



Staff Development Center
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

*Teacher - Learner
Skills Development in
Higher Education*

Selected Topics

Edited by
Udith Jayasinghe, Ph.D
Ajith Jayaweera

***Teacher – Learner
Skills Development in
Higher Education***

Selected Topics

Editors: Udith Jayasinghe, PhD
Ajith Jayaweera

Authors: Menuka Udugama
Keminda Herath
S. N. T. De Silva
N. J. Amarasinghe
Hansika Gunasekara
K. R. E. Padmathilake
D. M. Samarathunga
M. G. Shanika Dilanthi

Staff Development Center
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka
Makandura, Gonawila (NWP)
Sri Lanka
2011

***Teacher – Learner
Skills Development in
Higher Education
Selected Topics***

Published by : Staff Development Center
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka
Makandura, Gonawila (NWP)
Sri Lanka

ISBN : 978-955-8746-90-5

Cover Page Design & : Kapila D. Ranaraja
Computer Applications : Computer Application Assistant
Dept. of Agribusiness Management
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Page Setting : Maheshi Weeratunga
Technical Assistant
Dept. of Agribusiness Management
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Telephone : +94 31 331 5376

Fax : +94 31 229 9246

Teacher – Learner Skills Development in Higher Education: Selected Topics / Ed. by Udith Jayasinghe and Ajith Jayaweera. Makandura: Staff Development Center, Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, 2011.
117p.; 21 cm

ISBN 978-955-8746-90-5

i. 378.173 DDC 22

ii. Title

iii. Teaching methods – higher education

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 “*Teacher – learner Skills Development in Higher Education*”. 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. Skills Development is a very important aspect in higher education, which helps both teachers and students for greater levels of achievement.

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

Time is what a person wants “most”, but what he/she uses “worst”. Academics are engaged in diverse activities from teaching in the university to national contribution; thus, play an imperative role as responsible citizens. With their busy schedules, deadlines and dynamic duties such as conducting lectures, setting and marking papers, conducting research, revising manuscripts, supervising research, administrative and postgraduate work etc., organization and management of time has become imperative. The first article in this book talks about this phenomenon to a depth and provide some useful ways and means for an academic to manage his / her time to accomplish goals of his / her professional life.

Personal Development Planning is a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performances and/or achievements. Further, it helps students to plan their personal, educational and career development. The primary objective of personal development planning is to improve the capacity of individuals to understand what and how they are learning and to review, plan and take responsibility for their own learning process. The second article in this book discusses about how a student can be developed into a skillful learner through the principles and applications of personal development planning.

What soft skills possessed by a teacher and student make the teaching - leaning process effective? The third article offers a bold answer to this important question. It discusses about a number of such skills, including interpersonal skills, decision making, self confidence, giving feedback, cooperating as a team, resolving problems (conflict resolution), lateral thinking, creative and innovative in all aspects work, ability to create win-

win deals etc. in detail. These are considered as the keystones of success, but are typically hard to observe, quantify and measure in contrast to the hard skills such as technical and/or administrative procedures. Thus, this article, in particular, discusses the role of arts and culture to develop soft skills of a student.

The fourth article covers the specific area of creating a skillful educator through a successful communicator. Education rests on the ability to communicate in such a way that every student has a clear and comprehensive grasp on the information. Communication skills for teachers are, thus, as important as their in-depth knowledge of the particular subject which they teach. Given students have different levels of strengths and weaknesses and kinds of taste and preferences over the subjects they learn; it must be the job of the educator to create enthusiasm and interest in the minds of the students towards a subject. This article explains how this target can be achieved and several techniques, tips and strategies to develop communication skills of teachers and students.

All too often, though, we waste our own time (and often the time of other people) searching for data that's sitting in front of the computer or near the file cabinet. This is why managing our documents are essential. File management is the practice of organizing files and folders in some logical manner. This logic should, therefore, make sense to others beside you. The process begins with a consideration of how organization will be maintained over time. This adds to your stress, and makes the task of putting the data to use more difficult than it ought to be. The fifth article provides a remedy for this pertinent issue bothering many academics and it gives out a number of methods and techniques to manage our files effectively that, at the end of day, increases both effectiveness and efficiency of a teacher and learner significantly. The sixth

article adds in more tips and practices to make an efficient you by pinpointing to critical areas overlooked in managing a very scarce resource: 'time'.

The seventh and final article consider the potential of opportunities and strategies to support students' engagement in research, focusing on different national, institutional, and departmental policy approaches to this area. The idea is to enhance research skills of undergraduates by providing some useful insights into managing undergraduate research successfully.

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 seven 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.

Udith Jayasinghe, PhD

Ajith Jayaweera

Staff Development Center (SDC)

Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

03rd December 2011

List of Content

Effective Time Management for Professional Development <i>Menuka Udugama</i>	01
Producing Skilful Learner through Personal Development Planning <i>Keminda Herath</i>	14
The Role of Art and Culture in Developing Soft Skills of Students <i>S. N. T. De Silva</i>	25
A Successful Educator through a Skilful Communicator <i>N. J. Amarasinghe</i>	44
Effective File Management: Some Useful Hints and Techniques <i>Hansika Gunasekara</i>	68
Managing Your Time to Make an Efficient Academic Environment <i>K. R. E. Padmathilake</i>	79
Developing Research Skills at the Undergraduate Level <i>D. M. Samarathunga</i>	90
Inventive Self Assessment as a Reflective Teaching Practice <i>M. G. Shanika Dilanthi</i>	108

EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Menuka Udugama

*Dept. of Agribusiness Management
Faculty of Agriculture & Plantation Management
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Makandura, Gonawila (NWP)*

Time is what we want “most”, but what we use “worst”. As academics, we engage in diverse activities from teaching in the university to national contribution; thus, play an imperative role as responsible citizens. With our busy schedules, deadlines and dynamic duties such as conducting lectures, setting and marking papers, conducting research, revising manuscripts, supervising research, administrative work, postgraduate work and moreover, day-to-day household responsibilities amongst many, at nights we often wonder “where did the day go?”. But there are some of our colleagues who actually have it all under control. How do they do it?

The simple answer is organization and time management. If you want to accomplish each day, you need to take control of your time. If not, we will simply be limited to one out of many duties of an academic or might not excel in any by holding on to everything. Therefore, management of time is vital for our personal and professional development.

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

The “Forest” and “Trees” Concept to Manage Career

Before you manage your day, you need to think about managing your career. This is the forest view¹. The overall ("forest") goal is to be a successful scientist and university academic; if you are a junior faculty member, getting promoted with tenure should be on the list, too. To accomplish the first part of this goal, you will need to design, plan, and execute decisive experiments.

The second goal of becoming an excellent teacher may also be important to you personally and to your career. To be an excellent teacher, you must be able to spend considerable effort in the design of your lectures, assignments and exams. Although this seems obvious, it is easy to lose sight of the forest because of the trees.

Whereas the forest represents the major goals in your academic life, the trees represent the incremental goals that you must complete along the way. Each manuscript that you publish, grant proposal that you submit, course that you teach or committee that you sit on is a tree.

The leaves on the trees are the actual tasks: preparing figures, writing a paper or grant proposal,

¹ Boss, J. and S. Eckert (2006). *Academic Scientists at Work*, Plenum Publishers, New York, U. S. A.

preparing and delivering each lecture, meeting graduate students, providing academic advice, and so on. Some of these tasks are more important and more time sensitive than others. These two characteristics are important and time sensitivity is not the same and has to be kept separate. The key to time management is to prioritize.

Useful Strategies to Manage Your Time

Below we present some useful strategies to manage the time of a professional. You may not be able to do all at a given point of time, but doing it at the right time would help immensely to manage your time.

Prioritize

Try to do all the important stuff first while keeping focus on deadlines for unimportant stuff. Tasks with an "urgent" designation are those that have deadlines. The "vital" designation is for items that are important to your career or personal life. The "forest" aspects of your career belong to category 1 because they are important for your career success and also have time deadlines.

Category 2 is for the "trees"; they usually do not have immediate deadlines. Category 2 items enter category 1 as the due date approaches or passes.

For example, preparing lectures for your upcoming classes moves from a category 2 to a category 1 task as the date of class approaches. The last category reflects most items that are not related directly to your success. Remember, “first thing first”.

Do it once

To improve your efficiency at handling routine tasks, respond right away to every request that requires a simple action or response. If the list of chores in the request is complex and multifaceted and you are not going to deal with it now, put it on your to-do list.

Splitting chores

Sometimes tasks have multiple steps that can be accomplished at different times. For example, reviewing grant proposals and research papers is a two-step process. Sometimes, it takes longer to read the proposal and write the review if it is done in the same day.

Often, reading a manuscript or grant application on one day, letting it "ferment" overnight, then writing the review the next morning will allow your opinion on the matter to gel, making it easier to concisely and efficiently write your review.

Also, it may be easier for your schedule to split the reading and the writing tasks rather than trying to block out an extended period of time to accomplish both.

Means of communication

Although e-mail is fast and you can do it on your own schedule, it tends to eat up lots of time. These are enjoyable but can eat up your day. If you choose to communicate frequently on the phone rather than by e-mail, stick to business as much as possible and stay on the subject.

Information & news

As academics, we must be abreast with the daily happenings, read the news but do not read all minute detail, skim through and focus only on most important. But, read the headlines and captions. Pace yourself. Bottom line is: stay focused.

Committees

Academics often hold administrative positions and become committee members. If you are asked to attend a committee meeting, ask for the agenda. Read it ahead of time so that you have the opportunity to think about what you want to say.

Go into the meeting with a plan. If the discussion item is not important to you, do not prolong the discussion. Finally, have an exit time planned and excuse yourself early.

Close your office door

If you close your office door, you will get more accomplished. There are two reasons for this. First, a closed door is the equivalent of an invitation not to come in. The second reason is that it cuts down on the external distractions and allows you to concentrate on the work at hand.

Make sure that you emerge periodically so that they can see your own staff (and vice versa) and let them know that they should feel free to interrupt you. But, this practice may make you seem unfriendly to your colleagues this weapon must only be used when you need to catch up on your work.

Working the off shift and at home

You can get a lot accomplished if you can find time to work when no one is around who needs to take advantage of your time, thoughts, and energy. The hours before 9 a.m. and after 5 p.m. are the quietest times. You can make a big difference. Working Sunday evenings allows you to organize your week just before it starts. But leave time for a personal life.

Some people find that if they really need to make a big writing push or need some reading time, staying at home is the only way they can get control of their time only if you are not distracted by household activities.

Delegation for Managing Time Effectively

Time management also helps to increase productivity. Our time at work can be divided into productive and unproductive time, both are important; however we should try to maximize the productive time. Thus partitioning time is important. It would be good to distinguish between things that can decrease your productivity before they increase it, and things that just decrease your productivity.

According to time management experts, delegation is one of the best ways to squeeze more time out of the day. Delegation skill is the ability to effectively assign task responsibility and authority to others. Delegating some of your tasks to other people can free up your time and energy to pursue your highest priority goals.

For instance, you might choose to hire a technical assistant rather than handling your arranging field visits, project money yourself. But for many academics, delegating professional tasks to someone else just is not an option.

Some effective steps that can be used for delegation are discussed below:

- **Identify small tasks that will contribute to your priority goal:** in order to delegate appropriately to yourself, you have to figure out which tasks both need to be done and could be done on less brainpower. If a task doesn't really need to be done, then by all means just take it off your list. With a little reflection, you can probably identify several small tasks that would help you move forward on your highest-priority project but that don't require your highest level of energy.
- **List and group these small tasks:** designate a specific list or notebook for keeping track of these small tasks as you identify them. Get in the habit of adding to your list while you're working at your higher level will help you to stay focused on your priority task. Jot down things for later. Make a Monthly, weekly and day planner in your computer and update every day. This is as effective or sometimes more than using a diary as you will be able to get a bird's eye view of your activities and be ready.
- **Track your progress:** one of the challenges of academic work is that your day-to-day schedule may vary widely, as well as your

week-to-week schedule. Rather than only delegating tasks that contribute to lower-priority projects, like photocopying the handouts for next week's committee meeting, it is then effective to make a point of delegating tasks that contribute to your highest priority. Track your completion of these small tasks by crossing them off your list, keeping a daily log, or simply putting a check mark on each calendar day in which you worked towards your priority helps you see the incremental progress.

- ***Make it easy for yourself:*** match your actions, or tasks, to the context of available equipment and available energy. But when you are already tired, you're less able to make clear distinctions and decisions. Delegating your future self a list of clearly-defined tasks means you won't have to scan a list of tasks when you're tired and try to decide which one would be easiest. Also be nice to your assistant and people around support you. Effective delegation is a critical survival skill for us all. Yet, what is less often emphasized is that understanding delegation skill and knowing how to use it right is an important personal time management skill.

It's important to know when we should delegate. The right time to delegate is when: there is a lot of

work, a member has particular qualifications for or interest in a task, someone can benefit from the responsibility, when routine matters need attention and details take up too much time and have to be divided. Also, there are many ways to delegate, such as asking for volunteers or appointing someone. Appointing a person demonstrates your confidence in them.

Though one way to manage your time more effectively is to delegate, we often hear such comments from most academics as, *"It takes too much time to delegate."* *"If I delegate the work there is no guarantee that the work will be done properly. It is just easier to do it myself."* *"No one can do this as well as I can."* Therefore, it is important to delegate confidently.

