced not only by instructions but also by a teacher's caring and compassion. A teacher is called to perform variety of duties, responsibilities and roles as a mentor and a counselor.

Teaching involves both affective and cognitive learning. Teacher's role as a counselor includes:

- responding to emotional needs of children,
- resolving personal conflicts,
- serving as a surrogate parent and monitor for children acting as a counselor to students who are struggling with personal issues,
- identifying children suffering from abuse, neglect, drug abuse, and variety of emotional problems,
- assessing children's' developmental transition,
- guide physical emotional, social and spiritual growth leading discussions dealing with an assortment of emotional and personal issues participating in individualized educational programs,
- conducting parent conference function as a problem solver involve in affectionate, and
- cognitive growth of students.

How to Learn Counseling Skills

The teachers are said to be the best counselors, as teaching is first and foremost a helping profession. The teachers possess the basic counseling skills, listening and responding. They have high degree of interpersonal sensitivity and skills.

Therefore, it is easy to train and equipped them with skills to function in the role of counselor or human relation consultant. Counseling skills can be easily incorporated into teaching skills for better academic achievements. Following qualities could be developed in teachers to convert them to teacher counselors.

Qualities of a teacher counselor include: strong desire to help others, congruence, positive regard, empathetic understanding, affection, proper training, acquire postgraduate qualifications to be a licensed counselor, inspire respect, trust, confidence in students, be aware of ethical aspect, be patient, use a helping mode and moreover employ counseling skills.

However, counseling cannot be learnt only by reading books. A practical hand is very essential to gather more experience. Teachers should develop relationship with children based on trust, mutual respect, and true affectionate. They can earn trust and respect of students through interpersonal skills.

These say that counseling is a helping process. It includes helping people to complete a therapeutic task. As some people think it is not mere giving advices to others. It is a result oriented systematic process to be practiced with learnt techniques and strategies. Counseling helps needy people to get rid of their behavioral mental disorders.

Counseling can be considered as a brain fitness program. Our brains resemble our muscles. If we don't exercise them they lose their strength. Many experts on brain tend to believe the fact that the brain can be stimulated in a healthy manner to resist even the debilitating mental conditions such as Alzheimer's. Now brain gyms are available to utilize the brain muscles.

It has been found that the human brain can change itself. The brain is a living organ that can

actually change its own structure and function. The brain can function more effectively through brain fitness exercises allowing us to act more effectively.

Psychologists have developed indicators to measure or to determine mental and emotional handling of common situations. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is one such useful instrument. Therefore, systematic counseling programs to be carried out in universities or higher educational institutes to motivate grandaunts to function more effectively for better academic achievements.

Counseling is nothing but both participants are concentrating intently on what the other is saying. It is a contemplative art to be practiced through active and passive learning. It is the ability of grasping another person's experience through empathy.

Counseling Theories

Professional counselors, depending on the situation of client, use many different theories to diagnose the issues.

Psychodynamic Theory

This theory is based on the Sigmond Frued's assumption that individual's difficulties have their origins in childhood experience. According to this theory, individuals may not be consciously aware of their motives.

The unconscious is the part of mental life that is outside direct awareness. The preconscious thought that could come into the conscious although we are unaware of them. There are levels of the mind Id, Ego and super Ego

Cognitive Behavioral Theory

This is self exploration and understanding by the client himself to gain insight to their problems. Here the counselor is more concerned with actions of the client that will result in change.

Attention is paid to cognitive or thought process through which people monitor their behavior. There are 3 features, namely changed focused, problem solving approach and attention to cognition process.

Narrative Theory

Here the focus is laid on the stories that client tell about their lives. Counselor helps their client to make sense of their experience identify key themes. Stories are structured around 3 elements such as wish of the individuals in relation to others, response of the other person, and the response of oneself.

Academic Counseling

Academic counseling means helping students/undergraduates to fill the vacuum area in their lives, which is not addressed by the curriculum or the syllabus. Academic counselors try to indentify factors that prevent students from achieving the expected academic expectations as there is a possibility for misguidance to disrupt their progress.

Some students need some form of academic guidance as they are not matured enough to solve the problems by themselves. It has been found that emotional intelligence is low in the new generation. Academic counseling plays a significant role to

enlighten the path of academic performance of students.

Academic counseling is needed to optimize learning styles of students so that they can continue to pursue their academic excellence, graduation and eventually professional employment. It helps to students to explore their core interests, aptitudes and performances. Also, it assists students to develop positive attitudes towards learning to achieve high end results.

Further, it will also promote to develop life skills needed to solve problems before worsening them. Early detection of unsolved personal difficulties will favorably effect on academic achievements of students. While developing their personalities it will help them to integrate emotions, attitudes and values with psychomotor cognitive and intellectual knowledge abilities.

Academic underachievement, cognitive deficits, learning disabilities and behavioral disorders are some of the indicators of difficulties faced by students. Perhaps some changes in the socio-cultural set up may interrupt the learning process.

Students may have their own interests and agendas. Fear of failure, changing friendships occupies the minds of them. Death of a family member, rejected friendship, poor grades at examinations, excitements and disappointments, may detour them easily from the academic path.

Meanwhile, trouble shooters in higher education institutions may capitalize on these anxious frustrated depressed students and worsen the situation for their benefit. Academic guidance is, therefore, needed to prevent this misguidance. Academic counseling can, thus, be considered as an indispensable part of academic guidance in universities or higher education institutions.

Scope of Academic Counselors

There are various types of counselors. Scope of counselors differs from one another depending on their specialty. Counselors work in diverse community settings designed to provide a variety of counseling rehabilitation and support work. Family counselors, school counselors, rehabilitation counselors, vocational counselors are dealing with different personality disorders of individuals in different social settings.

