

Train the mind to think

V. Krishnappa

Albert Einstein once wrote that the true value of “college education is not learning many facts but the training of the mind to think.” Facing irreducible complexity and uncertainty in the social, economic, political, environmental and technological domains in our time, educators globally are searching for ways to make educational experiences relevant for the demands of contemporary workplaces.

There is an urgent need to bridge the ‘skill deficit’ in critical thinking and other career-enhancing skills. Conventional modes of education that are focused mostly on information and knowledge transfer are increasingly seen as insufficient to prepare students to face the challenges of workplaces and personal development.

Increasingly, educational institutions are adapting the liberal arts model of education, which places equal importance on both knowledge acquisition and skill development to enhance learners’ capacities to skillfully adapt to emerging complex environments.

Why cultivating critical thinking in Liberal Arts Education is becoming increasingly important in today’s world

The ability to think while doing, embrace uncertainty, story-telling, deal with emergent novelty, and give creative expression to complex developments are seen as more critical than the capacity to process information, facts, and recombine existing knowledge. The twin challenges of Artificial Intelligence and the growing complexities of the modern workplace are creating a sense of urgency to look for a new educational process that gives primacy to critical thinking and creativity.

Training in critical thinking orientates learners to appreciate the complex nature of human interactions, and socio-economic and political developments. Trained to see more sides to a problem, learners will resist the temptation to make quick judgements and advance over-simplified solutions that might end up creat-



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ing more problems than they intended to solve.

Interpreting events Human events are marked by the ambiguity of their meanings. An ability not only to interpret but also treat all interpretations as perspectives that need to take into account other viewpoints is a form of intelligence that is much in demand in managerial decision-making and strategic action.

The ability to add layers of meaning to novel events and take into consideration points of view that may contradict one’s own is more likely to enhance creative

possibilities.

Human situations are marked by increasing uncertainty. No amount of prior learning and foresight will be sufficient basis for decision-making and action as the recent events. An ability to

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judge the odds, imagine the possibility of failure, adapt to emergent novel developments, and recalibrate one’s interventions in an alert and ongoing manner will be the mark of a masterful innovator and expert manager.

Critical-thinking training takes the uncertainty of human situations as a cardinal starting point and prepares students to develop psychological strategies and attitudes to cope with uncertainty.

Strategies Critical-thinking orientation takes seriously the idea that true education

is not merely the transfer of the latest states of knowledge but, more importantly, is about orientation for continuous learning. In our fast-changing world, knowledge becomes irrelevant quickly.

In a world marked by fast-paced globalisation and technological change, an ability to critically understand the self and others is crucial for cross-cultural communication and psychological well-being. Further, an ability to navigate cultural complexity, respect otherness, accommodate difference, cultivate empathy, and spot creative

possibilities will be highly valued attributes in the contemporary workplace.

In order to train students in critical thinking, liberal arts educators have adopted a range of pedagogical strategies. Typically, institutions emphasise the importance of good reading, often placing a premium on reading time-tested classics, which provide a rich training ground for critical thinking. Educators have for long recognised the importance of learning to write well in order to think well.

Many institutions systematically teach writing skills during the foundation year to develop not only better communication skills but also to develop the faculty for critical thinking. Reading, writing, and thinking are the three key university skills and one cannot learn one without also learning the other two. A holistic training in liberal arts should train the learner simultaneously how to read well, write richly, and think critically.

Views expressed are personal.

The writer is Professor at School of Liberal Arts and Sciences and Executive Director of the Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Contemporary Ethics at RV University, Bengaluru.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Anjum Chopra Sports Scholarship

An opportunity offered by PUSH Sports

Eligibility: Open to Indian women cricketers between 14 and 25 years, who play for state teams.

Rewards: ₹1 lakh per annum and other benefits

Application: Online

Deadline: Round the year

www.b4s.in/edge/ACSO8

Inlaks Fellowship for Social

Engagement

An opportunity offered by the Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation to to explore alternatives and contribute to social change.

Eligibility: Open to Indian citizens who are graduates born on or after January 1, 1994.