A sign of a good leader is how they are able to delegate. You need to get the work done through others. This is the best way to accomplish more every day. You should make sure you know exactly what needs to be accomplished before you give the task to someone else. Help your junior staff grows, teach them well, plant faith in them, have confidence and be happy in their success. For effective delegation,

- Pick the right person best suited for the task: match the task with the person closest to the responsibility. Some tasks can go to a non academic staff member, or some might need

to go to a junior academic staff member. They just need to have the knowledge and skills to do the job. You want it done right. If the project is successful, the employee gets the credit. If it fails, you are accountable.

- Make sure the person can work independently: what tends to happen is the unsure or savvy person continually asks questions to the point where you end up doing most of the work. This is called “reverse delegation.” Don’t give in unless the person truly cannot do the task asked of them.
- Make sure the person understands exactly what it is you want them to do: set clear and objective goals. Let them know exactly what you want. Do not just say something like, “Don’t worry about it, I’m sure you will be able to figure it out.” Ask questions, watch the work performed, or have the employee give you feedback.
- Get the agreement and commitment of the employee: you want them to commit to you that they will perform the duties to the best of their abilities. If they are overwhelmed, or if they are already working on previously delegated tasks, chances are the project won’t get the attention it deserves. You will also be stressing out the employee.

- Give the person the authority to take control of the whole project: this will show you trust the individual and not look as though you just dumped all of the work on them, yet take the credit. They should be able to attend meetings associated with the project even when upper management is involved. Make sure you stand by the person and their decisions and make sure they use their authority wisely and not abuse the power given.
- Determine what tasks will need more monitoring than others: it is up to you to determine the strengths and who can get the job done quickly. The good news about delegation is having someone you trust do the work, however, you are still held accountable for the outcome. Give a deadline when you expect the project or task to be completed. Set up a daily or weekly meeting to review if you feel it's needed.
- Motivate them by discussing how the success of the project will make a positive impact: the positive impact refers to the company and to themselves. Let them know that what they are doing is truly important, and that they will be recognized for a job well done. This will help build commitment to the project as well.

- Once the project or task is completed, carefully review: make sure all was done correctly and to your satisfaction. Be sure to praise, when praise is due, when the job is completed up to standards. The easiest and simplest reward to give is a compliment to the completed delegated work. You both walk away feeling good and satisfied about the accomplishment.

Professional development and time management go hand in hand for all of us for as long as we exist in this time/space reality. The issue is: how to put first things first and how to even know what the first thing should be. As academics, we must remember to invest most of our time every week doing what we do best, and let others do what they do best and share to excel.

PRODUCING SKILFUL LEARNER THROUGH PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Keminda Herath

*Dept. of Agribusiness Management
Faculty of Agriculture & Plantation Management
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Makandura, Gonawila (NWP)*

There is bulk of evidence to show that most of the graduates from national university system in Sri Lanka are eventually employed in non related sectors. This highlights the urgent need for a revision in respective curriculum to fit which into the current needs of the respective sector.

In the formation of a new curricular, it is expected to shift from conventional teacher-centered learning systems to student-centered learning environment, or at least to a right mixture of both teacher-centered and student-centered learning systems. In this context, *Personal Development Planning* (PDP) will play an important role in so called newly developed education systems.

Need for Implementing a PDP

PDP is a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performances and/or achievements. Further, it helps students to plan for their personal,

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

educational and career development. The primary objective for PDP is to improve the capacity of individuals to understand what and how they are learning and to review, plan and take responsibility for their own learning process.

In particular, PDP provides students, amongst the others, an opportunity to: (1) become more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners; (2) understand how they are learning and relate their learning to a wider context; (3) improve their general skills for study and career management; (4) articulate personal goals and evaluate progress towards their achievement, and (5) develop a positive attitude to learning throughout life.

There are various expectations at the implementation of PDP. Some of important requirements can be identified as: (1) at the start of a program, all students should be introduced to the opportunities for PDP; (2) all students should be provided with opportunities for PDP at each stage of their program, and (3) the rationale for PDP at different stages of a program should be explained. Further, the higher educational institutes (HEIs) should be freed to have their own PDP policies and guidelines according to their circumstances.

Strategies of implementations can also be determined by respective HEI. Further, they are expected to specify the nature and scope of

opportunities for, and the recording and support mechanisms to be adopted. Each student should be offered PDP across the range of awards it provides.

Characteristics of Effective PDP in Practice

The characteristics of effective PDP practice can be identified as: (1) integration with mainstream academic pursuits; (2) links to the intended learning objectives and outcomes of programs; (3) support and endorsement by lecturing staff, underpinned by support from the institution; (4) reflect local customs, practices and circumstances with regard to the format and operation of the scheme; (5) complement good practice inherent in existing activity and practice, and (6) build upon existing partnerships between learners and academics.

PDP should be taken as a new way of expressing and reformulating existing principles and practices. Its introduction will be mainly a matter of making coherent and explicit to all students the presence and the value of established processes that are central to learning in higher education. Academics have always encouraged students to make progress towards intellectual independence, become more self-aware and plan and take responsibility for their own development.

Further, academics bring their existing skills to support students in this regard, providing feedback,

challenges and different perspectives to help their students identify possibilities for change. Many routine academic practices are built upon this in implicit ways.

The introduction of PDP will make it explicit that dialogue between teacher and student supports not only the student's going in depth understanding of their subject, but also the student's growing ability to think critically about their own performance and how to improve it.

This is already made clear within the curriculum, where modes of study or assessment involve challenging students as individuals to develop a piece of work over time and to undertake a process within which progress is reviewed continually.

Formative assessments, group projects, independent research projects, assessed seminar presentations and portfolio-based assessment are good examples in this respect.

Benefits of PDP

An effective PDP benefits both students and academics in a number of different ways. An effective PDP will increase student's attention, retention, progression and their key skills. Eventually it makes students more employable. In addition, there are a number of other benefits for students as PDP enables

to reflect critically; become more independent; adopt a more pro-active approach to their academic study, extra-curricular pursuits and career planning; make links and gain a holistic overview of their studies within a modular environment, and capitalize on their learning in a variety of contexts.

The benefits to the academics include that it adds some value to the learning-teaching experience. PDP helps students take greater responsibility for their own learning which facilitate more effective monitoring of student progress at the side of the academics.

It enables teacher to provide more focused and more effective academic support and guidance and supplies a mechanism for recording the tutorial and pastoral support provided to students, for fostering career-related skills, and for writing meaningful employment references.

Also, it enhances teacher's capacity to demonstrate the quality of the support he/she gives to students and provide a means of evidencing at the level of individual students that intended learning is being achieved. For some instances, PDP help to improve the effectiveness of work-based or work-related learning.

Approaches of PDP

There are many possible approaches of PDP. Some of commonly used approaches include: (1) Minimalist approach; (2) All-inclusive approach, and (3) Pragmatic approach, and are explored, in turn.

Minimalist approach

One approach is to do the absolute minimum – no more than is required to meet your institution's requirements. At this extreme, PDP can be seen as a tool that involve some formalization of personal tutorial support, the provision of university transcripts, and providing students with some facility for maintaining a progress file.

The progress file could involve the greatest effort, but there are many paper-based or electronic versions readily available that could be used. This approach addresses the required technicalities of PDP without necessarily involving many, or any, extra resources.

The advantages of this approach can be that it: (a) requires minimal input from academic staff; (b) is relatively quick and easy to set up, and (c) will encourage students to think about career choices both at university and afterwards.

On the other hand, the disadvantages include that it: (a) is unlikely to have much impact on student

learning; (b) will not enthuse students to become more independent learners; (c) may become little more than a 'ticking the box' exercise, and (d) will not address the spirit of PDP and stimulate any deep reflection in students.

All-inclusive approach

An alternative approach would be to fully embrace the spirit of PDP. Here, PDP would be seen not as a "bolt-on extra" but as the natural extension of good teaching practice. Enabling PDP would become a key feature in the planning of every single teaching session. Such an approach would involve most academic staff in re-evaluating their theories of learning and teaching.

The advantages of this approach can be that it: (a) provides a fully integrated learning and teaching experience; (b) provides all students with the means of relating the curriculum to their personal progression; (c) provides students with fully tailored support and guidance, and (d) enhances student retention and progression.

However, there are a number of disadvantages may also be including that it: (a) involves a major culture change in the way that some academics operate; (b) may have significant resource allocation implications; (c) involves considerably more effort in initial planning of learning and teaching activities,

and (d) may create unreasonable levels of expectation among students.

Pragmatic approach

A more realistic approach might be to adopt a position between the two approaches outlined above. This would probably involve: (1) mapping existing practice to identify where PDP is already being delivered within the curriculum; (2) where appropriate, building in further opportunities to enable students to plan their learning, develop skills, and reflect upon their experiences; (3) adopting tools and/or systems to enable students to audit skills, and to record achievement, and (4) providing support and guidance to ensure that students are able to benefit from the PDP opportunities on offer.

The adoption of more than just a minimalist approach is likely to pay dividends. Most engineering departments in the university system are faced with progression and retention challenges that are increasing with pressures to widen participation in higher education. A large part of the difficulties faced by students is their inability to cope with the degree of autonomy expected by universities.

Students are unlikely to put much effort into maintaining a PDP portfolio unless it is explicitly part of the curriculum, is well supported by resources and guidance, and is seen by students to be valued by

staff. Two notes of caution should be sounded in this respect:

- Firstly, if students are asked to do something without the proper support and guidance this is likely to prejudice students against the whole idea - an integrated approach is critical, and
- Secondly, offering a too rigidly structured system can have its drawbacks. The whole idea of PDP is that students should eventually manage their own lives, and, by definition, they can only do this in their own way and not somebody else's way - students should be able to modify any recording system to suit themselves and gain a feeling of ownership over it.

Use of Electronic Tools in PDP

Electronic PDP tools are certainly quite popular in developed countries. With the improving IT facilities in local universities, there is a huge potential of implementing plausible electronic PDP system at local level. These would offer the academic a readymade solution, whilst they appeal to students who have become accustomed to on-line systems and would expect their PDP recording portfolio to be electronic.

There is a huge potential this to be motivated and supported by the newly introduced leadership programs by the government for incoming undergraduate students.

We can think of a number of advantages of using electronic systems. The major advantage is that it can connect easily with the Internet, thus creating exciting new opportunities for accessing support materials, learning tools and other materials.

A number of dedicated websites are becoming available which will provide specialist support and which will have the potential for developing and hosting generic materials and tools. The Internet is also able to provide links to similar activities outside HEIs, such as employer organizations and professional bodies. Electronic PDP tools, in fact, can encompass the following:

- On-line services for students, so that they can move freely around a university's Intranet to access tips, advice and support workshops
- Chat rooms to share ideas and information
- Links with other records/databases within the institution
- Flexible updating and modification of both system and records
- Customizable systems/documentation
- Links to the Internet and other resources

- Other advantages of electronic tools as listed below.
- Accessible for all students within the university
- Ease of use for entering and storing information at any time
- Ease of production of reports, electronic or paper-based, such as Curriculum Vitae
- Manageable over the whole institution
- Paper-less
- Non-threatening for the user
- Facilitates interactive activities between the teacher and students (e.g. learning logs)
- Can be easily amended and added to at any time

Foundation to the professionalism of a typical graduate who expects to serve for the betterment of the nation is laid out in the local university system. Through proper implementation of PDP, a graduate will be very competent in processes such as skills auditing, competence assessment, skill development, action planning, evidence gathering, reflection upon practice and documenting activity.

THE ROLE OF ART AND CULTURE IN DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS OF STUDENTS

S. N. T. De Silva

Dept. of Biotechnology

Faculty of Agriculture & Plantation Management

Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Makandura, Gonawila (NWP)

What are Soft Skills?

Soft skills are needed in everyday life as much as they are needed at work. Communicating, listening, negotiation and engaging in a dialogue are people's skills that are needed to develop interpersonal skills. Moreover, decision making, self confidence, giving feedback, cooperating as a team member, solving problems, resolving problems (conflict resolution), lateral thinking, creative and innovative in all aspects work, ability to create win-win deals, are considered as essential skills of the human capital in any enterprise should possess. Without soft skills poor decisions are made, negotiations go poorly, communications lacks passion, and leadership withers away very quickly.

Soft skills are considered as the keystones of success. Selecting team members, establishing value, generating relationships that eventually gel into a functional team requires competent application of the soft skills.

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

These skills are typically hard to observe quantify and measure. In contrast, hard skills are technical or administrative procedures that can be easily observe, quantify and measure. These hard skills can be trained and usually appear in a curriculum vitae of a candidate. The following soft skills are considered as essential for meaningful personal development of a person which will lead him the way to success as a leader.

Humility and Self Confidence

Humility is looking at life from different perspectives which allow someone to see what others cannot. The sense of humility should be balanced with self confidence but not arrogance. Listen to criticism without affecting self confidence. A person must find the right balance between inner strength and outward humility combined with genuine sense of leading a whole team.

Emotional Intelligence

This 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. Self control deals with how to present self, when to focus on the strengths, and when to be

quiet and listen, when to allow others to make mistakes when they develop their leadership qualities.