Academic counselors are attached to higher educational institutions and their scopes of problems differ from the other counselors. Clients of academic counselors are undergraduates learning in universities or higher educational institutions. They provide their clients with career, academic, and educational counseling.

They advocate students to promote the academic, career, personal, social development of their clients. Also, they help students or undergraduates to evaluate their abilities, interests, talents and personalities to develop realistic academic career goals.

Academic counselors use interviews, counseling sessions and aptitude tests and other methods to evaluate and advice students. Moreover, they conduct career information centers and career education programs. Often academic counselors deal with students who have academic and social development problems or personality problems. Academic counselors help students to develop job search skills.

These counselors emphasize preventive and developmental counseling to provide students with the life skills needed to deal with their problem before worsening them and enhance student's personal, social and academic growth. Following personal behavioral disorders fall within the purview of academic counseling: mental disorders, addiction, traumas, stress, suicidal impulse, abuse, anxiety, depression, loneliness, dilemma in decision making, personal grievances and phobic disorders etc.

Finally, the followings are some hints for a teacher to become a good academic counselor: remember the names of mentees; keep information confidential; provide realistic appointments; do not give unachievable promises; do not take decision for the mentee; keep retrievable records; respect diversity of ideas; develop empathy & compassion, and be intelligent.

LIBRARY MANAGEMENT TO SUPPORT TEACHING – LEARNING PROCESS

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Libraries have always been the supporting rungs in the ladder of learning from time immemorial. There was never a doubt that libraries facilitate learning and support the teaching – learning process, effectively. It is also a fact that library professionals have since the beginning, undertaken roles and responsibilities that transcend the frontiers of traditional librarianship.

A modern library is considered to be a service institution. Its prime objective is to enable the user to make the most effective use of the information available in it. The introduction of information technology and computers to the library has created complexity in library management.

The job of managing the modern library today has become more specialized and complex than the

management of a big enterprise or business establishment.

It is so because a librarian deals with a variety of readers with their specialized fields of knowledge enshrined in the form of books, periodicals and non-book materials such as CD, DVD, online data bases and digital materials.

A professional library manager (Librarian) is expected to possess fundamental knowledge of concepts, principles and theories of management. The librarian should be able to manage the library with the same basic skills as are required in managing any type of organization.

However, it is different to a great extent from the other organization especially because a library is a non-profit making organization and usually provides free service to its users.

Generally, it is a part of a big organization and governed by the rules and regulations framed by the parent organization. We will see in this article how the concept of management works in a library environment in a university to offer the best service to the academics, students and the other staff.

Planning

The first function of an administrator is to plan and forecast determining the goals and ideals of an institution. The ways and means to achieve these objectives are thought out on a plenary basis.

These outlines are given in concrete shape and a regular framework of authority is established in such a manner that maximum work of best quality is ensured at a minimum cost with minimum efforts. Planning presupposes the stock – taking of the existing conditions and the relevant causes.

The efforts are made to remove the basic defects and their future implications are taken care of. In library planning, the locality, its make – up as regards its physical features, its linguistic divisions, its cultural diversities and educational needs etc. are taken in to account in planning.

The pros and cons are properly studied before providing a service so that the service is effective and long ending.

Organizing

Planning to be fruitful needs a sound organization, which means that such a structure of authority is, established which is capable of achieving the set goals. Through this structure, work subdivisions are arranged, defined and coordinated for the set goal.

Organizing is imperative to bring together all the staff members in such a scientific way that the work is done most efficiently and smoothly, in library organization. The decision is taken as to what kind of authority is to be provided for an area of service: should the authority be autonomous or part and parcel of the local government? Or whether this autonomous body would be capable of raising and colleting enough finances for raining the library etc should be considered in organizing.

Staffing

An organization for its efficient working is totally dependent upon proper staffing and recruiting policies. The staff employed should have special aptitudes and capabilities for performing a particular kind of job for example a University

librarian in addition should have an aptitude for research if he wants to become a successful librarian.

The other junior staff members should be appointed keeping in view their aptitude for various jobs. The practical experience of various jobs at the credit of applicants for various posts should be taken into consideration at the time of their appointment.

Directing

The harmony and efficiency of the staff depends upon the personal qualities of the chief librarian. He/she should be capable of performing his duties as a leader.

It implies that besides possessing knowledge, the librarian should be able to infuse confidence amongst the staff members and should be ready to sacrifice his personal comforts for the sake of library work and library staff. Directing includes continuous decision making and embodying them in general and specific orders and instructions.

Coordinating

Leadership will be successful only if the leader can properly inter-relate various parts of an organization in a harmonious way. This coordination can be achieved if the head knows all the jobs well and affects such an automatic administrative system that he feels practically no necessity to interfere.

Reporting

Reporting means keeping authorities, to whom the executive head of an organization is responsible, informed about the progress or regress of his responsibility. To perform this duty efficiently, the executive head has to keep him and his subordinates informed about their jobs and performances though research, records and inspection.

It is a sound principle or organization that a periodical report is asked from a head of an enterprise. Such a report should be factual one based upon actual and faithful statistical data. The chief of a library has to submit an annual report to the executive authority concerned.

Budgeting

Budgeting includes fiscal planning, accounting and control, No organization can function property without adequate finances. But, it is difficult to obtain enough funds for all kinds of organizations especially libraries, which are dependent and spending bodies. Their services, though essential for the well being of an individual the society and the government, are not considered apparently indispensable.

