

Ability Enhancement Workshop for Students:

A Pathway for Lifelong Learning

2-5 Nov & 1-4 Dec, 2020

The Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, in association with Training and Placement Cell of MNIT Jaipur, organized a workshop on Ability Enhancement for Students. The workshop was attended by both UG and PG students of MNIT. It was conducted on a virtual platform (Zoom). The Ability Enhancement Workshop for Students began with a welcome address by Dr. Manju Singh, Head, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, MNIT Jaipur. She addressed the participants and highlighted the importance of the upcoming sessions.

A brief outline of the various sessions is as under-

Day 1

Session: “Enhancing readiness for a protean career”

Expert: Dr. Sachin Kumar

The topic of the first session was “Enhancing readiness for a protean career”. The expert for the lecture was Dr. Sachin Kumar, Professor, Government College of Teacher Education, Dharamshala. Dr. Kumar began the session in an interactive manner and outlined the elements of the protean career. He began the session by explaining the meaning of career as a sequence of work education and training over a lifetime. Career is a function of choice and willingness, demands suitability, needs preparation, provides an opportunity to grow and fulfils personal and social needs.

However, there is a significant difference between career and protean career. Protean career is a career in which a person is value-driven in the sense that the person’s internal values provide the guidance and measure of success for an individual's career and self-directed in personal career management. The session highlighted the key differences between a traditional career and a protean career.

The next topic was career readiness which is the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace. He underlined the key components and competencies required for career readiness. It involves critical thinking, leadership, oral and written communication, teamwork, professionalism, career management among others.

He highlighted that the current status of career readiness is very low as students do not possess the new-age skills. The biggest hurdle to this lack of counselling and direction. The session included an interaction where participants expressed their views on career readiness. It underlined that students should adopt a hope-centric approach to their career.

In the current situation of COVID-19, the standard employment model has undergone a change. The nature of work, location, working time and the employment relationship is different from the earlier times. The session reiterated the importance of lifelong learning through curiosity, creativity and strategic awareness. The session concluded with a message that self-assessment, life-long learning, sharing of ideas and experiences pave the way for a protean career.

Day 2

Session: “Storytelling for leadership”

Expert: Dr. Prasanna Hulakavi

The theme of Day 2 session was “Storytelling for leadership” delivered by Dr. Prasanna Hulakavi. Dr. Hulakavi is the founder of MetaStories, a platform for storytelling and served as Deputy Director at Symbiosis Institute of Media & Communication. The session began with a Ted talk video on effective communication which focused on effective elements of communication. After the welcome address by Dr. Nidhi Sharma, Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Science, Dr. Hulakavi began the session with a story narration. The moral of the story highlighted that great leaders discover the star inside them. She underlined the psychological impact of storytelling through illustrations such as Amul pictorial advertisements among others. The session included a brief storytelling exercise for the participants as well. It highlighted that stories are a powerful tool for connecting learners by conveying complex ideas in a simple way. Learning through storytelling could be visual, auditory or kinesthetic.

Stories help to communicate in multiple ways:

- Explain critical and complex messages
- Build credibility
- Induce ‘lean in’ behaviours
- Inspire action
- Spread the word

A story is an expression of real and imagined experiences i.e. fictional and non-fictional shaped, crafted and woven by the storyteller in a sensory fashion. Dr. Hulakavi explained the merits of storytelling followed by a broad structure and elements of a story. She categorized stories into 4

broad categories: triumph, tragedy, tension and transition. Good storytelling involves a powerful beginning, revealing the character through behaviour and actions and having unique characters.

The session underlined that a good storyteller should be able to perceive the story at the deepest level. He should understand the needs of the audience and create a dramatic movement of the story towards its fulfilment.

Overall, the session concluded with a message that storytelling is a strong leadership skill which helps a person to influence, teach and inspire others in a meaningful way.

Day 3 Session: 'Pathways to Happiness: Attitude Management'

Expert: Prof. Divya Singhal, Professor

On the third day of the workshop conducted by the Department of #Humanities and #SocialSciences, in association with the #Training and #PlacementCell, the online session on 'Pathways to Happiness: Attitude Management' was organized. Prof. Divya Singhal, Professor, Goa Institute of Management, Goa and Chairperson- Centre for Social Sensitivity and Action, was the invited resource-person.

The session was aimed at an increased understanding of the attitude and ways to manage attitude for creating a better impact. The discussion focused on gratitude, self-compassion and locus of control. The session significantly contributed towards realizing the life skills to motivate the participants for gathering clarity amongst their aims and professional reliance. It was mainly focused on embracing one's abilities and strengths to achieve goals and stay focused and calm to achieve them. Dr. Choudhary explained the steps to create a happy work environment.

The session involved a drawing exercise called 'kindness drawing'. It was aimed at capturing the moment and memory of kindness and compassion as a drawing as vividly as possible. Dr. Choudhary divided the participants into small groups and asked them to discuss their acts of kindness and their impact on their mood. She highlighted that research indicates when we remember an act of kindness, our bodies feel safer and stronger. When we pay attention to how our body responds and focus on any pleasant or neutral sensations that come up, this can help our bodies feel even greater well-being.