Rewards: Up to ₹45,000 per month

Application: Online

Deadline: January 15

www.b4s.in/edge/SEF1

TSDPL Silver Jubilee Scholarship Programme

Tata Steel Downstream Products Limited’s scholarship (TSDPL) aims to support meritorious students from low-income families continue their education.

Eligibility: Open for students from Jamshepur, Kalinganagar, Pantnagar, Faridabad, Pune, Chennai, Tada, and Kolkata who are pursuing diploma, graduation or postgraduation courses in fields such as Nursing, medicine, dentistry or paramedical or ITI/diploma courses such as fitter, electrician or welder from government-recognised institutes and have scored at least 60% in Class 10 and 12; Annual family income must not be more than ₹5 lakhs from all sources.

Rewards: ₹1 lakh for one year

Application: Online

Deadline: January 21

www.b4s.in/edge/TSDPL2

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

Nilesh Gokhale

In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, the pursuit of knowledge encompasses a complex interplay of emotions, relationships, and personal growth, leading to the growing importance of Emotional Intelligence or EI. This refers to the ability to recognise, understand, manage, and effectively use one’s own and others’ emotions. It involves empathy, self-awareness, social skills, and emotional regulation. While it has been widely recognised as a valuable skill in the workplace, its importance in the realm of higher education should not be underestimated.

In the context of higher education, EI plays a pivotal role in shaping the academic experience of students, faculty, and administrative staff. It influences interactions in and out of the classroom, the dynamics of campus culture, and the overall learning environment. Educators, administrators, and students with higher EI levels are better equipped to navigate the complexities of academia and contribute positively to their institutions.

Positive and inclusive environment

Effective leadership in higher education requires more than just academic prowess. Emotionally intelligent leaders are attuned to the needs and concerns of their colleagues and students, creating a supportive and inclusive atmosphere that encourages growth and innovation. Here’s how emotionally intelligent leaders make a

Catalyst for success

When educators, administrators, and students possess high levels of emotional intelligence, the educational ecosystem reaps the rewards



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difference:

Empathy: Emotionally intelligent leaders understand the emotions and perspectives of those they work with enabling them to address issues with sensitivity, provide support, and foster a sense of belonging. In an empathetic environment, students are more likely to open up, seek guidance, and collaborate with their peers.

Conflict resolution: Emotionally intelligent leaders are skilled at managing and resolving conflicts constructively. Their

ability to navigate disagreements in a respectful and considerate manner sets an example and fosters a culture of mutual respect.

Communication: Emotionally intelligent leaders ensure that messages are conveyed clearly and with sensitivity and that all voices are heard, contributing to open dialogue.

Stress management: Emotionally intelligent leaders can identify and address stressors, help individuals cope and maintain well-being. This re-

duces burnout, enhances productivity, and supports mental and emotional health.

Academic leadership

In academia, leadership is not confined to those holding administrative positions. Students play pivotal leadership roles too. By building EI, both educators and students are empowered to become effective leaders and lifelong learners. The cultivation of emotional intelligence not only enhances individual academic experiences

but also contributes to the broader success of institutions. Emotionally intelligent leaders create an environment that is conducive to collaboration, innovation, and personal growth. In turn, this benefits the academic community as a whole, improving retention rates, student satisfaction, and the institution’s reputation.

Impact

Emotionally intelligent educators are better equipped to connect with their students on a deeper level. They understand the diverse emotional backgrounds and challenges that students may face, allowing them to tailor their teaching methods to be more effective and empathetic. This not only results in improved learning outcomes but also fosters a more positive and constructive student-teacher relationship.

Moreover, institutions that prioritise emotional intelligence are more likely to create an environment where diversity and inclusion thrive. Emotionally intelligent leaders are naturally inclined to embrace and celebrate the uniqueness of each individual. They actively seek out opportunities to create a campus culture where people from all backgrounds feel welcomed and valued.

In terms of research and innovation, emotionally intelligent individuals are more adept at collaborating and brainstorming effectively. When a collaborative project involves students and faculty with high EI, the result is often a more creative and comprehensive outcome.