The libraries have been given almost the lowest priority in matter of allocation of funds. So, the librarian has to muster strength and acquire necessary skill and tact for securing adequate funds.

Librarian has to convince the authorities about the usefulness of the service rendered by libraries. The authorities can be convinced easily by statistical data, so the librarian should maintain proper statistics of income and expenditure of his library.

In addition to the above-mentioned functions the following two functions are considered essential for an efficient administration.

Control

The chief or the supervisor will have to be every vigilant about the rate of progress of the work. Librarian has to ensure best quality and maximum quantity of work from his workers. In order to achieve this, the chief has to control effectively his subordinates. Librarian has to inspect their work personally and to keep an eye upon the methods of performing specific jobs assigned to individual workers, the end products and overall costs of service.

Motivation

The librarian can achieve the library's aim of maximum service only if he/she instills enthusiasm and team work amongst workers. Unless the workers perform their jobs willingly and conscientiously, the aim cannot be achieved. The workers also must be made to realize that if they work more, they will get rewards for the same.

Libraries exist in grate variety. These vary in size, goals, financial stability, structural patterns, complexity, and such other characteristics. From management point of view, these vary in management style, employee morale, organizational health, environment for innovation etc.

In the late 2000s, libraries are operating in a setting, which has become more complex than ever before. New technologies have become available as a means to improve library service and operations. A large number of information services and products are available commercially for a library to choose from.

In this environment, library's role in technology and information oriented society is beginning to be reexamined. But the main concern is to find out how libraries can adopt themselves to the new environment so as to fully support the nation in achieving its goals. Many of the problems and issues implied in the changing environment are related to management.

The major issues include budgeting, funding, costing, objectives, accountability, efficiency, etc. In

the present context, application of management techniques has acquired added significance. We need good managers, who can manage libraries, responsibly and imaginatively, to accomplish the objectives. Libraries are costly ventures. Cost must be justified by providing effective and efficient service through efficient and effective management.

SUPPORTING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THROUGH ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKS

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Social Networking

Social networking is the grouping of individuals into specific groups, like small rural communities or a neighborhood subdivision as you wish. Although social networking is possible among persons, especially in the workplaces, universities, and high schools, it is a good place to find new friends and lovers.

When it comes to online social networking, websites are commonly used. These websites are known as social sites. Social networking websites function like an online community of internet users. Depending on the website in question, many of these online community members share common interests in hobbies, religion, or politics.

Once you are granted access to a social networking website you can begin to socialize. Individuals or groups linked by some common bonds share social status, similar or shared functions, or geographic or cultural connections. Social networks form and discontinue on an ad hoc basis depending on specific need and interest.

A social networking service is an online service, platform, or site that focuses on building and reflecting of social networks or social relations among people, who, for example, share interests and/or activities.

A social network service consists of a representation of each user (often a profile), his/her social links, and a variety of additional services. The most social network services are web-based and provide means for users to interact over the Internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging.

Online community services are sometimes considered as a social network service, though in a broader sense, social network service usually means an individual-centered service whereas online community services are group-centered. The

friends that you can make are just one of the many benefits to social networking online.

Another benefit is the variety that the internet gives individuals from all around the world access to social networking sites. This means that although you are in Sri Lanka, you could develop an online friendship with someone in USA or Japan. Not only you make new friends, but also you might learn new cultures or new languages and improve your knowledge immensely.

Once you are well informed and comfortable with your findings, you can begin your search from hundreds of networking communities to join. This can easily be done by performing a standard internet search.

Your search will likely return a number of results, including: *MySpace*, *FriendWise*, *FriendFinder*, *Yahoo! 360*, *Facebook*, *Orkut*, and *Classmates*. Other than these sites, researches are very much interested in the social network called *academia.edu*. It helps them to share the knowledge and papers among the known ones.

Social Networks to Handle Student Stress

Social networks are providing a different way for individuals to communicate digitally. These communities of hypertexts allow for the sharing of information and ideas, an old concept placed in a digital environment. *Facebook* and other social networking tools are increasingly the object of scholarly research.

Scholars in many fields have begun to investigate the impact of social-networking sites, investigating how such sites may play into issues of identity, privacy, social capital, youth culture, and education.

One other use that is being discussed is the use of social networks in the science communities. Social networking is allowing scientific groups to expand their knowledge base and share ideas, and without these new means of communicating their theories might become "isolated and irrelevant".

Social networks are also being used by teachers and students as a communication tool. Because many students are already using a wide-range of social networking sites, teachers have begun to

familiarize themselves with this trend and are now using it to their advantage. Teachers and professors are doing everything from creating chat-room forums and groups to extend classroom discussion to posting assignments, tests and quizzes, to assisting with homework outside of the classroom setting.

They are also being used to foster teacher-parent communication. These sites make it possible and more convenient for parents to ask questions and voice concerns without having to meet face-to-face. The advent of social networking platforms may also be impacting the way(s) in which learners engage with technology in general.

The use of online social networks by libraries is also an increasingly prevalent and growing tool that is being used to communicate with more potential library users, as well as extending the services provided by individual libraries.

Rather than procrastinating more, use the social networks to control the stress and crack down on getting work done, then things may get done early. Once they have done, you can go back over them and take a more objective, less stress

surroundings. In the end your assignments or the quality of your studying for exams will be much higher.

There are dangers associated with social networking including data theft and viruses, which are on the rise. The most common danger though often involves online predators or individuals who claim to be someone that they are not.

Although danger does exist with networking online, it also exists in the real world too. I believe that university students are talented in using social networks with caution. Students having friends and engaging in social activities are less in stress.