Simply a sense of having priority what needs to be done and when. Most importantly self control helps controlling outbursts and frustrations in public. This aspect generally reflects a person's consideration for others. The qualities like empathy, sympathy kindness ext. are rare qualities of some people but can be inculcated. At an organizational level empathy alone will really find a way to deal with difficult people.

Building on Strengths and Minding Core Incompetence

As an individual a leader should be able to identify strengths and core incompetence which describes the aspects that interferes with accomplishing goals. Focusing on personal strengths enhances the ability to see them in others. This can reinforce the delegation of tasks to those who can do them better.

This will give the others a feeling of working in an area of strength builds self efficacy, self esteem, job satisfaction and loyalty. Thus, becoming aware of this significant weakness and paying attention to it can remove the obstacles is a path of success.

Communication

Learning creates the distinction and communication enhances them. When speak out, one should observe the impact. From an organizational point of view the communication skills such as integrity in speech and action, sensitivity to context and managing perceptions are important qualities of a leader.

Integrity in speech and action

When considering the integrity in speech and action, the leader should be aware of the knowing and doing gap to do what should be done when it should be done. The performance levels should reflect the words in a consistent and coherent manner. Leaders need to model the attitudes and behaviors they expect others to display. As a result the trust and security grows in others.

Sensitivity to context

Knowing the differences in styles of communication and the context in which they can be presented can make the difference between success and failure.

Saying the right thing at the right time with clarity as well as exposing complex issues in simple basic and compelling ways are valuable traits. Awareness of what should be said to whom and when are

matters of strategy and responsibility and not as a function of emotion.

If the leader does not possess the ability of sensitivity to context this can lead to insecurity, mistrust and decrease in morale of the others. Poor jokes, inappropriate comments, insensitive to other peoples of different ethnic or religious background could create an unpleasant atmosphere. Thus, the knowledge and awareness of context, culture and custom can lead to success as a leader.

Managing Perception

The success of an organization depends upon understanding that perception is reality by virtue and ability to create a perception a reality, the leader's role is of critical. The differences between "what is said" and "what is done" as espoused theories (what we say) and theories in use (What we actually do).

Lacking the awareness of the gap between the two can lead to major conflicts. This may create perceptions in others that we may not be who we say we are. Losing the confidence of others can mean losing everything. Cultural differences accounts for some differences in perception.

Something that is said in one culture could mean something very different in another. This become very important when has to deal with multicultural

where people are unfamiliar with cultural perspectives of work, management, personal freedom and responsibility ethics and the like. Thus, the ability to communicate in a clear concise and unambiguous manner is essential for good interpersonal relations.

Listening

Communication and listening could be considered as two sides of a coin. A leader should be able to communicate effectively as well as listen to others. Listening empowers knowledge and leads to cooperation.

Listening to the experience and ideas of others, will improve leaders own judgments and make correct decisions. Listening helps to builds humanity and self confidence and prevents conflict.

This quality of a leader will allow the others to contribute to the vision while maintaining confidence that the vision is well founded and the others will feel a sense of satisfaction of their ability to contribute the vision and generate a sense of ownership.

Appreciating the role of others

Giving and receiving appreciation is important role as a leader, thus, being generous and timely in

rewarding others and acknowledging their contribution is a soft skill of a leader.

Recognition for good performance enhances the perception of self efficacy as well as pride. Acknowledge and appreciate people in public and criticize mistakes in private and this way of approach can create win-win situations because it is important to boost morale by recognizing the role play by others in the enterprise.

Team player

Team work is critical to growth and long term success. A team is a group of people with complementary skills who are committed to the attainment of a common objective, who work well together to produce high quality results for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.

Qualities of a leadership are take responsibility for the success of the team, delivers on commitments, contributes to discussions, listening, precise and concise when across the message and gives and receives useful feedback.

Leadership will also provides a climate in which constructive working relationships can evolve and identify and resolve problems and destructive conflicts before they damage the team.

Among traditional, passive and facilitative leadership, the latter is considered as the best in which an open environment will be maintained, creativity among team members will be considered while maintaining the group focus rather than autocratic and figure-headed leaderships.

Bloom's Taxonomy - Learning Domains

Higher education institutes of any country involve in human capital development. In 1956, Dr. Benjamin S Bloom has developed a system of categories of learning behavior to assist in the design and assessment of educational learning, looking at learning as a behavioral science.

This learning theory has been expanded over the years by Bloom, Anderson and Krathwhol in which they divide educational objectives into three learning domain structure, within which the detail may vary. They are cognitive domain, affective domain and psychomotor domain.

Bloom's theory was build up under the assumption that education should focus on mastery of subjects and the promotion of higher forms of thinking rather than fact-transfer for mindless information recall. He believed that the fact-transfer and information recall is the lowest level of training rather than true meaningful personal development.

In this structure within the learning domains there are sub categories ranked into different levels which are starting from the simplest behavior to the most complex. The categories can be thought of as degrees of difficulties. That is, learning at the higher levels dependent on having attained prerequisite knowledge and skills at lower levels.

The taxonomy of learning behavior motivates educators to focus on three domains and after a learning process the learner should acquire new skills, knowledge and attitudes for meaningful personal development. This remains the challenge for academia in modern days.

Cognitive domain

The cognitive domain involves knowledge and the development of intellectual skills. This includes the recall or recognition of specific facts, procedural patterns, and concepts that serve in the development of intellectual abilities and skills. The six major categories of this domain are: knowledge, comprehension, apply, analyze, synthesize and evaluate.

Knowledge tests learner's previous learned materials by recalling facts, basic concepts theories, classifications, definitions rules etc. At the comprehension level the learner will demonstrate the understanding of facts and ideas by organizing,

comparing, translating, interpreting in his or her own style. Learner will begin to apply new knowledge into novel situations at the application level. At the level of analysis the ability to separate material into components by distinguishing between facts and inferences will be achieved.

This will enable the learner to develop logical thinking abilities to solve a problem proactively. Next, the learner will reach the evaluation level to present and defend opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas based on particular criteria.

For an example, the learner will be able to evaluate a most effective solution for a given situation based on available information. At the synthesis level the learner will begin to compile information in different way to synthesize new ideas or patterns to propose alternatives.

Psychomotor domain

This domain focuses on change or development of a skills relating to manual tasks such as physical movement, coordination and use of motor skill areas. Development of these skills requires practice. There are seven subcategories under which this can be described from the simplest behavior to the most complex. Perception is at the lowest level where the learner will use sensory cues to guide motor activity.

At the next level the learner identifies the three sets; mental, physical and emotional that predetermines a person's response to different situations.

This shows learners motivation to learn new skill and recognizes the abilities and limitations. Under guided response the learner will acquire the skill by trial and error and better performance is achieved by adequate practicing.

Next step (mechanism) describes the intermediate stage in learning a complex skill. A learned skill become habitual and can be performed with some confidence and proficiency. Under complex overt response the skillful performance of motor acts involve complex movements.

The proficiency is indicated by a quick accurate and highly coordinated performance requiring minimum energy. The learner will perform automatically without hesitation.

At the adaptation level the skills are well developed and the individuals can modify movement patterns to fit special requirements under unexpected experiences. Finally, the learner will gain the ability to create new movement patterns based on highly developed skills to specific problem.

Affective domain

The affective domain includes emotional aspects of life, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasms, motivations, and attitudes. The five major categories are listed from the simplest behavior to the most complex. Blooms theory advocates this structure and sequence for developing attitude or personal development.

There are five levels in the affective domain moving through the lowest order processes to the highest. The lowest level which describes as receiving, the learner passively pays attention shows willingness to hear. They would listen with respect and try to remember names of newly introduces names of people for an example.

At the next level (responding) the learner will actively participate in the learning process by involving in classroom discussions, questioning new ideas concepts and models. This shows motivation.

At the third level the learner will learn to value a person attaches to a particular object, phenomenon or behavior. Valuing is based on the internalization of a set of specified values and these will be expressed in the learner's overt behavior and are identifiable. Thus the learner will learn to value diversity, resolve conflicts; commitment demonstrates belief in the democratic process.

At the organizing level learner organize values into priorities and creates a unique value system. By comparing and relating, the learner will synthesize his/her own set of values which will enable to recognize the balance between freedom and responsibility, accept responsibility for his own acts, systematic planning and solving problems, accept professional ethical standards, to create a life plan in harmony with abilities, interests and beliefs and prioritize time between, work, family and self.

Finally the learner will internalize the values which will become characterize. The learner will be self controlled; the behavior will be consistent and predicable. Thus learner will shows self reliance, cooperate in group activities, displays professional commitment to ethical practice and value people for what they are and not how they look.

Blooms in his theory, thus, emphasize the importance of developing emotional aspects of life for meaningful personal growth. This domain structure describes about developing and internalizing values which are primarily the soft skills of a learner.

However, the young adults or the undergraduates who cross the threshold to enter the higher education possess a unique set of skills that reflects their

interpersonal behavior. These qualities are practiced since their childhood and are thoroughly ingrained.

What are Ingrained Qualities?

Individuals acquire unique behavioral patterns and other life challenges at very early age from the environments where they grow up. Thus, they are coming up with unique portfolio of soft skills. Like all behavior patterns interpersonal skills are “hard-wired” in the neuronal pathways of the cerebral cortex of the human brain.

This means when a behavior pattern was repeated often enough make neuronal connections that behavior pattern become habitual thus; feel natural, easy and comfortable.

The challenge for the academia is to attempt to change the ingrained personal qualities of an individual while transferring knowledge and other desired skills for them to become future leaders. However, introducing a new interpersonal skill is extremely difficult, because it means replacing an old skill. Can practicing different art forms help to improve soft skills of a person?

Role of art in personal development

Recent studies have shown a correlation between participation in the arts and increased brain function.

It has also been shown that participating in such activities enhances soft skills of a person and helps them to reach their maximum potentials. Further, modern research claims that art can be used as a therapeutic device with broad reaching outcomes which benefits the learners cognitive, emotional, social and motor abilities.

The study of art exercises, strengthens, and develops the neurophysiological areas and associations of the brain that are involved with other cognitive abilities. Research on the arts finds impacts showing both increased attendance and fewer discipline referrals in schools.

Moreover, learning arts skills forces mental 'stretching' useful to other areas of learning. Particularly important outcomes such as improved writing and reading skills, oral language skills, literacy, mathematics, and science skills have been observed. Further, arts touch and cultivate sustained attention and focus along with student motivation and social competence.

Art, on the other hand, can also be used as a self esteem booster when their pieces are displayed or when others compliment their presentation or efforts. Art encompass the areas of musical arts, visual arts and kinesthetic arts which include dramatic arts, dance, recreational activities and physical education.

Music

Most extensively studied area in brain development is music. Greater impact could be observed by learning and practicing music. To experience music in full the specific acoustic properties of a note; tones and tonal relationships (pitch, duration, timbre and intensity and sounding of notes in terms of rhythm and melody and memory and emotional responses are necessary. Learning music aids arousal of emotions and memory by storing information in more areas of the brain and creating connections between these areas.

In addition music can enhance cognitive system, motor system and stress response system. Music is a complex symbolic system, much like language and mathematics. Learning in music can have very important impacts on brain functions namely spatial reasoning or spatial-temporal reasoning. These terms refer to understandings of relations of ideas and objects in space in time.

The areas of the brain used in music perception, appreciation and expression (many, but not all, thought to be localized in the right hemisphere) are also needed for the visual-spatial skills necessary for mathematical processing. There is historical as well as experimental evidence for this math/music connection.

Visual arts (Drawing)

Drawing requires prior visualization of the picture and gradual completion. This improves visualization. It also gives the delight to the creator and self confidence. Drawing requires attention, concentration and develops mental relaxation and enhances creativity of the learner. In a state of attentive relaxation one tends to forget worries.

In addition, drawing develops mental power, enhances collaboration, social aspects of life and team work, learns to appreciate the work of others and also have strong positive effects on emotions. It does have an emotional effect on the viewers.

The experience gained is helpful in daily life, trying to discover new solutions to problems and to tackle challenges of daily life. Visual arts also improve academic skills such as organization and persistence writing skills, reading skills and highly developed independent thinking skills. As a learner taking risk in exploration of a new field, it leads to a path of self-discovery. Taking part in visual arts, thus, helps to identify the inner wealth and the potentiality of an individual.

Dance

Another area of the arts that has been documented as increasing brain function is the area

of dance. Dance can aid learning by teaching individuals to observe and then translate their observations into action. It's a way to communicate thoughts feelings and it spans in every culture encompassing different styles.

Dance contributes to increased self-confidence, persistence, social tolerance, and appreciation of individual and group social development. Researchers have also observed learning dance steps and increased learning capacity.

Learning dance steps require observations translating into motion. This increases the function of the motor cortex and helps the individuals to learn better. Moreover, a learner adapts a sense of control and autonomy by controlling body to match the beat of the music. This discipline can foster self management and impulse control, thus, leading to anger control. Researchers also found evidence that dance has indirect links to creative thinking, originality, fluency and flexibility.

Drama

The final well-documented area in which the arts may increase the intellect is drama. Performing in drama can lead to a state of high motivation that increases a person's attention span, which ultimately helps to focus in other areas of learning. Acting

training improves memory by forcing performers to learn lines and movements for the performance.

