

Pallikkutam

Pallikkutam, The Education Observer » July 2023

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Enablers for Students' Success



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“I am a fighter, you know, “ stated 83-year Mr. Ezra Washington, who

helps with lawn mowing in my yard in Lubbock. Mr. Washington came back to work right after he got better from his recent admission to a hospital. This is a model work ethic which everyone needs to take to heart. People like Ezra motivate me every day. There are so many such Ezras in our community, who are great teachers for us.

Life is the most important lesson one can gain. Learning from others, those who are close and those who provide positive influence should be a lifelong process. Ancient Indian education system precisely outlines the process of education is divided into four parts: 1) Learning from tutors; 2) Self learning; 3) Learning from peers & friends and 4) Life experience.

In the complex world scenario, we see that what skills that were thought highly employable a decade or two ago are not most sought after, which is evident from decreasing interests in hardcore engineering disciplines. It is my view based on 25 years of experience in a research-intensive university in the United States, in addition to subject specific knowledge, soft skills and social adaptive capabilities are needed, emphasizing the importance of outreach and engagement with community at large.

Knowledge Acquisition

Subject matter expertise is imparted in all disciplines by many public, private, and publicly aided institutions, with a high-level of competition among them to provide cost-effective high quality academic experience. In this competitive age, in addition to focused subject specific education, other skills provide competitive advantages for students in the job market.

While in addition to subject specific education, communication, business, and analytical skills get imparted in professional and graduate level courses, it is important that capabilities to adapt well in the society and professional working places are needed. In the case of the legal profession, there is some expectation that as part of maintaining bar association's license, one must contribute time at no fee as a pro bono service. Such mandated efforts in some fields bring professionals close to society—a welcoming path forward.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the need to engage and work with society. This needs diplomacy, looking into sensitivity issues and effective outreach and communication with the community.

Valuable perspectives from a young academic based at Tiruchirappalli-based National College, Mohamed Nabi are worthy to note. "In this competitive world, both parents and teachers should step out of their traditional roles to help kids reach their goals. A teacher should cultivate a growth mindset by making students understand that every effort matters. At the same time, the teacher should tailor their approach based on the uniqueness and individuality of each student," emphasizing holistic growth.

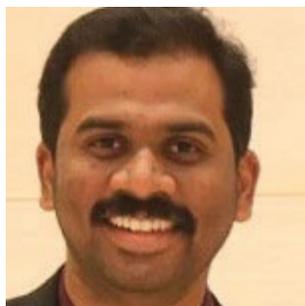
Adapting to Situations

Adapting to a situation is a valuable lesson towards success. In this instance, it is with humility, I would like to mention a scenario that is related to our research laboratory at Texas Tech University. A young graduate student Mirza Khyum, who hails from Bangladesh after his graduation in engineering in 2014, took time off to for 6-years to be the sole caregiver for his ailing mother. It is rare these days to see youngsters sacrificing their careers to take care of the sick and the needy. After his mother's passing in 2018, Mirza approached me and joined our lab. Recently he successfully defended his master's thesis at Texas Tech University, which focuses on face masks. His self-confidence, engaging with peers, willingness to adapt to situations, in addition to technical skills has enabled him to be an outstanding student in the Department of Environmental Toxicology at Texas Tech University. Such students must be showcased as models to motivate youngsters. Even adults can learn from such positive influences. It is easy to look-up to models, and we have some many in our neighborhoods and community—easy way to motivate youngsters.

How to Acquire Additional Skills

It is no secret that many organized and professional associations like Lion's Club, Rotary Club, Boys and Girls Scout of America to name a few are doing effective community engagement, social service and provide support in emergency situations.

Mohammed Suhail Nabi

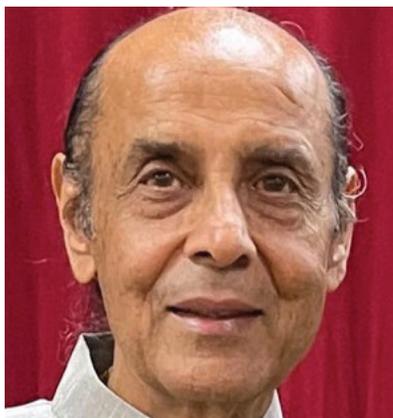


Engagement with professional and community-based nonprofits is important for personal, professional, and psychological wellbeing. "These days it seems impossible to excel without the support of community, whether it is professional one or cultural or others depending on the field. Most of the

scriptures emphasis the importance of fellowships and caring for the society as is evident in these words, "Ekaki Na Ramathe," meaning we do not rejoice as a loner," stated Mr. Jitu Govind Gohel, Lubbock-based business leader involved in the lodging sector. Highlighting his own experience in a foreign land, Mr. Gohel emphasized the importance of community gathering and support, particularly in regions, where there may be minority communities, such as Indians in West Texas. Gohel along with like minded persons as a way of supporting Indian community and students from India, created the Hindu Temple of Lubbock, which serves as a place for worship, cultural gathering and more importantly a platform for people and students arriving from India to connect with Indians settled in the region and experience our culture.

Jitu Govind Gohel

As youngsters, particularly, who leave their motherland face many challenges, there is a role for the community to support, emphasized Gohel. Indian students should connect themselves with local Indian student chapters or local Indian community, which will prove valuable, opines Gohel.



Students and parents can choose organizations of their interest whether it is sports, arts and culture and should get connected early on. These can provide valuable connections for students to enhance their career. School and College alumni associations are important places for connections for education and career and personal growth.

Support Network as an Enabler

Our community already has several resources that assist in student development. Academically weak students naturally seek supplemental education support. High achieving students in high schools say at 10-12th grade can support those students who need help. In the United States as admission to universities are not only based of school grades, additional criteria such as contributions to the society, service-learning, excellence in arts, music, and sports, etc. are also counted. Such a holistic assessment motivates youngsters in high schools to understand the importance of service, understanding the sufferings of the neighbors and the community, etc. These attributes propel them to be leaders.

Support networks like tutorial institutions provide additional education support to get students to full speed. It is also important that these organizations help to nurture talents of students not only in academics, but also in those areas, where students are interested. "It is extremely important that we not only support our students academically, but constantly be a source of encouragement for our students and parents by celebrating their success inside and outside the classroom – whether that is through UIL competitions, or even athletic accomplishments," stated Tyler Backus, Executive Director of Lubbock-based Sylvan Learning Center.

Tyler Backus

Engaging with service-based associations is considered important in the resource stressed developing world. During summer, youngsters should be encouraged to volunteer with non-profits of their choice such as Red Cross or Food Bank, to name a few. Such involvements right from teenage days will enable students to value community and



motivate themselves to choose career paths that can support the growth of community and nations.

As a researcher in Artificial Intelligence, Mohamed Suhail Nabi insisted on the necessity to use internet based trustworthy community platforms such as LinkedIn as a valuable community platform, which can provide ample benefits to youngsters and professionals. “Youngsters face various challenges such as changing careers, upskilling, seeking connections, and effective communication. The best community for those starting their careers is the LinkedIn community,” stated Nabi.

As the saying goes, there are so many roads to Rome, and so do pathways to successes are many. Based on ongoing scenarios, whether it is the pandemic, or economic downturn, political and military tensions in the world, students need to equip themselves with quality subject matter expertise and additionally need life skill capabilities. It is important to engage with community, which builds self-confidence, interpersonal capabilities, and ability to face tough scenarios. Onward and upward should be our motto!

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