Other considerable fact is that online social networks create a path to the students to foot into a socialized environment. In most of the universities in Sri Lanka the use of social networking sites/services is banned.

This has been done mainly due to insufficient internet bandwidth and with the intention of creating an educational environment in the computer laboratory. Now the time has come to think of the brighter side of the social networks.

It can be declared that, it is a very valuable free stress controlling service for the students of the universities in developing counties like Sri Lanka. In summary, a social network is an unknown sincere pal for a restless, listless, stressful mind.

STRATEGIES AND TIPS TO OVERCOME STRESS IN STUDENT LIFE

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Categories of Stress

Stress is a mental or physical phenomenon formed through one's cognitive appraisal of the stimulation and is a result of one's interaction with the environment. The continuation of stress depends on the existence of the stressor. In small amounts, stress is not bad as such. Instead, it can pressurize to do better. It is the body's natural response to protect and help to stay more focused, alert and energetic. Sometimes stress may give extra strength to defend ourselves.

However, if the stress exceeds a desired level, it can be harmful to the body. It can damage not just to health but also have negative effects on the social life. In long term, stress can also hamper on productivity levels. Therefore, it is ideal not to eliminate stress but to identify the optimum level

that will motivate us. In case of university students, they may experience stress trying to meet the demands of their course while juggling all the other things going on in their life. Most students are anxious to do as well as possible and, if things do not go as planned, their expectations may become a source of stress.

Stress, in general, is divided into four main categories such as:

1. ***Eustress***: this can be defined as a positive form of stress, which prepares the mind and body for the imminent challenges that it has perceived. It is a natural physical reaction by the body which increases blood flow to the muscles, resulting in a higher heart rate.

2. ***Distress***: the stress due to an excess of adaptive demands placed upon us. Thus, this is the bad stress and it can cause illness and disease. This is the kind of stress most of us are familiar with and this is the kind of stress that leads to poor decision making. Physiological symptoms of distress are increase in blood pressure, rapid breathing, generalized tension etc. Behavioral

symptoms include loss of appetite, drinking, smoking and negative coping mechanisms.

3. ***Hyper-stress***: occurs when an individual is pushed beyond what he or she can handle. It results from being overloaded or overworked. When someone is hyper-stressed, even little things can trigger a strong emotional response.

4. ***Hypo-stress***: the opposite of hyper-stress. It occurs when an individual is bored or unchallenged. People who experience hypo-stress are often restless and uninspired.

Types of Stressors

Anything that challenges an individual's adaptability or stimulates an individual's body or mentality is defined as stressor. Stressors can be positive and negative. They come in a variety of different forms: tests, finances, job interviews, health problems, achieved goals, praise, family conflicts, romantic relationships, competitions, homework assignments, etc.

Stressors can be anything minor as a "needle" to anything as major as an "elephant". It makes us

uncomfortable. Broadly, stressors can be classified into number categories.

- ***Interpersonal*:** this includes change in social activities, roommate conflict, contacts with people and trouble with parents etc.

- ***Intrapersonal*:** includes change in sleeping habits, change in eating habits, new responsibilities, financial difficulties, change in use of alcohol or drugs, outstanding personal achievement, decline in personal health, change in religious beliefs, death of a family member, death of a friend, severe injury, engagement/marriage etc.

- ***Academic*:** increased class workload, examinations, lower grade than expected, change of major, missed too many classes, anticipation of graduation and serious argument with instructor etc.

- ***Environmental*:** vacations/breaks, noise, computer problems, placed in unfamiliar situation, messy living conditions, change in living environment, inadequate infrastructure etc.

Symptoms of Stress

Symptoms of stress can be divided into main four categories such as cognitive symptoms, emotional symptoms, physical symptoms and behavioral symptoms and are explained below:

- ***Cognitive Symptoms*:** are memory problems, poor judgment, inability to concentrate, seeing only the negative, anxious or racing thoughts, constant worrying etc.

- ***Emotional Symptoms*:** include moodiness, agitation, restlessness, short temper, irritability, feeling overwhelmed, sense of loneliness and isolation, depression or general unhappiness etc.

- ***Physical Symptoms*:** are aches and pains, diarrhea or constipation, nausea, dizziness, chest pain, rapid heartbeat, weight gain or loss , loss of sex drive and frequent colds etc.

- ***Behavioral Symptoms*:** eating more or less, sleeping too much or too little, isolating yourself from others procrastination or neglecting

responsibilities, using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax, nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing) etc.

Strategies to Manage Strategies

You can reduce stress by changing the situation that is causing stress or changing your response to the situation. The situation that causes stress can be change by avoiding the stressor or altering the stressor.

The reaction to the situation can be changed by adapting to the stressor or accepting the stressor. For example, students may be able to reduce exam panic by spending more time preparing and revising; they may be able to limit essay-writing anxieties by planning the task more thoroughly and taking detailed notes.

Each person has his/her own individual stresses and styles, therefore the most successful way is to use stress management strategies that is tailored to your own personal needs. The following ideas on managing stress can be used effectively.

Regular exercise

Regular exercise can act as a release valve, to allow students vent off some of that energy. Students should choose a form of exercise that is fun for them so that they will be able to keep with it. Walking, jogging, cycling and aerobic classes are effective ways to get their exercise. Recent standards suggest that one should aim for 30 minutes of exercise every day or every other day.

Avoid alcohol and drugs

Too much stress tends people towards consuming more alcohol or too much drinking can cause the stress. While alcohol may aid relaxation in small amounts and used in the short term, in the long term it would have a negative impact.