Drama shows consistent effects on narrative understanding as well as on component skills: identifying characters, understanding character motivations, reading and writing skills, and interpersonal skills such as dealing with conflict team playing. In general engage all forms of art and art activities increase a wide range of social and in general academic skills.

A SUCCESSFUL EDUCATOR THROUGH A SKILFUL COMMUNICATOR

N. J. Amarasinghe

*Information Communication Center
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Kuliyaipitiya*

Communication: Concept, Process and Importance

Communication is essential for every area of life. Especially, Education rests on the ability to communicate in such a way that every student has a clear and comprehensive grasp on the information. Communication skills for teachers are thus as important as their in-depth knowledge of the particular subject which they teach.

Students have different levels of strengths and weaknesses and also they have different kinds of taste and preferences over subjects. So, it is the job of the educator to create enthusiasm and interest in the minds of the students towards a subject.

Communication is a two way process between the sender and the receiver. Communication is only successful when both the sender and the receiver understand the same information as a result of the effort from both the sender of the message and the receiver. It is a process that consists of the sender, encoding, the channel, decoding, the receiver,

Staff Development Centre – Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

feedback and the context. At each stage, there is the potential for misunderstanding and confusion. To be an effective communicator and to get your point across without misunderstanding and confusion, your goal should be to lessen the frequency of problems at each stage of this process, with clear, concise, accurate, well-planned communications.

Success in encoding depends partly on the ability to convey information clearly and simply, Just as successful encoding is a skill, so is successful decoding (involving, for example, taking the time to read a message carefully, or listen actively to it). Just as confusion can arise from errors in encoding, it can also arise from decoding errors. In such a situation you can get the aid of feedback, to measure how well your message has been understood.

Communication is classified in the following two different ways: (1) intrapersonal communication, and (2) interpersonal communication. When people talk to themselves, communication takes place within the brain and it embraces their thoughts, experiences and perceptions during a communication event. Behavior responses on all other levels of communication essentially begin on intrapersonal level.

On this level, the individual forms personal rules and patterns of communication. It can be “sense-making” e.g. interpreting maps, texts, signs, and

symbols or “interpreting non-verbal communication” e.g. postures, gestures, eye contact & etc.”

Interpersonal communication is referred to as dyadic communication, or communication between two individuals. This type of communication can occur in both a one-on-one and a group setting. This also means being able to handle different people in different situations and making people feel at ease. Gestures such as eye contact, body movement, and hand gestures are also part of interpersonal communication.

Interpersonal communication may involve face-to-face communication in a way that accomplishes the purpose and is appropriate. This can also occur as Public Communication or Public Speaking: The speaker sends messages to an audience, which is not identified as individuals.

The relationship between thoughts and expressions is the relationship between intent and content of a message. Any communication is bound to be positive and pleasant only when our thought process is under control and we are in a positive frame of mind to communicate and also receive communication.

In fact, a person whose inner qualities/core competencies are positive is likely to be a better communicator than those whose perceptions, values,

outlook and attitude (frame of reference) are not in a positive frame. However, given the nature of communication, which is highly intricate and interactive, it is not possible to have a complete control on ourselves.

Successful communication takes place when the sender's frame of reference matches that of the receiver. Frame of reference is a combination of ideas, beliefs, opinions, attitudes, values, knowledge, culture, past experiences and many other elements. The biggest challenge that the sender faces is in drawing the receiver into his or her own frame of reference.

Every communication takes place within a context. Context is formed by the combination of circumstances that influence the piece of communication at a certain point of time. The factors that influence a context are physical surrounding, emotions and reactions of people to whom the communication is transmitted, their attitudes, and opinions.

These factors differ from situation to situation. Therefore, no two transmissions can be replica of each other because the situations are different. Context influences both the encoding and the decoding stages.

Seven 'C's of Effective Communication

Where “effective communication” is of concern, one thing that comes to mind, is the basic principles of “effective communication” which tells how the message can become effective for the target group, and about style and importance of the message. These principles are commonly known as 7 C's of effective communication. They are:

1. *Completeness* – the communication must be complete. It should convey all facts required by the audience. The sender of the message must take into consideration the receiver's mind set and convey the message accordingly.
2. *Conciseness* – this means less wordiness, i.e. communicating what you want to convey in least possible words without forgoing the other C's of communication. Concise communication is both time-saving as well as cost-saving. A concise message: underlines and highlights the main message as it avoids using excessive and needless words: provides short and essential message in limited words to the audience: more appealing and comprehensible to the audience.
3. *Consideration* – consideration implies “stepping into the shoes of others”. This implies that the sender of the message gives due importance to the receiver and composes the message

accordingly. Effective communication must take the audience into consideration, i.e., the audience's view points, background, mind-set, education level, etc. Ensure that the self-respect of the audience is maintained and their emotions are not at harm. Modify your words in message to suit the audience's needs while making your message complete.

4. *Concreteness* – implies being particular and clear rather than fuzzy and general. Concreteness strengthens the confidence (concreteness means opposite of being abstract or vague).
5. *Clarity* – implies emphasizing on a specific message or goal at a time, rather than trying to achieve too much at once. By choosing simple, precise, familiar, right words and short sentences to express ideas, Speaker succeeds in expressing his/her thoughts well. Clear expression is a fine balance between familiar words and words that are precise. Several other factors affect the clarity of communication. Of course, in speaking, it is expected that you as a message sender should know the standard pronunciation of words. It is necessary to remember that when you speak clearly, you impose listening on people. Clarity in communication: makes understanding easier: Complete clarity of thoughts and ideas enhances the meaning of message.

6. *Courtesy* – implies the message should show the sender's expression as well as should respect the receiver. The sender of the message should be sincerely polite, judicious, reflective and enthusiastic. A courteous message: implies taking into consideration both viewpoints as well as feelings of the receiver of the message: is positive and focused at the audience: makes use of terms showing respect for the receiver of message: is not at all biased.
7. *Correctness* – implies that there are no grammatical errors in communication. A correct message: is exact, correct and well-timed: boosts up the confidence level: makes use of appropriate and correct language in the message.

Non-Verbal Clues in an Effective Communication

In written communication, the nonverbal communication signifiers are the use of white space, proper margins, right kind of fonts, right length of sentence, length of paragraphs, and line spacing. A page that has matter condensed closely is usually skipped by the reader or it is rejected.

Few of us are born to be excellent public speakers. If you notice, you may find that their speeches are full of non-verbal clues. But, don't be discouraged, if you are not. Many people become

accomplished speakers, who in the past were speechless when asked to speak in public.

To become a good communicator, one must improve more on his non-verbal communication skills than the verbal communication skills. Experts say that communication is composed of different methods: words, voice, tone and non-verbal clues. Of these, some are more effective in delivering a message than others.

According to researches: in a conversation or verbal exchange: words are 7% effective; tone of voice is 38% effective, non-verbal clues are 55% effective. That is why good visual presentation - using graphics, color, balanced design layout adds so much to a written or spoken message. These additional "clues" can help compensate for the non-verbal aspect of a delivering message by triggering emotions on the part of the reader or listener.

This shows that the teacher or speaker should pay more attention on the non-verbal clues rather than totally dependent on verbal communications. These non-verbal clues include: Body language (e.g., arms crossed, standing, sitting, relaxed, tense), Emotion of the sender and receiver (e.g., yelling, speaking provocatively, enthusiastic) and other connections between the people (e.g., friends, enemies, professional similarities or differences, personal similarities or differences, age similarities or

differences, philosophical similarities or differences, attitudes, expectations). This teaches us that “what” you say is not nearly as important as “how” you say it!

The different ways in which people move their bodies that include postures, gestures, head nods, and leg movements, are called “*Kinesics*”, and some of which are explored below.

Gestures

These are body movements. Many presenters worry about how much or little they gesture. They believe arms can sometimes get out of control. The important thing is to find the gestures that are natural for you. If you are great in use of your gestures, don't try to force your hands to rigid stillness. On the other hand, don't force yourself into balletic movement, which makes your listeners unpleasant or uneasy. In general, gestures are classified into three categories:

1. **Emblems** –these have direct verbal translations, like nodding of the head for 'yes', shaking the head for 'no' or waving hand for 'hello' or saying 'bye bye' they are used in place of words.
2. **Illustrators** – these gestures naturally accompany our speech and accentuate what we say. Very often, we tend to close our palm in a fist formation or bang the table to suggest our mode

of thinking, often for the purpose of emphasizing our points. These gestures have a dramatic effect.

3. **Adaptors** – these are unconscious movements of body that originate from the nervous state of our mind. In an interview, when the candidate is nervous or uncomfortable with the questions asked, she/he may unconsciously crack knuckles, shake legs, or tap the foot.

Postures

Gestures are a part of postures although for our understanding, we will study some of the postures separately. Often in interviews and group interactions, you will be judged by your postures. When we make a presentation, we stand and do it. But, when we are at a meeting or a seminar we sit and listen.

In both situations we must keep our posture in a controlled manner, because our sitting and standing postures may be indicators of our personality, confidence or our commitment. In a presentation, it is necessary to have an erect posture with weight evenly distributed on both legs.

Tilted body weight gives a clumsy / casual impression to the presenter. It is a negative posture. A person with drooping shoulders and sagging body gives a poor impression.

Power of Eyes (Eye Grammar)

The study of facial expressions begins with the eyes because they are the most powerful medium of communication we possess other than words. Isn't it often said "People speak through their eyes?" Eyes are said to be the windows to our soul and mirror of our heart! Of all the parts of the human body that are used to transmit information, the eyes are the most important and can transmit the most subtle nuances.

In your daily life, have you ever felt that someone talking to you does not establish eye contact and continues to either look up or down as she or he is talking? At the same time, another person while talking may be engaged in the process of thinking, and in doing so may be moving his/her eyes sideways, or upwards.

Remember, your unpleasant feel! A great deal of fascinating study has been done in this area. The dynamics of our eye movement have been labeled as 'eye grammar' and the research unfolds the micro-power-of our eyes.

Effective Oral Communication

Oral communication is as challenging as written communication. What makes written communication different from oral communication is that it is

permanent and forms a part of documentation that can be referred to as and when require. A letter or a report can always be read over and over again for the purpose of determining the truth so that it helps in the process of taking a decision on an issue.

However, oral communication has its own special characteristics. It is believed by many that good writers may not necessarily be good speakers. For an effective communication, however, one has to make an attempt to master both the forms of communication.

While it is true that one need not be so finicky about the correctness of pronunciation, it is vital to remember that in an oral communication, the listener expects the speaker to have the correctness of standard pronunciation. Also, the listener expects you to speak at your best. After all, when we speak well with proper pronunciation, we force listening on people.

The beautiful aspect of oral communication is that it involves not only words but also the nuances of voice that acts as a communication channel. When as a speaker you utter your words with clarity, feeling, correctness, and you do justice to the rhythm of the words, your speech begins to sound lyrical, almost like music. When you speak, you have to manage your tongue to produce the correct sounds.

A vowel cannot be enunciated as a consonant. A vowel demands a glide just as a consonant demands a sharp touch to the edge of the words.

When we as speakers understand that words have rhythm and a personality of their own, we are in a position to feel the sound quality of the words. We then speak, as we would be expected to utter. Pleasant sounds are enunciated when we do justice to the combination of the consonants and the vowels.

Only then, our speech begins to sound like music! All great speakers are pleasant and powerful speakers but they have to work hard to become so! A number of factors that matter in oral communication, and are discussed next briefly:

1. *Projection* – an effective voice is not only clear but also as loud as the occasion and the listeners demand. When you make a presentation to a group, ensure that you are heard even at the end of the room. You are expected to raise and direct your voice to all the listeners by alternating between loudness and a quieter tone. But in interpersonal or small group communications, it is necessary to adjust to the level of the volume required. At no point in time must you be heard as 'yelling' or shouting at the top of your voice. A loud voice can be misunderstood, as 'anger' or 'rudeness', and it can be a major point for misunderstanding in a multicultural environment.

2. *Articulation* – means speaking all the parts of a word carefully. Incorrect articulation occurs because of carelessness on the part of the speakers. It involves: (1) leaving off parts of a word, (2) adding parts to a word, or (3) slurring words together.
3. *Modulation* – varying the tone and the pitch of your voice is called modulation. Pitch refers to the sound vibration frequency. Pitch should never be too high or too low. Listeners like a controlled pitch. Modulation means the rise and fall in pitch and this pattern of speaking makes the voice sound pleasant and interesting. If you do not vary the pitch, you will risk being labeled as a monotonous speaker.
4. *Pronunciation* – you are judged by the way you speak the words that your listener expects you to speak. Wherever you go, your knowledge of careful pronunciation will always be an advantage. Pronunciation basically deals with the stress, non-stress of consonants and vowels and opening and closing of the mouth. Of course, regional or ethnic dialects often come in the way of pronunciation of words.
5. *Enunciation* – it means the care and precision with which you use your tongue and jaw to produce clear speech sounds. While consonants

provide sharpness/crispness to sounds, vowels
add melody and richness.

As a teacher, you know that your students are visual, auditory or kinesthetic learners. You should be adept at creating presentation styles for all three. Your body language is your main communicator and you keep it positive at all times. Like a great orator you are passionate when you speak. But, at the same time, you know that discussion and not lecturing stimulates greater feedback.