The session included a discussion on the iceberg phenomena which states that people only know our behaviour and not our real attitude. Dr. Choudhary discussed the "Tricomponent Attitude Model" (ABC). The session highlighted that self-compassion is not self-pity or indulging in self-gratification. Rather it is a process of self-care, kindness to oneself and embracing ourselves as we are.

The session helped the participants in unleashing their hidden potentials, developing a better outlook with positive attitude thus, gearing towards pathways to happiness. Discussions were held over topics like – Gratitude/kindness, Self Compassion, and Locus of Control. Some engaging activities on breakout sessions on Zoom were also conducted to keep students motivated and informed about the objectives of the session.

Day 4 Session: Management Skills for Engineering Minds: From Campus to Corporate

Expert: Dr. Deepika Pandita

On the fourth consecutive session of AEWS workshop, an online session on ‘Management Skills for Engineering Minds: From Campus to Corporate’ was conducted by Dr. Deepika Pandita, Asst. Professor, Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Pune. The session was helpful to the students in understanding the corporate playing field that has a range of new challenges, all of which call for the graduates to display accountability, professionalism, and credibility. Several notions like ‘abandonment’, ‘arrogance’, ‘damaged’, ‘inferiority’, ‘rejection’, and ‘shame’ are discussed in the light of corporate culture. Moreover, the discussion also included the challenges faced by students while completing assignments on time, homesickness, getting low grades in exams, inability in fixing punctual schedules, different vocabulary, dislike for mess food, issues with roommates, giving less time for studies, inadequate money or poor health conditions.

Special attention was laid on ‘What companies expect from students?’ The answer to which was well discussed where Individuals with a “CAN DO” attitude was given a prime focus. A major push was given to deciding for the Long term Commitment and goals. The qualities like learning aptitude, Time Management Skills, Engaged Employees, good leadership skills, multi-tasking skills etc were discussed in detail.

Vital management tips were given by the speaker for achieving true success in corporate life that turned out to be the major crux of the whole session as well. Few of them are as follows:

- Develop the right attitudes
- Limit the expectations
- Build cordial relationships
- Make a good first impression
- Be a good follower
- Develop work savvy
- Build up organizational savvy
- Exhibit Professionalism
- Punctuality is very mandatory
- Listen and learn
- Stay away from internal politics and gossip
- Follow professional ethics by imparting values and manners
- Always stick to deadlines.
- Explore the organization’s culture

- Ask Questions about organizational structure, technical issues and the work culture.

Since technology and social media have created new forums for connecting and sharing information but it should be used very carefully. Thus, DIGITAL ÉTIQUETTES- formal means of online communication in the workplace- was discussed at length citing the examples from the corporate environment and associated social platforms for professionals like LinkedIn, Email, etc.

From the practical aspects, few psychometric tests were conducted during the sessions where students were asked to fill up the questionnaire and mark themselves according to the prescribed rating scales. Psychometric tests provided an objective way to measure the potential ability of candidates to perform well in a job role. The students were able to identify their strengths and weaknesses by measuring a range of skills from cognitive abilities, knowledge while assessing their personality. The practical sessions were all the more engrossing and ignited the interests of participants to a great extent.

Day 5 Session: “Embracing the new normal: Mental Health Perspective”

Expert: Dr. Bhawna Choudhary

On the fifth day of the 'Ability Enhancement Workshop for Students' being conducted by the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences in association with Training and Placement Cell, MNIT Jaipur, the session on 'Embracing the new normal: Mental Health Perspective.' was organized. The invited keynote speaker was Dr. Bhawna Choudhary, Assistant professor, Department of Psychology, Christ University, Delhi.

The keynote speaker highlighted how mood disturbances represent only some of the prevalent mental health issues experienced by college students, besides other serious problems such as suicide, eating disorders, and addiction. Being a mental health professional, Dr. Bhawna stressed the importance of talking about such issues as students generally tend to consider these stresses as a normal part of college life. Other cases were also discussed where students may lack the time, energy, will, and/or money to seek the support they need. The session underlined that building resilience requires the following:

- Reduce multitasking and find your flow
- Sleep and exercise
- Practising gratitude
- Set vision and mission
- Be consistent, committed and stay in control
- Engage in positive self-talk

There are various sources of stress for students such as social life, academic achievements, self-care among others. The session talked about various types of personalities and categorized them into 4 categories.

On practical aspects, the SWOT analysis exercise was organized by the resource person to engage the students and helped them to realise their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the time of COVID-19. Few other activities like rumination, reflections etc were also conducted during the session where students showed their engaged participation. Overall, the session concluded all sorts of details to help students identify potential mental health issues and locate valuable community resources.