Have a balanced diet

Since the interaction between the diet and stress level is very important, students should have a well balanced meals. The meal should be low in fat and high in fruits and vegetables. If any student is under stress definitely s/he has to pay attention to what s/he eats.

Establish and make use of a good social network

Students should identify mutually supportive friendships and relationships. Students can talk with someone who can help them to clarify why they are stressed and can help them to manage the situation.

They can talk to an understanding friend, a lecturer, a family member, your year coordinator, a learning skills adviser or a counselor from the counseling service of the university.

Relaxation and meditation

There are many ways to relax such as sitting quietly near a lake, listening to soothing music. The relaxation response is actually the opposite of the physiological experiences of stress such as slow heart rate, dropped blood pressure etc.

Meditation can improve the life and reduce the chance to face stressful situations. So, it is better to avoid medication, but to improve meditation to manage stress.

Manage the time effectively

Use of strong time management skills will help students to reduce stress. They can use a calendar (cell phone or paper calendar), write down everything in one place, schedule time for relax, Keep trying new systems, allow for flexibility, plan ahead, plan for the unexpected and schedule rewards in.

If someone consistently cause stress in particular student that student has to limit the time spend with that person or has to end the relationship entirely.

Reducing study stress and conflicts

The best way to reduce the stress of studying is to develop work habits that even out the burden of work over the semester. It is also important to make sure the time spend studying is as effective as possible for that student can revise his/her time table.

Teacher or a counselor can play a major role in managing stress and conflicts among students. For example, if students have lack of interest in a

particular subject it will create stress for the students. At such situation the teacher can reduce that stress condition. Teacher has to develop creditability by providing some background information about the experience with subject matter, experience as a student and research experiences. Lecture goals, organization, enthusiasm, solid knowledge of the content, and fairness help maintain credibility.

Good presentation and facilitation skills as well as enthusiasm for teaching are assets that will keep attention of the student focused and help prevent distracting classroom behavior such as lateness, talking and sleeping.

Teacher is the most common mode of delivering learning materials. In conventional lectures, the teacher delivers the materials to students for one hour or for longer durations such as two or three hours, without discussion between the lecturer and the student. This method is so passive that students listen to the lecture and takes down notes all the time.

This type of passive task will not hold students' attention for a long period. After the first 20- 25

minutes in a lecture, students' performances decrease. It can create a stress condition to students. However, teachers can make the lessons more interactive to keep students' attention in a higher level. This can be done by introducing lecture breaks after every 30 minutes of lecture session.

Normally students work better when they feel that their teachers care about them; therefore, it is important to reduce anonymity and use students' names whenever possible. Allocating a few minutes before and after the lectures to answer questions and chat with the students will be help to develop a good rapport with students. Teacher can ask questions throughout the lecture so that the lecture becomes more of a conversation.

Study stress can arise if students have been working too hard, in which case they might need to take a short break or vary their routines. Or, it can arise if they have not done enough work during the semester. In either case, some thoughtful planning of their workload can often reduce their stress levels. They have to focus on one major task at a time.

Teachers can help students to reduce the examination stress in different ways. At the beginning of the semester teacher can explain the structure of the paper to the students clearly. Teacher can break down the total marks into different sections such as end semester examination and continuous evaluation.

End semester examination might have multiple choice questions, structured essay questions, essay questions and practical paper. Continuous evaluation include quizzes, open book examinations, presentations, assignments and take-home examinations.

Teacher can give unannounced quizzes for few minutes. It will help students to get rid from examination stress. If students are asked to do individual assignments at the beginning they will be under stressed. Therefore, teacher can give group assignments for year one and two students and individual assignments for year three and final year students.

Conflict is a normal part of relationships. Therefore, it is an inevitable aspect of life. The major reasons for conflicts are the social unrest /

stress and political interference. Conflict situations can make feel upset, threatened, frustrated, and/or angry for all or part of participants. So, counselors/ teachers has to select a suitable time and place to mediate the situation, like counseling room or conference room but not the office room. The mediator should not take the conflict situation personally, should not be biased to any party or group of students or a student, should really listen to students without any interruption and discuss possible next steps with the students.

Tips to Reduce Exam Stress

Many students experience stress related to taking exams. This is mainly due to their poor exam preparation or the inability to manage the stress successfully. The following tips may help for a student to overcome so effectively.

Before the exam

- Sort out the topics for revision. This should be done based on syllabus and examination requirements, on predictions derived from past papers and on guidelines suggested by lecturers/tutors. They can ask or email the

lecturers questions about the things they don't understand.

- Spend more time to learn harder things at the beginning. Students should deal with less demanding tasks in periods of the day when they are less alert or take a break or switch to some other work. They can have a break by cooking meals.

- Prepare a realistic time table for revision.

- If any student feel that s/he don't remember anything, have to find another method to revise or stop revising until s/he can concentrate properly again.

- Breakdown the targets into manageable units. Students can use flow diagrams, keywords or patterns linking ideas to make master summaries for revision purpose. They can use cue cards, indexed sized flash card, which are very easy to carry around and are useful for learning information they find particularly hard to remember.

- The night before the exam, they have to go to bed at their normal time. If they go to bed earlier they will end up in sitting up in bed worrying.

- Avoid alcohol. It makes students forget and it will ruin a good days worth of revision.

- Students should keep the revision area clean and tidy for efficient revision.

- Students should look up their exam time table as soon as it becomes available. If the exams are well spaced they can learn one module at a time. By doing so, they don't have to remember unnecessary material. Students should check the time and venue of the exam and have to keep the necessary equipments with them (watch, pens, pencil, calculator etc).