Anyone who understands some underlying techniques and principles about presenting will be a more confident speaker. Speaking effectively and persuasively is something anyone can learn and develop with practice. There is a big difference between being nervous before speaking and feeling terrified.

A certain amount of anxiety and tension before addressing a group is natural and even energizing. What you need to do to succeed is to turn the experience around and focus on the positive implications of giving a presentation, rather than on the negative ones.

Pre Preparation

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of careful preparation. The presenter must concentrate

not only upon the facts being presented but upon the style, pace, tone and ultimately tactics which should be used. As a rule of thumb for an average presentation, no less than 1 hour should be spent in preparation for 5 minutes of talking.

Formulate Your Objectives

The starting point in planning any speech is to formulate a precise objective. This should take the form of a simple, concise statement of intent. For example, the purpose of your speech may be to educate your students or, to evaluate a proposal. No two objectives will be served equally well by the same presentation; and if you are not sure at the onset what you are trying to do, it is unlikely that your plan will achieve it.

One question is how many different objectives that you can achieve within the given time frame. In the end it is far more productive to achieve one goal than to blunder over several. The best approach is to isolate the essential objective and to list at most two others which can be addressed providing they do not distract from the main one. If you do not focus upon your objective, it is unlikely that the audience will.

Identify the Audience

The next task is to consider the audience to determine how best to achieve your objectives in the

context of these people. Essentially this is done by identifying their aims and objectives while attending your presentation. If you can somehow convince them they are achieving those aims while at the same time achieving your own, you will find a helpful and receptive audience.

This principal of matching the audience aims, however, opens the simplest and most effective manner of obtaining their attention at the beginning. If your opening remarks imply that you understand their problem and that you have a solution, then they will be flattered at your attention and attentive to your every word.

Structure Your Speech

All speeches should have a definite structure or format; a talk without a structure is a woolly mess. If you do not order your thoughts into a structured manner, the audience will not be able to follow them. Having established the aim of your presentation you should choose the most appropriate structure to achieve it.

However, the structure must not get in the way of the main message. If it is too complex, too convoluted or simply too noticeable the audience will be distracted. If a section is unnecessary to the achievement of your fundamental objectives, pluck it out.

The Listening Skills - Key Element of Learning

Various studies stress the importance of listening as a communication skill. They point out that many of us spend 70 to 80 percent of our working hours in some form of communication. Of that time, we spend about 9 percent writing, 16 percent reading, 30 percent speaking, and 45 percent listening. Studies also confirm that most of us are poor and inefficient listeners. Most people listen at an efficiency level of less than about 25 percent.

Studies also show that, immediately after listening to a 10-minute oral presentation, the average listener has heard, understood, properly evaluated, and retained only a half what was said.

Listeners are basically in two types: as those listening with the intent to reply, and those listening with the intent to understand. As educators, we should know the importance of the listening skill of our learners? Real communication occurs when we listen with understanding - to see the idea and attitude from the other person's point of view, to sense how it feels to them, to achieve their frame of reference in regard to the thing they are talking about.

Remember, listening is not the same as hearing. Hearing is using the ears to acknowledge the sound

of something. Listening means the understanding from the perspective of the speaker.

By practicing your listening skills, you will also develop better speaking skills, too. If you listen to where people misinterpret what you say, you will find ways to make it clearer. Your frustration at being misunderstood will disappear and you will assume less about what you speak because you have confirmed it with the learner.

Understand Listening Barriers

To improve listening skills is an extraordinary skill to develop, which pays great dividends in the learning process. The most direct way to improve communication is by learning to listen more effectively. Nearly every aspect of human life could be improved by better listening. Poor listeners, in fact don't know how much they're missing.

Because listening is so vital to the success of a learning process, it is important to take note of the “Seven Sins” that get in the way of a verbal communication:

1. *Filtering* – this is when a person’s mind is sifting through another’s words and tuning in only when he or she hears agreement. Some listeners feel compelled to challenge every point the speaker makes, even if they inwardly agree. Discussion

then becomes a contest, with a score being kept for who wins the most points by arguing. Commonly, a filterer replies to someone else's statements with "yes", but not with an agreement.

2. *Second Guessing* – someone who is second-guessing usually misses important details because they are too busy (a) imagining someone has hidden motives for saying what they're saying, and (b) trying to figure out what those hidden motives might be.
3. *Discounting* – this sin occurs when a listener lacks respect for a speaker. What the speaker is saying could be 100% dead on correct, but a discounter will either internally or publicly scoff at what's being said, for any number of reasons. One reason may be dislike on teaching style. The sad thing about discounters is that they often miss the content totally, simply because they don't like the source. A milder form of discounting occurs when content is brushed off just because the person speaking is not a good speaker.
4. *Relating* – a relater is someone who continually finds references from his or her own background and compares them to what the speaker is saying. Relaters often appear self-centered, as everything they hear is publicly compared or contrasted to his or her, own experiences.

5. *Rehearsing* – this sin blocks much listening as it is simply waiting for the other speaker to finish what he or she is saying so the rehearsing listener can start talking or questioning again. While someone else is talking, the listener is thinking about how to say the next sentence or how to ask next question.
6. *Forecasting* – someone who takes an idea from the speaker and runs light years ahead of the topic at hand is forecasting. Forecasting can stem from being bored with the subject matter, or simply because one's mind automatically thinks ahead.
7. *Placating* – it is the worst of all listening sins. Listeners with placating feeling show that they agree with everything (even though they disagree) anyone else says, just to avoid conflict.

Apart from that, in most cases, the listeners think they already know what the speaker wants to say, before the speaker actually finishes saying it. They might then impatiently cut him off or try to complete the sentence for him.

Even more disruptive is interrupting him by saying that they disagree with him, but without letting the speaker to finish saying what it is that they think they disagree with. That's a common problem when a discussion gets heated, and which causes the discussion to degrade quickly.

If you don't value what the speaker's saying, your respect to the speakers gets drained. Showing respect to the speaker is a crucial element of good listening. This also causes the listener to pre-judge what the speaker is saying - a kind of closed-mindedness.

One good strategy to overcome this is to teach them, to make a commitment to learn at least one unexpected, worthwhile thing during every discussion. While listening, the decision, to look for something new and interesting helps make your mind more open and receptive.

Some listeners are always trying to be helpful to the speaker. This may seem beneficial, but, it interferes with listening because the listener is thinking about how to solve what he perceives to be the speaker's problem. Consequently, he misses what the speaker is actually saying. It's worth emphasizing that the goal of good listening is simply to listen - nothing more and nothing less.

On the other hand, interrupting the speaker in order to offer advice disrupts the flow of discussion, and impairs the listener's ability to understand the speaker's experience. To overcome this, teach them try to think of your solution only when you are asked to do so. Also, tell them, we should not forget that it's rude to offer a solution when the speaker isn't asking for it, even if your solution is good.

When a person has an agenda other than simply to understand what the speaker is thinking and feeling will not be able to pay complete attention while listening. Psychologists have pointed out that people can understand language about two or three times faster than they can speak.

That implies that a listener has a lot of extra mental "bandwidth" for thinking about other things while listening. A good teacher should teach the listener how to use that spare capacity to think about what the speaker is talking about.

Speakers should avoid "red flag words", because words can provoke a reaction in the listener that wasn't necessarily what the speaker intended. When that happens the listener won't be able to hear or pay full attention to what the speaker is saying.

An important point is that the speaker may not have actually meant the word in the way that the listener understood. However, the listener will be so distracted by the red flag that he will not notice what the speaker actually did mean to say.

Listeners believe on the language of the speaker. When it is a misplaced trust in the precision of words listener may be discouraged. Use of a language is a guessing game. Speaker and listener use language to predict what each other is thinking. Meaning must

always be actively negotiated. Words have a unique effect in the mind of each person, because each person's experience (frame of reference) is unique.

Those differences can be small, but the overall effect of the differences can become large enough to cause misunderstanding. If the listener hasn't had the experience that the speaker is using the word to point at, then the word points at nothing. Don't assume that words or expressions mean exactly the same to you as they do to the listener. If possible, let listeners to stop the speaker and question the meaning of a doubtful word.

EFFECTIVE FILE MANAGEMENT: SOME USEFUL HINTS AND TECHNIQUES

Hansika Gunasekara

*Dept. of Computing & Information Systems
Faculty of Applied Science
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Kuliyaipitiya*

Importance of Managing the Files

As an academic, you have to deal with many documents. There is a flurry of data pouring in from all directions that you need to process and, usually, store so that you can retrieve them later. We must be able to lay our hands on the information we need at the right moment, when we need it so it can be used for further analysis or report writing, or perhaps for creating a presentation.

All too often, though, we waste our own time (and often the time of other people) searching for data that's sitting in front of the computer or near the file cabinet. This adds to your stress, and makes the task of putting the data to use more difficult than it ought to be. So, we need to get more organized and efficient with our file management if we're going to get our work done in a timely manner.

If your files stored in the computer not organized properly, you will have to spend hours of precious

time searching for data you have filed away somewhere, because it's easy to forget the filename or even to forget that such information is on your computer in the first place.

So, how can you go about simplifying your work? Get better at managing files and if it's your expectation to help people, how much of other people's time are you wasting if you can't find the information you need when you need it? You owe it to yourself to file effectively, however boring this may seem. Imagine how much more impressive it would have been if – when asked – you'd smiled, accessed a well-organized filing system, immediately found the document, and quickly given the answer!

File management is the practice of organizing files and folders in some logical manner. This logic should make sense to others beside you. The process begins with a consideration of how organization will be maintained over time. Your drives will become populated with data and it will pay to consider this.

For academics they have documents and works in both the formats, electronics documents and hard documents. All the documents such as letters from emails, drafted letters, lecture notes, presentations, downloaded materials and all the documents in electronic version are kept in the computer or other portable storage media.

As academics, we have to work with many different letters, handouts, assignments, examination papers, project thesis which needs be kept in filing cabinets.

Can we keep those thousands of documents anywhere in the computer or anywhere in the filing cabinet? Yes, it is possible just only for store but not for reuse. If you are not reusing them what is the purpose of storing them. To make the things to be reused it is necessary to organize properly. Let's see how we can organize the file cabinet and the computer.

Managing Your Documents (Hard Copies)

You can organize all your papers and documents into a filing cabinet that will keep you focused, streamlined and to the point. To set up a well organized filing cabinet you will need files, file folders, labeler. First of all you may gather all the loose papers, letters, project thesis, handouts, and assignments in your office, as well as any other papers cluttering up your bag, home or car.

Look through them, deciding what to keep and what to toss. Be tough on yourself - only keep documents you really need, and don't let yourself stop to read, reminisce, or otherwise get distracted.

While you are collecting your necessary documents start categorize them according to their type or the necessity like letters, faculty board minutes, handouts, researches, result sheets, past papers, personal, then add or subtract categories as needed. In these categories, there may be sub categories also for an instance in result sheets it should be categorize according to course code and the year.

The categorized documents should be stored in a set of files according to category or sub category. Sometimes, if your categorizations not working properly then merge categories or break those down further. Label your file folders in a consistent way that make it easier to find and identify immediately. You may want to use different colors for different categories to help you see what you have at a glance.

All documents in the file should be tagged in a well organized manner. If it is a file containing letters it can be aligned according to the date. You can sort them in alphabetical order of their name. If you have hundreds of documents, you can tag with small labels for all 26 characters by partitioning the file. This tagging can be used not only for document in a file but also files or folders in a file cabinet.

If a document doesn't have a name or a date you can number them and keep them in ascending or descending order of numbers. If you are left with

papers that don't fit into any of your categories or subcategories, create an alphabetical file to organize strays and orphans. If you come across something that needs immediate attention, put it in a special "active" folder.

You may want to keep frequently used files near the front. The files that should hide from others such as student results files, personal files have to be kept in a locked drawer. After organizing the files make an index, a list of files by category and stick on the door of the cabinet as a guide to inside drawers so you know what belongs where and where everything is.

Managing Your Files in the Computer

Every academic uses computers to ease their work and to keep their documents. Sometime they don't care about the place that they store their documents, letters, and notes materials in the computer. Once they want to find something from the computer they have to search it everywhere.

Sometimes one document may have several copies and it is difficult to find the latest copy of it. In this kind of situations many files and folders have to open to find the necessary file then it is very time consuming.

Saving several copies of same document is wasting the memory capacity of the computer. To get

read of several problems caused with unorganized file system of the computer, you have only very simple things to do. Here you can gather all the things in the computer and organize them in a proper way.

Here it is necessary to use folders to keep documents and files categorizing in several ways to make it easier to find the appropriate files. First, you should identify the main folders you can include to your computer for instance as an academic, research, lecturing, out reaching, personal.

After you have figured out the main folders that you want to put your files in, you will need to create sub folders in order to have good file management on your computer. If you have a large number of files in one folder, or a large number of subfolders in a main folder, so many that you can't see the entire list on your screen without scrolling down, break them into smaller groups (subfolders or sub-subfolders).

Once you have created all your main folders and sub folders, you are ready to create your files and store them in the right place. File management is easy if you take the time to do it as you go along. If you want it to be effective, that is what you will do. If you want to make it more difficult on yourself, put the files in whatever folder pops up on the save screen. You will have a very difficult time finding it again in

this case. Put your files in the right folders to get the most effective working system on your computer.