Day 6 Session: “Let your Mind Speak: The Effective Communication”

Expert: Dr. Priyanka Pareek

On the sixth day of the 'Ability Enhancement Workshop for Students' the online session on 'Let your Mind Speak: The Effective Communication' was organized. The invited keynote speaker was Ms Priyanka Pareek, founder of the Training Enthusiasts, a Gurugram-based institute for professional training in the area of communication. The session included writing and speaking opportunities for graduates to present information in a clear and organized manner. The resource person emphasized that good verbal and written communication skills are essential in order to deliver and understand information quickly and accurately, thus, being able to communicate effectively is a vital life skill and should not be overlooked. Different dimensions of communication were discussed. For instance, communication skills are needed to speak appropriately with a wide variety of people whilst maintaining good eye contact, demonstrate a varied vocabulary and tailor your language to your audience, listen effectively, present your ideas appropriately, write clearly and concisely, and work well in a group. Few activities related to reading, writing and critical thinking were also conducted during the session where students showed their engaged participation.

Overall, the session was fun-filled, the resource person kept a relaxing environment where students could practise reading, writing and using new words and were freely able to express themselves. The focus was on participating in recreational activities in an effective way to develop language and communication skills. It also helped students to be more socially confident and become capable enough to know ways to forge friendships.

Below are some examples of games and playtime activities that integrated language learning with fun during the session:

- Word games

Games activities like Scrabble, Pictionary or a round of Charades were encouraged to make understand the importance of vocabulary development and communication skills.

- Rhymes

Activities like repetitive chanting, reading, writing, or hearing of rhymes promoted good listening skills and memory retention, aside from understanding speech-related issues.

During the question and answer sessions, the resource-person guided students on how to express their thoughts, feelings and actions better through the use of words as this will prepare them to face the world with confidence as they grow. The session was a huge success with engaged participation of every attendee.

Day 7 Session: “Harnessing Blogging Skills for Aspiring Professionals: Blueprint& Hands-On Strategies”

Expert: Ms. Manasvini Rai

On the seventh session of the 'Ability Enhancement Workshop for Students', organized by the #Department of #Humanities&SocialSciences, in association with, #Training&PlacementCell, #MNITJaipur, the session on 'Harnessing Blogging Skills for Aspiring Professionals: Blueprint& Hands-On Strategies.' was conducted. Ms. Manasvini Rai, a full-time research scholar in English in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, at MNIT Jaipur. The session provided a necessary theoretical foundation for the subject of ‘professional blogging,’ and building a sound rationale for why blogs are invaluable in the 21st century towards building an attractive professional portfolio. Ms. Manasvini focused on how blogging is becoming one of the most effective ways to build your brand or profession awareness while providing relevant and useful content to your target audience. She highlighted how blogging can be an inexpensive way for professionals to drive traffic to their site, enhance inbound attention towards your professional work and attract more prospective like-minded people. Since blogging is nothing without readership and dissemination, the emphasis was also laid upon ‘How to make your blogs popular?’ It was discussed how talking with experienced people and learning from their failures and mistakes, can make one even better than them. By making blogger friends, more and more people can know about you as a person and sooner and later everybody will know you and thus there are high chances that one can become famous.

From practical aspects, a breakout session was also conducted where the significance of ‘digital footprints’ were discussed. Participants displayed their views on the topic. Overall, the session was all comprehensive, where different types of online blogging accounts were shown, the importance of blogging was discussed in greater detail with respect to the corporate and academic network building.

Day 8 Session: “Conflict Management”

Expert: Brig JS Rajpurohit

An online session on 'Conflict Management' was held on the eighth and last session of the 'Ability Enhancement Workshop for Students.' The session was delivered by Brig JS Rajpurohit, ex-Indian Army Officer and a soldier scholar with expertise in insurgency, mountain and high-altitude warfare, UN mission and disaster management. The session was aimed at understanding the concepts of conflict, identifying their personality traits and learning to manage personal, social and professional conflict. The keynote speaker elaborated upon the conflict management as the process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of conflict. He emphasized the importance of conflict management to enhance learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness or performance in an organizational setting. Interestingly, several conflict resolution strategies that people use to handle conflict such as avoiding, defeating, compromising, accommodating, and collaborating, were also discussed in great length. The session was full of real-life examples and connected each and everyone in one way or another. A case study was also discussed in the break out sessions where participants shared their behavioural preferences in a hypothetical setting. The attendees were also presented with the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, which is the leading measure of conflict-handling modes. It helped participants understand how each conflict mode can be useful for dealing with conflict in certain situations. The speaker recommended participants to appreciate the value of their own conflict styles and also learn the value of other styles as well. He mentioned how using the Thomas-Kilmann assessment can allow people to focus and build on their strengths. Overall, the session was all-engrossing and the participants showed full enthusiasm throughout.

The workshop concluded successfully with a vote of thanks and a group photograph of all participants. The participants shared their positive feedback about the sessions. All the sessions were highly interactive with the active participation of students in all exercises. An analysis of pre and post-psychometric analysis of the participants reflects a positive change in all parameters. This is very encouraging and motivating for the organizers to plan more such events in the future.

Thank you!