- Relieve your stress by relaxing after you have finished revision for the day, doing something you enjoy doing, like watch television or playing computer games.

During the exam

When students get into the exam hall and sit down, the following approach can help settle their nerves:

- Take a deep breath in and a long breath out.

- Read the exam paper very carefully. Spend 15 minutes for that and underline key words and instructions because format of the paper may have changed from previous years. Note how many questions are to be answered and if any are compulsory. Read the whole paper once, then read it again and mark the questions that can be answered. Then read those questions carefully.

- Decide the order in which they will answer the questions. Answer the easiest questions first and save time for most difficult questions for last. Usually, first 50% of marks for any question are easier to obtain than the next 50%.

- Be careful with the wording of the questions because if their answer is not tally with the

question no matter how thoughtful their answer is they can't obtain marks.

- If they find that thoughts or ideas about other questions come in to their mind, they have to jot them down on a separate piece of paper.

- Save the last 5 to 10 minutes for "finishing off" as crossing out unwanted scripts, ensuring that questions are clearly numbered and that all answer scripts have their identification/index number.

After the exam

- Should not stress out about what has passed and should not compare the answers with others.

- Reward themselves with chocolate, trips, good meals and going home when they have finished a set of exams.

GETTING STUDENT FEEDBACK IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

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With the developments of high technology and globalization, social, cultural, educational aspects of life become different and get better in terms of time space and communication. In the educational field, classical learning and teaching techniques cannot be effective without technology and time, space limitations. Distance Education, under these circumstances, provides fast, easy education opportunities for everyone overcoming these limitations.

There is a significant tendency among students to pursue distance education for self development and professional achievements. However, there are many types of problems with distance education. Thus, it is important to evaluate students' perceptions toward distance education in this context in order to measure common

interpretations around the world for this popular education style.

In order to conclude the perceptions of students towards distance education, it is necessary to know what distance education is. It refers to interactive educational process between two people, student and teacher, separated by physical distance. What it means is that distance education provides equal opportunities to learner and reduces the distance among communicators for global, competitive learning environments among the countries.

Though his method becomes popular among the developed countries, its applications are quite new for developing countries, and no exception for Sri Lanka. In order to create an effective distance education system, it is imperative to know what the perceptions of students and their roles are.

The evaluation of an educational system can be defined as a systematic procedure of collection and interpretation of data, concerning particular components of the system according to specific criteria and aiming at the feedback of these activities and efforts with useful information. This article describes the different stages and types of

evaluation for distance-delivered experiences. It also offers some guidance for developing an evaluating plan for distance education programs.

Student Feedback in Distance Education

The quality of student feedback is of critical importance in distance education. Students studying such courses may be geographically far removed from teachers, and limited contact opportunities necessitate a sharp and accurate focus upon aspects of study which link theory, research, clinical practice and written assessment closely together.

An understanding of quality feedback begins with an appreciation of the role of distance learning course tutors and the education models which can usefully guide them. Quality also relies upon a close evaluation of support to students as courses are planned, launched and then monitored through course boards or their equivalent.

Mail questionnaires are the most widely used method for collecting feedback from students and the types of information sought tend to fall into the following areas:

- *Extent of utilization*: students may be asked to indicate which parts of the course or program they have studied, which components they have used, how much time they have spent on their studies, etc. and any problems they have encountered.

- *Overall view of teaching:* students may be asked to rate the teaching of a particular unit of instruction in terms of its interest, perceived relevance or usefulness, level of difficulty etc. They may also be asked to rate individual components of a course (e.g. teaching text, audio-tape etc.) in terms of their relative usefulness.

- *General style of presentation*: course writers may be keen to receive students' comments on the style of presentation, both in terms of layout and design etc. and the coherence and clarity of the teaching.

- *Specific content issues*: it is important to know how well the teaching has achieved its aims and objectives. To this end, information about students' problems with key concepts,

ideas and relationships etc. can be of great value to course writers when it is time for revisions to be made.

Practical Issues to Obtain Student Feedback

***Why obtain student feedback*?**

Student feedback can provide diagnostic evidence for teachers and also is a measure of teaching effectiveness for administrative decision-making. Today, it is becoming increasingly accepted the fact that individual teachers will refer to student feedback both to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching and to support applications for appointments, tenure or promotion.

Student feedback also constitutes information for prospective students and other stakeholders in the selection of programs or course units, and it provides relevant evidence for research into the processes of teaching and learning. It, more importantly, constitutes as a major source of evidence for assessing and improving teaching quality.

***Why use formal instruments*?**

Student feedback can be obtained in many ways other than through the administration of formal questionnaires. These include casual comments made inside or outside the classroom, meetings of staff–student committees and student representation on institutional bodies, and good practice would encourage the use of all these means to maintain and enhance the quality of teaching and learning in higher education.

However, surveys using formal instruments have two advantages such as: (1) they provide an opportunity to obtain feedback from the entire population of students, and (2) they document the experiences of the student population in a more or less systematic way.

In distance education, as mentioned earlier, students are both physically and socially separated from their teachers and their institutions, and this severely constrains the opportunities for obtaining student feedback. Under this situation, the use of formal inventories has been dictated by geographical factors as much as by organizational ones.

***What should be the subject of the feedback*?**

Student feedback can be obtained on teachers, course units, and programs of study, departments and institutions. At one extreme, one could envisage a teacher seeking feedback on a particular lecture; at the other extreme, one might envisage obtaining feedback on a national system of higher education, especially with regard to controversial developments such as the introduction of top-up fees.