Follow a consistent method for naming your files and folders. For instance, divide a main folder into subfolders for research, lecturing, out reaching, personal etc. you may have a main folder with the name "Research". Inside that folder, you can create other folders with the topics of researches as subfolder names.

Give shorter names to identify what or whom the folders relate to. What's more, you can even give a different appearance or look to different categories of folders. This can make it easy to tell them apart at first glance.

Give files logical, specific names and include dates in file names if possible. The goal when naming files is to be able to tell what the file is about without having to open it and look. So if the document is a referee report of a student to be send to a company, call it something like "refreereport081210"; rather than something like "referee report".

When you name do not use spaces in file names, keep file names under 27 characters, and use all lower case. So, a file named for a course should be chem1223 rather than chem 1223. If you break any of these rules, be consistent about it.

The best time to file a document is when you first create it. So get in the habit of using the "Save As" dialogue box to file your document as well as name it, putting it in the right place in the first place. When you are saving your document, click "save as" rather than just "save". Never use whatever folder pops up when you want to be specific about where you put the files.

Give the document a title; click through to find the folder you want to put it in. When that folder opens, click: "save". You have effectively saved your document to the correct folder. In order to have effective file management on your computer, you have to set up the folders and save your work to the correct folders as you go along.

Perhaps there is a chance that your files will be incorrectly saved to the wrong folder at times. There is no need to worry. If you remember part of what is in the title of the file, you can do a search from the start button. Go to the bottom, left of your monitor, click on the start button. You will see the search bar at the very bottom of the menu.

Type in the words you know are on the file name and it will give you back results with any file name that has those words. You can now open the file and save it to the correct folder. Once you do that, you can delete the file from the wrong folder.

Store related documents together, whatever their type. For example, store MS-Word documents, presentations, spreadsheets, and graphics related to a particular project in a single folder rather than having one folder for presentations for all projects, another folder for spreadsheets for all projects, and so forth. This way, it's much quicker to find, open, and attach documents for a particular project. Separate ongoing work from completed work.

Some people prefer to save current or ongoing work on their computer's desktop until a job is completed. Rather than saving on the desktop you can store in a folder calling "ongoing works" in the common folder that all files have. Then, once it's done, they move it to the appropriate location, where files of the same category are stored.

At periodic intervals (for example, weekly or every two weeks), move files you're no longer working on to the folders where your completed work is stored.

Now there is a trend of sending document through e-mails. When you receive a file in an e-mail "just put it away" in some folder for the time being. "Hmm. looks interesting, but I'll take a closer look at this later, when I've got more time." By default these documents are saved in downloads folder in my documents in the computer.

It's highly unlikely that you'll ever find time to go back and get all of that information organized, especially considering that you're usually under pressure with other things.

Don't make a habit of saving everything that finds its way into your Inbox. Take a few seconds to glance through the content, and save a file only if it's relevant to your work activity. Having too much data on your computer adds to clutter and makes it harder to find things in the future and it may, over time, slow down your computer's performance too. If you want to save them in another folder while it is downloaded you can turn off the default saving mode in your internet browser. Then you can save your downloaded files in relevant folders.

If you have very old documents that are not willing to use again you can remove them from the computer. But, make sure that those documents will not be need anymore. Also make sure, firstly, that your computer is backed up regularly and, secondly, that the backup includes the directories where you file information.

Whether you're copying your files onto another drive or onto tape, it's important to set up and follow a regular back up regimen. In the mean time, you may have thousands of unorganized files in your computer.

How do you gather all the files and find the latest version of same file? Sometimes when you are start to rearrange your files and folders you may lose important files or latest versions of files by coping and pasting here and there. For instance, if you want to arrange files in the “downloads” folder by putting them into other folders according to their activity you have to open set of folders with “downloads” folder.

There are hundreds of file management software and tools to handle the problems of file organization. A file management system is a computer system (or set of computer programs) used to track and store electronic documents and/or images of paper documents. It is usually also capable of keeping track of the different versions created by different users (history tracking).

These tools are freely available in the web to install in your computers². The most of file management software are seamlessly integrated with “Windows Explorer”, providing a user interface that is instantly familiar to everyone and easy to learn and use.

² *FileOrganiser v1.126, xplorer2 lite, XYplorerFree, FreeCommander, CubicExplorer, Q-Dir, FileTypesMan 1.61, Free File Wiper v0.1, DropIt v0.9.2.*

MANAGING YOUR TIME TO MAKE AN EFFICIENT ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

K. R. E. Padmathilake

Dept. of Plant Sciences

Faculty of Agriculture

Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Puliyankulam, Anuradhapura

Importance of Time Management

There will only be given 24 hours in one day, but to be fulfilled given tasks, within the day is abundance. This is why time management must come in to the scene. Time is democratic. Nobody gets more or less time. That is the reason everyone in any profession feels time management is important. In the case of academic, the importance is enormous.

There is something very interesting in time. Time is a bank that credits your account each morning with 86,400 not in rupees, but in seconds (i.e. 24 hours / day x 60 minutes / hour x 60 seconds / minute). It is an exceptional account which carries over no balance from day to day. Every evening, it deletes whatever part of the balance that you failed to use during the day. You will not be able to ask unused balance ever in your life, even a single passed second. If you fail to use the day's deposit, the lost is yours.

Uniqueness of time can be classified as regular, inflexible and democratic. Once it is lost, it is lost forever. When it comes to finding ways to manage time well, there is no specific method to be done. But to manage this priceless resource effectively, the best way is to identify the wasters of time and avoid them.

Time Wasters in an Academic Environment

Here we discuss a number of things that waste your time, knowingly or unknowingly, if otherwise the time you lost can be used efficiently and effectively to achieve the goals of your academic life.

Telephone interruptions

Most of the time in your day, you hang on the phone. Even you have no idea how much time you spend on this. Most of the time what you discuss over the phone is useless. To avoid this you can allocate all the unimportant phone calls after your office time. You can also make a habit of answering such calls as short as possible during your working hours.

Procrastination

This is avoiding doing things that needed to be done or leaving things undone for as long as possible. Doing right thing at right time is very important in managing time. People tend to postpone things due

to fear of failure, laziness, lack of interest in work, the complexity of work and need to reach perfectionism. But, without starting, how could you find out whether you will end up with failure or success.

You need to do all your work with interest, for that you have to change your attitudes. By analyzing the task step by step can overcome its complexity or can go for others help instead of keep thinking and put off the task. It is always worth of doing a good job rather than keep on trying for perfectionism without completion.

Procrastination is the biggest reason for loss of productivity and late output. Though many would not admit it, they would benefit greatly if they start their work on time. To avoid yourself procrastinating, you try to develop a conditional response to the tasks you procrastinate. Then try to set a goal to complete the task and after completing the task reward yourself with something that is pleasurable for you. This is important because it drives the body to release endorphins (natural pain and stress fighter) which drives you to do well in your work.

Cluttered work space

A work table with full of files, papers, pens, a book shelf with full of books from top to bottom in here and there, an overflowing dustbin etc. shows that you are a busy person. But, for one who comes

to your place might get a negative impression on you regardless your talents and reputation.

Apart from that, it makes you feel having a huge work load to be completed, which leads you feel under stress. You feel uncomfortable in selecting what to start. When everything is a mess you will find difficulties in finding things. It will lead you to continue searching without engaging in your task. If you can keep your work space tidy and neat, it will help you to start your day with a fresh and clear mind that easy to work with.

To have such work space you have to go for '5S' concept. "5S" was originated in Japan, and stands for five Japanese words that start with letter 'S': *Seiri*, *Seiton*, *Seiso*, *Seiketsu*, and *Shitsuke* (Table 1).

Inefficient delegation

In your to do list there may be thousands of activities to be completed during the day itself. If you are an administrator of the university, the situation is much worse. You cannot even think of completion of all works by yourself. Here comes the importance of delegation of work.

But, inefficient delegation can waste your time more than anything. Therefore always select the most appropriate person for a particular task. And keep it

mind that you do not expect, but inspect and guide properly.

Table 1 – “5 S” Concept

Japanese Term	English Equivalent	Meaning in Japanese Context
<i>Seiri</i>	Tidiness	Throw away all rubbish and unrelated materials in the workplace
<i>Seiton</i>	Orderliness	Set everything in proper place for quick retrieval and storage
<i>Seiso</i>	Cleanliness	Clean the workplace; everyone should be a janitor
<i>Seiketsu</i>	Standardization	Standardize the way of maintaining cleanliness
<i>Shitsuke</i>	Discipline	Practice 'Five S' daily - make it a way of life; this also means 'commitment'

Poorly run meetings

Calling for meetings, such as, monthly board meetings, scrutiny board meetings, results board meetings, department meetings, students' welfare meetings and so on, is very common for an academic. Normally meetings are dragging due to discussions of unnecessary things in unexpected way. If you can prioritize schedule what is to be discussed it will reduce the discussion of unwanted matters. Other thing is everyone should present for meetings on time.

Poor planning

You should plan your day properly. It should be efficient as being able to utilize most of time of the day and be able to complete almost all of the responsibilities there to be finished. Poor planning misleads you and makes you to end up with a poor day.

Not sticking to priorities

Prioritization is used to optimize the utilization of your day among your tasks. Most of the time, you will not be able to complete all the tasks within your given day of time. By prioritization of your tasks according to importance of being completed minimizes the harm of incompleteness of the rest of tasks while important tasks are already covered.

Drop-in visitors

As you work in a tight work schedule, ad-hoc visitors can spoil even the whole day. Your enthusiasm on working and motivation of completing the whole set of tasks could be ruined by spending your time on unexpected visitors.

You should have to have a habit of meeting visitors with prior appointments. Then they are already included in the day plan. You should try to strict to allocated time. You can meet others after office hours, but it should not be interfered your family life.

Extended lunches or breaks

Leisure times and activities are important to help you refresh, but too much can again be detrimental.

Junk mail

Evan without knowing, you waste your time on reading junk mails. Also, it wastes your time making difficulties in finding an important mail among lots of junk mails. It is always better to maintain another mail account for official mails. Then, there is no need of screening out for an important mail among hundreds of other mails.

Physical and mental exhaustion

This causes by too much of work load and continuously working without resting. You should stop for a while, while you are working. If you can understand '*Circadian rhythms*' of body and act according to them, you can maximize your efficiency at work. Circadian rhythms are biological clocks that regulate many body functions and activities including sleep, temperature, metabolism, alertness, blood pressure, heart rate, hormone levels and immunities. About every 24 hours, our bodies cycle through metabolic and chemical changes. These circadian rhythms are reset by sun light in each morning.

If you listen and work with these natural rhythms instead of fighting against them can be more efficient at work. If you can schedule certain activities at certain times of the day, you can make more efficient use of time without having a physical and mental exhaustion. In addition, you should try to do things with an interest. Always try to find something to enjoy in whatever you do.

Some Useful Tools for Time Management

Set goals

Setting goals is an excellent way to motivate yourself and to ensure that you are actively moving your life in a direction of your choice. First, identify

your lifetime or long term goals that you want to achieve across your life.

You should have to identify goals in professional and personal life as well. Then come to your short term goals, which are milestones for which you would like to reach in the next several months or next several years. Finally, it is important to set daily goals to keep themselves focused and making towards your large scale goals. Setting goals helps you to see the big picture in your life. Then you can drive yourself to reach one by one.

List all the responsibilities

You need to prepare a list of all the activities that you want to get done within the day. Here it should not be considered whether it is important or urgent, and just list out all. This should be prepared in the morning before you start the day or at night. This is to have an idea about what you have to do.

Select what you really want to do

You may end up with a long list with a huge number of tasks to do, and never have time and energy to do them all. Therefore, in the list you prepared select the activities actually that have to be done. There can be activities which should “Do” it, and some are there to be “Delegate”. You can

“Delay” the activities which are not urgent and unimportant activities you can “Delete” from the list.

Prioritization of activities

This is particularly important when time is limited and demands are seemingly unlimited. You do not have time and resources to do all in even your selected list of tasks equally well. No matter how hard you try, many things will be left undone.

Prioritization is the solution for this frustrating problem. Prioritization makes you to spend more time on the right thing. Prioritizing is about making choices of what to do, what not to do and when to do. To prioritize effectively, you need to be able to recognize the tasks that would be included in two groups “important” and “urgent”.

At first glance, many of the tasks seem equally urgent and important. If you take a closer look you will be able to categorize your tasks accordingly. Good prioritization helps you to finish all the important and urgent tasks as soon as possible. It reduces the harm of incompleteness of the rest, while the important part is already covered.

Plan your day accordingly

You plan each day, each week, each semester. In planning, set a realistic deadline for each step.

According to your prioritizing list think how much of time you will need to accomplish each task.

Set deadlines accordingly. You better to remember that there will always be interruptions and distractions. Therefore, if you can try to allow time for them also, you are won. You can always change your plan, but only once you should have only one. In planning you have to be realistic about what you can accomplish within your time.

Evaluate your day / plan is right

At the end of your day, you should assess your day whether you succeeded according to your plan or not. In accordance with your analysis you can have an idea about your plan. By daily evaluation you can reschedule and reallocate time in proper way.

Time management tools help you to figure out what you are doing wrong with time and help to cut out them as much as possible. The more you cut out, the more time you will have to enjoy your life. Learning time management is actually not that difficult. It may take time, but once you mastered the necessary skills, you feel less pressured and are able to work better. Being efficient and effective, by utilizing the best practices for your time management as an academic is essential to your career and success.

DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

D. M. Samaratunga

*Dept. of Mathematics
Faculty of Science
University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya*

Education is the stem of a nation's cultural, social, economical, science and technological developments. Higher education plays the key role in education and it shapes the values and norms of a society, and creates the space for enlightened citizenship and democracy. It is universally recognized that a major function of a higher educational institution is the creation and advancement of knowledge which is a product of teaching, research, community services and national services. It should be emphasized that research takes the central position of gravity of such universities' functions. The word research come up with several versions of definition and the following are some of them:

- *Research can be defined as the search of knowledge or as any systematic investigation, to establish novel facts, solve new or existing problems, prove new ideas, or develop new theories, usually using a scientific met (Wikipedia)*

- *A studious inquiry or examination, especially, investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary)*
- *By research is meant not only that which fulfils specific, important and immediate national and sectoral needs, i.e., applied research but even more so work of a kind that is basic and fundamental, involving thinking and discovery at the frontiers of knowledge, indeed sometimes knowledge of a kind whose fundamental significance may not be immediately recognized (The University of the Future – Senake Bandaranayake)*

Undergraduate level is the first entry level of tertiary education in Sri Lanka. Also it is the first entry level, which students expose and get firsthand experience in investigation, research projects, and inquiry based learning.

Research skills at undergraduate level mean something more varied and often simpler than postgraduate research activity or the abilities of professional researchers. It includes evidence-based practice, problem-based learning, and the apprenticeship model learning.

In this article, it is argued that all undergraduate students in all universities in Sri Lanka should experience research skills from the commencement of the degree program for the benefit of students as well as sound national development. It also explores key issues around the nature of undergraduate research and how academics develop and assessed students' research skills in content-rich courses from first year to final year.

Further, we consider the potential of opportunities and strategies to support students' engagement in research, looking at different national, institutional, and departmental policy approaches to this area. Finally, you will find fascinating example from local, and international inspirational attempts to engage undergraduate students in research activities.

Types of Research

Research is a process of careful inquiry, thoroughly examining and analyzing the situational factors surrounding a given problem leading to the discovery of a solution or alternative solutions to it. Although there are some differences in how research is conducted across disciplines, research is not restricted to certain subjects or fields and it can be undertaken by many people or organizations such as government, universities, industries, businesses, farmers, doctors, academics, students, and so on. Medicine, science, education, engineering and

agricultural sector are just some of the disciplines that spend millions on research to address complex, persistent, and surrounding problems.

Research has traditionally been classified into two types; Pure and Applied. Pure research supplies theories and applied research uses and tests them out in the real world. According to the Wikipedia, three fold classification of research as follows:

- *Scientific Research*: provides scientific information and theories for the explanation of nature and the properties of the world around us and relies on the application of the scientific methods.
- *Artistic Research (practice-based research)*: can take form when creative works are considered both the research and the object of research itself.
- *Historical Research*: is embodied with the historical method. Historians use primary sources and other evidence to systematically investigate a topic, and then to write histories in the form of accounts of the past.

Research can also fall into two distinct types:

- *Primary Research*: collection of data that does not exist yet.

- *Secondary Research*: summary, collection and /or synthesis of existing research.

Qualitative research and quantitative research are also two distinct types of research:

- *Qualitative Research*: understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior.
- *Quantitative Research*: systematic empirical investigation of quantitative and phenomena and their relationships.

Again, there are three fold classifications as follows:

- *Exploring Research*: involve in tackling a new problem/issue/topic about which little is known, so that the research idea cannot be formulated at the beginning very well.
- *Empirical (Testing Out) Research*: This tests the feasibility of a solution using empirical evidence.
- *Constructive (Problem Solving) Research*: which develops solutions to a problem.

Research Skills and Research Techniques

The research process is a methodical approach to find and examine a variety of reliable, scholarly resources on a particular topic. To be effective and reliable, a research process needs to be organized, systematic, based on data, critical, objective, useful, and uses a scientific investigation. Though steps order may vary depending on the subject matter and researcher, research process usually consists of following steps:

1. *Getting Started*: Identification of the problem and assessment of value of the research process. Here the researcher needs to focus on novelty, utility, risk, cost, and underlying assumptions.
2. *Literature Review*: Find and generate needed information and data using appropriate methodology.
3. *Research Design*: Development of the research design.
4. *Data Collection*: Determination of data collection methods and procedures.
5. *Data Analysis*: Determination of analytical procedures.

6. *Evaluation of Results and Recommendations:* Synthesize and analyze new knowledge.
7. *Dissemination:* Final report writing and communicating the research findings.

There are many skills associated with research process. Often, research skills lie at the apex of outcomes of undergraduate profile. Also it is a key and potential skill that a student should be equipped with on the journey of postgraduate studies. Some of the important research skills are summarized in Table 1.

Necessity to Develop Research Skills of Undergraduates

The world is developing ever rapidly with every moment passing through due to mainly the ongoing research, new inventions, and simply by the creation of new knowledge. Development itself necessitates new research initiations and directions. For a country and its own and unique development a country should have strong commitment on the research. For a country like Sri Lanka, its weight age is very high and universities duty and responsibilities are crucial on strong research involvement and output. Undergraduates which are only a very few percentage get the opportunity to enter into the universities are the resource persons for community services.

Table 1 - Some Important Research Skills:

Research Skills	Description	Background Skills
Critical Thinking	<p>is accepting nothing at face value, but examining the truth and validity of arguments and evaluating the relative importance of ideas.</p> <p>It is also evaluating and weighing different sides of an argument, applying reason and logic to determine the merits of arguments and drawing and evaluating conclusions from logical arguments and data analysis.</p>	<p>imagination and creativity; logic and reasoning; conceptual thinking; reflection and feedback</p>

Problem Solving	is the ability to identify, define and analyze problems, to create solutions and evaluate them, and to choose the best solution for a particular context. It requires imaginative and innovative thinking to find new ways to approach a problem, analytical skills to examine the consequences of a particular solution, and reasoning skills to weigh one solution against another.	imagination and creativity; logic and reasoning; data collection; conceptual thinking; reflection and feedback; Scientific experimentation.
Analysis	is the ability to gather relevant data and information and apply methods of synthesis, critical thinking and data reduction to locate and understand patterns or connections in that information.	data collection; data analysis; reflection and feedback; scientific experimentation

Dissemination	is communicating to others the purpose and outcomes of research. It requires the ability to summarize information, explain the aims, motives, results and conclusions of research, and tailor the communication to the needs and knowledge level of a particular audience.	imagination and creativity; logic and reasoning; conceptual thinking; reflection and feed back
----------------------	--	--

It should inculcate research skills at the undergraduate level to all students in order to get their contribution on research activities. To produce qualified graduates to the country, and competitive with world class institutes, universities should actively involve with research activities.

Research is simply the creation of new knowledge. If students are equipped with research skills, then they can participate in producing knowledge but rather just consuming knowledge and hence they are able to contribute their capabilities to society and national developments.

Furthermore, when students are participate in research activities, learning skills will be greatly improved and academic experience will be expanded. After completeive examinations, students

enter the universities and they are often unaware of research skills.

A systematic approach to the development of research skills will yield students ready for independent problem solving, lifelong learning, and also for career life. Specially, for the journey of postgraduate studies, it is essential to be equipped with research skills. In Sri Lanka, postgraduate enrollment is not at satisfactory level and postgraduate output is also low. So, inculcating research skill at undergraduate level for all students will increase research activity and independent study abilities hence it will increase the students' participation in postgraduate studies.

Getting a satisfactory job to reflect the interests and qualifications of students at very first place is somewhat difficult in Sri Lanka. The common blame on these issues is students are lack of employability skills. Employability skills have research skills at their apex. Universities interaction and close collaboration with research activities of community and industries is essential for sound national development.

Often most universities in Sri Lanka require independent work or research type activities at the end of their degree program, normally in one whole semester in their final year. This is one of the major problems students encounter at their final year due to the lack of systematic development of research skill

from their first year. Some of the many benefits of becoming a researcher include:

- Working closely with a faculty mentor
- Enhancing your understanding and knowledge of your academic field
- Clarifying your academics, career, and personal interest
- Gaining academic credentials that help expand your resume, publishing and working with a research team
- Learning skills in communication; written and oral, critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, and time management
- Exploring research techniques
- Earning academic credit, scholarships, stipends, and/or awards for having conducted research.

Strategies to Inculcate Research Skills for Undergraduates

Undergraduate research capabilities means being able to generate new knowledge and communicate it. Even though the set of associated research skills are often the same at different levels, and for different disciplines, it varies from first-year undergraduates to professional researcher according to the degree of rigor, the level of specialization and complexity of

the discourse, the scope, depth and methodological framework applied to the research process.

Government policy makers, universities, departments, academics, and students are stakeholders and have some shares of duties and responsibilities of developing research skills at undergraduate level. Some of the important strategies, duties and responsibilities at national level, institutional, departmental, and individual level both academic and students can be summarize as follows.

At the *National Level*, increase academic staff awareness of undergraduate research. Provide support to academic staff with regard to professional development so that they are encourage to become engage in undergraduate research also provide incentives and rewards for academic staff to support undergraduate research and inquiry, particularly through workload planning, institutional and departmental recruitment, criteria for appointment, performance review and promotion processes.

May think of initiating some more research oriented institutes and link those strongly with existing institutes and industry. Also, it is essential to improve libraries and its services and should be equipped with the state of the art technology.

At the *University Level*, emphasize from the variety of dimensions that course teams may adopt in

integrating undergraduate research skills into the curriculum and also we should engage expert support in developing the project of research skills in the curriculum.

Further, provide opportunities for all students to undertake undergraduate research and inquiry within and outside the curriculum. Also, ensure quality assurance, quality enhancement and institutional assessments process and policies support students as researchers.

In addition, Encourage cross program (multidisciplinary). One such program is Computational and Management at University of Peradeniya providing opportunity to study crosses multidiscipline with Mathematics, Science, Arts, Economics, and Commerce.

Emphasis research awareness among students from the very beginning of first year and involve students in research, practice, community service and as research assistants and link undergraduate research to institutional policies for civic and community engagement. Value the role that student's organizations can play in supporting undergraduate research.

At the *Departmental Level*, organize student presentations to value and disseminate of their work. Developing a web-based student research journal,

encourage students to publish their work in professional and academic journals.

Also, conduct regular workshops on promoting research activities and have visiting lectures from research expert faculties from locally and internationally. Highlight research endeavor in student recruitment for special degree programs, temporary and permanent academic staff positions, and other universities employability positions and also link undergraduate research activity to the student's employability in industries.

Ensure appropriate learning spaces are available to support undergraduate research and make sure to facilitate that space with computers, resource persons; academic staff, postgraduate students, or senior undergraduate students all the time to get support.

Also, if possible maintain a department wise library which equipped with up to dated books and journals, and also documents that shows department's research activities. Encourage undergraduate student interaction with research students, and postgraduate's students. Give chance to postgraduate student when recruiting temporary academic staff.

Libraries and Librarians' Role: align student support from library, information and communication

technology services with needs of students undertaking undergraduate research. In Sri Lanka, libraries and librarians' role should be changed dramatically on supporting students and students' research activities.

Libraries should be up to dated with books and journals and also most importantly need to be improved online facilities. The role of libraries has changed immensely, in developed countries and our libraries also should be competitive with those.

Linking Research and Teaching: one of the prominent strategies of developing research skills is to bringing together and breaking down institutional firewalls between teaching and research activities. Separation of teaching and disciplinary research will impoverish both the role of teaching and students learning experience.

Research based teaching should be understood and emphasized a fundamental conceptual shift from the notion of students as a passive learners to the students as active stakeholders in a research community.

Assignments that teach research skills can help students gain confidence in using research tools, a better understanding of teaching of disciplinary criteria, and a sense of how scholars use resources in their research. All undergraduate students should be

familiar with basic principles and have up-to-date knowledge about research ethics and policies for gaining research outputs. We can summarize some of the important roles of teacher as follows:

Build curiosity and keep motivate students doing research. Focus students as stakeholders in research community. Assist students to clarify thinking through questioning, critical thinking, logical and reasoning. Individualize teaching and help on one to one basis. Evaluate students' progress in content and process areas.