Nevertheless, it is clearly sensible to seek feedback at a level that is appropriate to one's basic goals. If the aim is to assess or improve the quality of particular teachers, they should be the subject of feedback. If the aim is to assess or improve the quality of particular programs, then the latter should be the subject of feedback.

Logically, there is no reason to think that obtaining feedback at one level would be effective in monitoring or improving quality at some other level. Indeed, identifying problems at the program or institutional level might have a negative impact on the quality of teaching by de-motivating the

staff who is actually responsible for delivering the programs.

***When should feedback be collected*?**

It would seem sensible to collect feedback on students' experience of a particular educational activity at the completion of that activity, since it is presumably their experience of the entire activity that is of interest. In other words, it would be most appropriate to seek student feedback at the end of a particular course unit or program of study.

However, other suggestions have been made. Obtaining feedback at the end of a course unit would not benefit the respondents themselves and that earlier feedback would be of more immediate value. Indeed, students' perceptions in the middle of a course unit can influence their subsequent studying and final grades.

The benefits of having completed a program of study are not immediately apparent to the new graduates, and hence, feedback should be sought some time after graduation. Indeed, from a purely practical point of view, it would be both convenient and economical to obtain feedback from recent

graduates at the same time as enquiring about their entry into employment or postgraduate education.

More generally, the literature leads one to the following conclusions that student feedback provides important evidence for assessing quality as it can be used to support attempts to improve quality, and it can be useful to prospective students. Also, feedback should be sought at the level at which one is endeavoring to monitor quality and as soon as possible after the relevant educational activity. It is feasible to construct questionnaires with a very wide range of applicability.

CREATING LEARNING TEAMS TO MANAGE A LARGE CLASSROOM

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With an increasing trend of global competition, industrialists are now demanding for more talented, competent and skillful personnel for their organizations. To fulfill this demand, a graduate must possess both hard and soft skills. Especially, a graduate is need to be a critical thinker, innovator, effective communicator and a team player who is capable of working together to accomplish shared goals. Many graduate programs, unfortunately, provide little or no concern for this increasing trend, and instead, the most focuses on individual contributions rather than on managed group efforts, which become the norm in any industry.

Within this light of shed, social scientists, educators, scholars and researchers have observed and identified the importance of dramatic changes in the way of disseminating knowledge in higher education. The change that has attracted so much

attention and enthusiasm is an increasing level of teamwork and collaborative efforts. Collaborative knowledge enhancement, collaborative decision making and collaborative problem solving processes are emerging as an essential part in today higher education.

Much of the time students work alone, because it is obvious that sitting for lectures, reading in the libraries or working in the laboratory involves concentrated individual effort. However, there is much to be gained by working collaboratively, and the purpose of this article is to elaborate this important phenomenon.

The increasing acceptance and demand of teamwork witness that it offers many advantages such as, mental stability, decision making ability, greater educational autonomy, generic skill development or enhancement and understanding of cooperative working and learning processes from both a theoretical and personal perspective.

Assessing Teamwork Skills

It is not an easy talk to assess the teaming skill of an individual student since it needs a more

comprehensive approach. This highlights the fact that graduate programs should focus on and incorporate multiple assessment tools to evaluate student progress and provide continuous feedback. Some strategies that can be used to foster teamwork are discussed below[4]:

- *Defining the Team's Goal* – the faculty can specify the goals when the team is first formed or at any other time and encourage students' feelings, ideas, and opinions. Being committed to a team goal improves teamwork.

- *Provide Adequate Resources* – in universities teams must receive necessary support from not only the academicians but also the other relevant parties such as administrators, non-academic staff. This support includes proper equipment, adequate guidance, encouragements and precise appraisal.

- *Using Shared/ Rotating Leadership Style – contributing* input to important decisions helps students feel that they are valuable team members. Consensus

[4] *Raynold, P. (1997). Groupwork in Education and Training, Kogan Page Limited, London.*

decision making also leads to an exchange of ideas within the group, with group members supporting and refining each other's suggestions.

- *Encourage Competition with Other Teams* – one of the best-known methods of encouraging teamwork is rallying the support of the group against a real or imagined threat from the outside.

- *Encouraging the Use of Jargon* – encourage specialized language that fosters cohesion and commitment. In essence, this specialized language is in group jargon. The jargon creates a bond among team members and sets the group apart from outsiders.

- *Holding a Powwow* – this is an informal approach to laying the groundwork for cooperation among students who will be working together as a team. Powwow is intentionally informal, friendly, and unstructured. It gives each group member an opportunity to be heard, thus establishing open communication.

- *Soliciting Feedback on Team Effectiveness* – when the feedback is positive, the team may experience a spurt of energy to keep working together well. Negative feedback, as long as it is not hostile,

might bring the team together to develop action plans for improvement.

- *Minimizing Micromanagement* – faculty needs to avoid the close monitoring of most aspects of group member activities and give ample opportunity to manage their own activities for empowerment.

- *Provide Chances for Physical Proximity* – a useful tactic for achieving physical proximity is to establish a shared physical facility such as a conference room, research library, or cafeteria areas. Team members can then use this area for refreshments and group interaction.

- *Emphasizing Group Recognition and Rewards* – giving rewards for group accomplishment reinforces teamwork, because students receive rewards for what they have achieved collaboratively.

- *Using Technology That Enhances Teamwork* – students can collaborate better when they use information technology that fosters collaboration, often referred to as *groupware.* Electronic brainstorming is another example of groupware. An important

new development is web sites where students can collaborate to save time and money on activities.

Obstacles to Teamwork

There are a number of issues that make up an interrelated model on team dysfunctions. Some of them are discussed below:

Absence of trust

The first dysfunction is an absence of trust, which stems from a member's unwillingness to be vulnerable within the group. Team members who are not comfortable sharing with one another about weaknesses make it impossible to build a foundation for trust.

Fear of conflict

An absence of trust leads to fear of conflict. Teams that lack trust are incapable of engaging in open dialogue of creative ideas and solutions to problems. Without open dialogue, team members will partially contribute to discussions with guarded comments.

Lack of commitment

Any fear of conflict that exists within the group can create a lack of commitment. Without feeling confident in openly sharing their opinions in a passionate and open debate, team members will choose to not commit to decisions that the team makes, and difficult issues may not get resolved.

Avoid accountability

When there is a lack of real commitment to team success by individual team members, it becomes easy to avoid accountability. Without a commitment to an agreed upon plan of action, team members may hesitate to address actions and behaviors that are counterproductive to the success of the team.

Inattention to Results

When team members are not held accountable to each other and to the overall success of the team, inattention to results occurs. When individual team member's attention and intention is out of alignment with the collective team goal(s), the team's success is jeopardized.

Useful Techniques to Promote Teamwork

Teachers in the university system should discuss and find ways of maximizing participation of students in a large group in the learning process and how to be effective in teaching to a large class. Because more fully a leaner participates in the learning process the more effective is the learning. The following techniques can be applied to get high student involvement in large group sessions.

Rounds

A "round" involves each student in the group in tern speaking briefly. It works best if the group site in a circle and the passes round the circle. Rounds work well to start a session as they involve each person speaking once before any one speaks a second time. This establishes a more balanced pattern of interaction and makes it much more likely that individuals will speak again later.

Circular interviewing

This involves each person interviewing the person opposite about an agreed topic for a moment or two and then both the interviewer and

interview roles rotating one place around group until everyone has taken both roles. Circular interviewing is very likely to initiate subsequent discussion across the group between students

Buzz groups

Buzz groups are simply small groups of 2 to 3 students formed impromptu to discuss a topic for a short period. In a pair, it is almost impossible for a student to stay silent and once students have spoken "in private" they are much more likely to speak afterwards "in public" in the whole group. Buzz groups are very useful to get things going

Pyramids

Pyramid groups are known as snowball groups, involve students working alone, then in pairs, then in four or sixes, and finally as a whole group in a plenary. Pyramiding is a very effective way to lead into productive discussion in even a large group such as 24. Working alone might involve reading a passage or a case study or beginning to tackle a problem.

Syndicates

Syndicates are teams of students' workings in parallel on the same task. They might be designing something, analyzing a problem or case etc. Normally, syndicates present the outcomes of their discussions in a plenary session. This is where the whole group discussion comes in. Syndicates tend to be task-oriented rather than simply discussion groups and may be in competition with other groups; both those features can increase motivation and involvement.

Fish bowls

A "fish bowl" is a small circle of chairs occupied by students who will have a discussion surrounded by a larger circle of chairs occupied by the rest of the students who will listen in. It is most useful when you have quite a large group, perhaps 30 or more, in which a discussion involving the whole group would be desultory, fragmentary and dominated by only a few students.

Those students who would have spoken up in the whole group will readily volunteer to go into the fishbowl, and these students will have a more lively

and coherent discussion simply because they are close together. The other students would not have joined in any way and at least have a livelier discussion to listen to.

Crossovers

Crossovers are a way of changing the makeup of groups within a large class. If you have six of six working in room you can re-mix them so that each of the six new groups consists of one member from each of the six old groups.

Poster tours

It helps groups working together on a task, such as syndicates, to use board or flip-chart. Having to produce a poster of the outcomes of the discussion also focuses attention on a clear goal. Posters can involve a design or proposal, lists of the pros and cons of an approach, or the main features of a case study.

Debates

Debates give pictures and focus to discussions and make it more likely that students will join in

even when the group is fairly large. Highly organized debates may support independent small-group discussion over a number of works prior to the large group event at which the debate takes place.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a technique for creative problem solving. It involves a group of up to about 12 in launching ideas, initially without any discussion, elaboration or criticism, and then going back through the list of ideas generated to see which once are worth pursuing. It is the separation of the creative from the analytic stages which makes brainstorming work.

Line-ups

Line-ups involve asking students to come clean on where they stand on a controversial issue by asking them, literally, to stand at a position in a line which represents their views. The tutor's role is to define what the line, the dimension of views, consists of, and to get students up out of their chairs.

The methods described above can be mixed within sessions and should be varied from week to week. When introducing new methods, take care to explain to students why you are going it and benefits you expect. Take an experimental approach and review the effectiveness of methods with students. Students are then much more likely to cooperate with you and see the success of the session as a joint venture rather than see the exercises as draft and trivial games foisted on them by an eccentric tutor.

Facilitating Teaching - Learning Process Beyond the Class

Selected Topics

Teaching Beyond the Subjects for the Reconstitution of Social Order
Mekala Vithana

Use of Adult Psychology to Make an Effective Graduate
D. R. Gimhani

Effective Academic Advising for Student Success
W. S. Dandeniya

Academic Counseling to Enhance Student Performance
K. M. Dissanayake

Library Management to Support Teaching Learning Process
D. G. A. S. Malkanthi

Supporting Learning Environment Through Online Social Networks
W. P. E. Priyadarshani

Strategies and Tips to Overcome Stress in Student Life
M. K. N. Kumari

Getting Student Feedback in Distance Education
K. M. I. Nishantha

Creating Learning Teams to Manage a Large Classroom
A. K. D. N. Dilshani

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