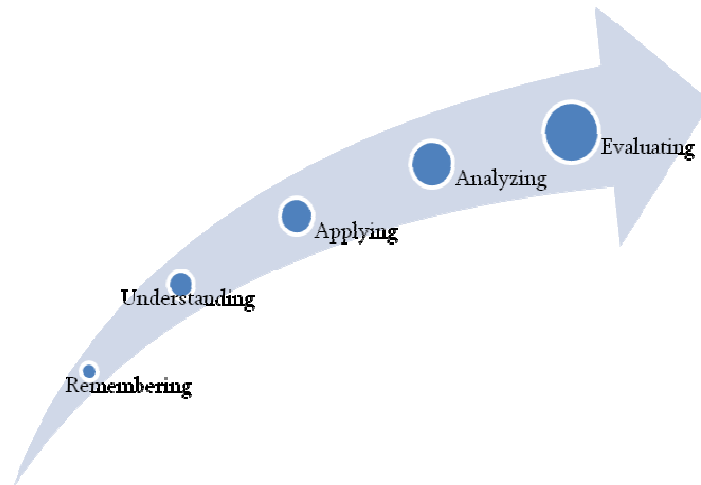
There are four main ways of engaging undergraduates in research activities, including:

1. *Research-Led*: learning about current research in the disciplines;
2. *Research-Oriented*: developing research skills and techniques;
3. *Research-Based*: undertaking research and inquiry;
4. *Research-Tutored*: engaging in research discussions

Bloom's Taxonomy, which is a systematic classification of learning objectives within education, is the widely accepted frame work for teaching community. According to Bloom's Taxonomy, it is clear that it highlights some of the important research skills. Therefore, a new version of Bloom's Taxonomy

goes very close with steps of research process as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - A New Version of Bloom's Taxonomy:



INVENTIVE SELF ASSESSMENT AS A REFLECTIVE TEACHING PRACTICE

M. G. Shanika Dilanthi

*Department of Industrial Management
Faculty of Applied Sciences
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Kuliyaipitiya*

Being a Reflective Teacher

It is true that the process of teaching is complex and wrapped with more responsibilities. Being the way of working with the students a very personal activity, it has the chance to be developed by reflective teaching practices; hence it provides the guidance towards a better outcome. The practice of reflective teaching sufficiently manages the decisions and new adoptions in the field leading to a steady increase in the quality of education provided to the students. Also, reflective teaching practices support the development and maintenance of professional expertise.

Assessing the self performance as a reflective practice offers the opportunity to newcomers in the field to become expert and mature educators through strengthening their skills and improving the self confidence of teaching. Though newcomers may find the initial teaching efforts stressful, the experience gained through self assessment will encourage them

to acquire repertoire of teaching strategies for an effective teaching style.

Reflective practice is a fine tune for a successful teaching process. The critical reflection refers to the individual performance and it extends the experience toward the professional development, which is based on the view of skill acquisition from novice to expert. The reflective teaching practice finely responses to the past experience by playing a huge scenario in its context. In the sense of addressing the diversities in society, culture and the behavior of students, a reflective teacher can do the tasks with certain flexibilities not just caring on one student but for the whole class or group of the students.

Reflective teaching is dealing with the knowledge of one's own teaching. The questions originate from "what?" and "why?" will make such power of teaching alive. Reflective teachers reflect upon their delivery and effectiveness for students. Teachers can monitor, evaluate and revise their own practices by applying the process of reflective teaching in a cyclical way as described in Figure 1 below.

Once the teacher has completed a lesson or a lesson part, he can observe the students by different ways and means with gathering particular data in order to clarify the level of achievement toward the objectives carried out by relevant lesson or lesson part.

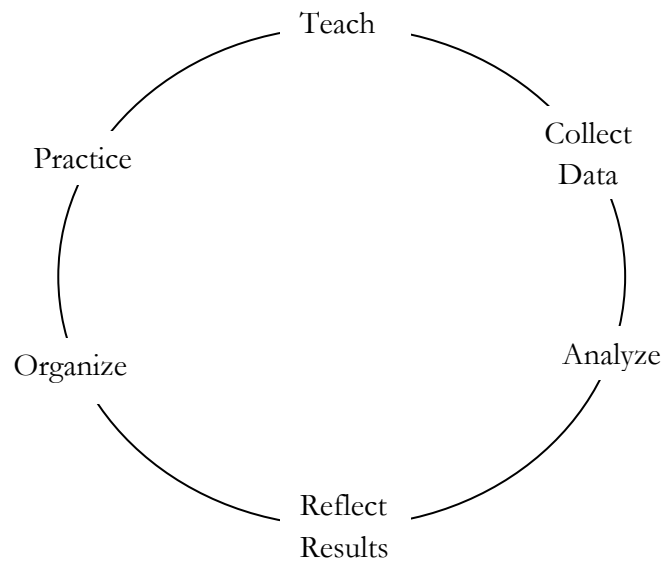


Figure 1 - Cyclical Process of Reflective Teaching

By analyzing the data gathered with reference to the self performance in teaching, it clearly draws the mirror image of teaching style in a critical manner to further improve the followed practices.

Sometimes the evaluations over the reflective teaching practices should be carried out periodically to obtain a better result. Interpretation of results of this evaluation provides witness for the level of understandability and measurability of the students' learning. It also provides an indicator to self commitment to the career. Considering all the reflections, they can become well organized for

enhancing the performance of teaching the next time. By practicing these reflections, the teacher will become more expertise in the field.

The process of teaching will have a significant impact from the reflective teachers who will definitely obtain the professional development in the field due to the exposure gained through the reflective process hence a reflective teacher learns from the experience.

Undoubtedly, the reflective teacher is then ready to acknowledge the complexities and coming trends in future implying the familiarity with the words of *“I have got similar events like this before.”* They will soon find the solution for *“What next?”*. That will enhance the confidence level of the person to play in his role without any hesitation on the work.

It should be reminded that the reflection itself alone is not sufficient for the development of professional life of a teacher. Based on a certain criteria of evaluating the performance, it can give the birth to a well planned modification of the teaching style after the period of reflection. Though it upgrades the self practice, there are some controversies as well related to this matter which needs to be undergone to further discussions among the experts in the field.

Relevance of Self Assessment

All teaching and academic administration should be informed by having a broader understanding of how the students learn and the applied conditions and processes supported to them in learning. Therefore, it can be obtained in a more qualitative manner through self assessment which reflects the minute attempts of teaching and reveals some weaker points to be improved in teaching style hence to create a great effect on student learning. Assessing the self performance of a teacher helps to get the fruits of aims and objectives.

Self-assessment appears in many forms, including: (1) Discussions with the group of students; (2) Check lists or questionnaires; (3) Conferencing; (4) Reflective journals or logs; (5) Students' assessments; (6) Inventories; (7) Feedbacks from students; (8) Peer evaluation, and (9) Teaching portfolios.

With the aspiration of reviewing the self work through the words of students, all of above forms produce fine reflections those are highly determinable. There are slight changes among these assessment methods, they will not take much time to reveal their own feedbacks, and hence, the progress is not far for reflective teachers. The achievements of a student are not only the contributory factor for the success of self assessment.

The process of self assessment can be succeeded with many other contributory factors such as good teaching practices, working experience and qualifications of the teacher, knowledge on the field, creativity, willingness, mutual understanding between the student and teacher, innovativeness and many more. All of these factors have the same theme for assessing a reflective teacher.

Inventive Self Assessment Techniques and Procedures

Monitoring the students' average progress

Improvement of the teaching style can be monitored with reference to the student progress. The classroom assessment is such a good formative exercise where the teaching style can be clearly and closely monitored. The effectiveness of teaching as well as how well students are learning can be simultaneously revealed through this activity.

Observing the average performance of same set of students considering the teaching of similar lesson parts, it can be graphically represent the effect of the support from teacher to understand the lesson within the classroom.

Audiotape and videotape recordings

The modern technology, which is quite expensive but easily accessible, can be nicely handled in order to obtain a closer look on self teaching style. Audios and videos can be exploited in a number of ways to encourage self-assessment in the classroom not only the students but also for the teachers.

An audio recorder can be put a small on the teacher's desk or a video recorder can be put on the side of the classroom and let it run during a class session at least once or preferably twice in each semester. Later, it can be replayed and listened or viewed. The teachers can also be videotaped or they can videotape each other and then assess their language skills, speech problems and if new ones have cropped up. Audiovisual aids can match the potential of the video recorder so that to emphasize the suitable frequency level of voice.

Obvious advantages to the use of video in self-assessment for teachers include that it can be used to assess not only the communicative or language skills but also the paralinguistic (i.e. body language) skills as well, which should be matched with the group of students. It provides a better improvement to the newcomers too to the field of teaching to follow up with the passage of time letting them to identify disruptive speech patterns, misleading and

unnecessary actions, and hence, to avoid them as professionals.

Since this process can be carried out as a formative self assessment, each and every time of self reflections will let the teacher to become fresh and the students to feel them as new ones with modified teaching styles. It causes to motivate the students to have a regular participation of the classes.

Summarizing students feedback & evaluation

Any active teacher can follow the feedbacks received from the students to appear the self performance generating the real image of the teaching style through students. This activity will attract the attention of the students for continuous and constant evaluation of teaching through the academic year or semester. The evaluation will emphasize the abilities of the teacher to cope with modern educational trends and challenges.

Subjectivity and objectivity, undetermined teachers' authority, evaluation patterns for entering to the senior teaching levels are some of major controversial topics on teacher evaluation forms. Though there are such controversies with the feedback evaluation, this paperwork reinterprets the characteristics of the teacher clearly paving the way to describe where he/she is, what to improve in the

teaching style, and new things to be added as comments.

After observing the feedbacks from the students, it will be an inventive teaching practice to analyze them and prepare a declarative summary on each particular matter concerned so that new strategies and avoidable factors can be easily revealed undoubtedly.

Researching own teaching style

Researcher being an inquirer and long term investigator in the field can collaborate to examine and to enhance the own teaching style. Methodically and finely searching for every nook and cranny of the relevant field the self performance can be clearly interpreted. Teachers have the potential energy to maintain the ongoing records, journals, and appraisals from senior bodies or major achievements throughout the career life; hence, they can be retrieved when required to access information keeping as references for self assessment.

Teaching is a usual habit of such a person who is dealing with that particular career. Though it is done daily, he/she might be there with hands on unseen qualities. Reflective teaching practices definitely feed for such qualities to get revealed with the use of measurable and seen qualities of the person which can be pointed out by the views of the students, peer

reviewers or any other. In that case, the researcher in the academic field can do a great job in revealing those unseen qualities as the research findings.

Monitoring of achieving the individual targets

Each and every teacher has to become framed with the time allocations so that the teaching has to be done with some struggles having frontage on running short time. Goal setting is essential there to manage and to meet the successful end of the session of teaching. Teachers are then in a good confidence of evaluating their progress of the self performance more clearly and up to date when they are used to focus on targets. In addition, they are automatically motivated to improve the thirst of seeking for new methods of teaching when they are provided self-defined, and therefore, relevant teaching goals.

Teachers having trained to keep up with SMART goals related to their career lives undoubtedly will come up with realistic, short-term and attainable goals. They can keep on drawing day calendars, Gantt charts, or other types of charts according to the sequenced tasks to be performed easily viewing where they are at present and how much remains there to be achieved. These will show the progress of individual target achievements, and hence, they can be improved in the next time by getting used to this reflective practice.

Teacher - Learner Skills Development in Higher Education

Selected Topics

**Effective Time Management for
Professional Development**

Menuka Udugama

**Producing Skilful Learner Through a
Personal Development Planning**

Keminda Herath

**The Role of Art & Culture in
Developing Soft Skills of Students**

S. N. T. De Silva

**A Successful Educator Through a
Skilful Communicator**

N. J. Amarasinghe

**Effective File Management:
Some Useful Hints and Techniques**

Hansika Gunasekara

**Managing Your Time to Make an
Efficient Academic Environment**

K. R. E. Padmathilake

**Developing Research Skills at the
Undergraduate Level**

D. M. Samarathunga

**Inventive Self Assessment as a
Reflective Teaching Practice**

M. G. Shanika Dilanthi

Publisher :

Staff Development Center

Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Makandura, Gonawila (NWP)

Sri Lanka

2011



Professor of Agribusiness Management and the Director of the Staff Development Center (SDC) of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka. Graduated in 1994 with a B.Sc. (Agriculture) [First Class Hons.] degree from the University of Peradeniya followed by a M.Sc. (Agric. Econ.) from the Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture (PGIA) of the same University in 1997. He obtained his PhD (Agric. Econ & Business) from the University of Guelph in Canada in 2004. In addition, he possesses a Postgraduate Diploma in Teacher Training & Education Management (IITM, India), Diploma in Business Management (Scranton, USA) and a Diploma in Mass Media & Communication (DES, Colombo). He completed the Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education (CTHE) course conducted by the University of Colombo, and received the United Kingdom's Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) accreditation in 1999. Besides the academic, research, and career development activities, Prof. Jayasinghe has been involved with activities related to teacher training and consultation, development of teaching technologies and methodologies, curriculum development, and quality assurance in higher education etc. He is a renowned resource person and has conducted many workshops on staff development in both national and private universities around the country together with the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) of the University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka.



Senior Lecturer attached to the Dept. of Livestock & Avian Sciences of the Faculty of Livestock, Fisheries & Nutrition of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka. He was also the Director/Career Guidance Unit (CGU) of the University and the Student Counselor and member of the Curriculum Revision Committee of the Faculty. He graduated with a B.Sc. (Agriculture) [Hons.] degree from the University of Peradeniya in 1993, followed by a M.Phil (Animal Science) from the Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture (PGIA) of the same University in 2003. He has obtained the Certificate of Staff Development from the University of Peradeniya in 1996 and the Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education (CTHE) of the University of Colombo in 2002 and was qualified for the United Kingdom's Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) accreditation in 2002. Mr. Jayaweera has been working as the Course Facilitator of the "Certificate Course on Staff Development" conducted by the Staff Development Centre (SDC) of the Wayamba University of Sri Lanka for the Probationary Lecturers in the national universities in Sri Lanka.

ISBN : 978-955-8746-90-5