The writer is Director, Thakur Global Business School, Mumbai.



OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

I completed my B.Tech. in Civil and Environmental Engineering in 2018 and completed M.Tech. in Water and Environmental Technology in 2023. But I am not getting any job opportunities. How can I build my career? Devraj

Dear Devraj,

Start by looking at entry-level positions in your field and gain practical experience and build your professional network. Consider working with consulting firms, construction companies, environmental agencies, or research institutions. Network by attending industry events, conferences, and job fairs to connect with professionals in the field. Create an online presence on professional networking sites like LinkedIn. Consider pursuing marketable professional certifications like a licensed Professional Engineer (PE) or Certified Environmental Professional (CEP). Explore job opportunities in government agencies, and look for positions related to water resource management, infrastructure development, and environmental protection. Consider expanding your job search to a broader geographic area if possible. Some regions may have more job opportunities in your field than others.

I am studying in Class 6 in Kalaburagi. I am not sure whether I should do IT or opt for Civil Services. I am confident about doing IT because my school has several courses for the entrance exams. Sai Prasad

Dear Sai Prasad,

You have plenty of time to make this decision. Choose a path that aligns with your passions and goals. IT encompasses various fields, including software development, cybersecurity, and data science, so you can choose a specialisation that interests you. Civil servants play a vital role in shaping policies and governance but the UPSC exam is highly

Explore all options

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help

competitive and challenging. Focus on your school for now and explore IT with the courses your school offers, as it will give you a good foundation. Also, participate in extracurricular activities, clubs, or competitions related to IT and build your skills and knowledge. Stay open to other subjects and fields, as you progress through school. Your interests may evolve as you learn more about different subjects and careers choices.

I finished my B. Tech. in 2022 and got an offer letter from an MNC. But, with the company not doing well, the joining letter never came. I not getting any other offers, despite trying hard. This is affecting my mental and physical health. How can I overcome this? Sanjana

Dear Sanjana,

Get yourself assessed by a counselling psychologist and evaluate your mental health. You need a positive, patient, stable mindset to look and apply for jobs. Setbacks and failures are normal and temporary! Find out what is lacking in your CV. Some sectors have more job opportunities than others. Are you willing to move out of your comfort zone? Use your professional network to leverage and reach out to people for opportunities. Contact your classmates, professors, and industry contacts and diversify your job search strategies. Check job search websites, company career pages, and social media platforms while engaging with placement companies. Do you need to upgrade your current skills to become more employable? Are there opportunities to work on projects and take up freelance work? This will help you stay functional, earn something, gain experience and maintain a routine. Finally, meet a career counselor and seek personalised guidance and support.

I finished my B.A. English Language and Literature and have got an offer for MA from

two universities in Philosophy and in Public Health. While I have an interest in experiencing PG life, I have no clue which one has better scope in the long term. Balagopal

Dear Balagopal,

Both courses are great but have very different career choices. So this decision should be based on your individual interests, values, and aspirations and align with your personal passion and long-term goals. A Master’s in Philosophy will allow you to engage in deep intellectual exploration, critical thinking, study of existential crisis, ethics, and knowledge. This will improve your critical thinking, help you analyse complex issues, and communicate effectively. If you have a passion to teach, you could get into academia. An M.A Public Health addresses critical issues like disease prevention, health promotion, and healthcare system improvement. You can make a positive impact on public health at the community, national, or global level across a wide range of careers, including epidemiology, health policy, healthcare management, and research. It is a field with strong job prospects. However, you may need to study and specialise further to move ahead. Identify your interests, strengths, and passions that align with your values and goals. Do you see yourself working in academia and research? Are you interested in addressing public health challenges? Explore potential career paths, the job market, industry trends, and the demand for professionals in each field. Speak to different people across both fields, as they will provide you with an accurate measure of their challenges and opportunities.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge

Connect, collaborate, innovate



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Crafting stories, embracing change

Beginning as a college project, the film took the writer on an unexpected journey

Sreeram Jayaram

During my school days, I was captivated by gaming, which sparked the dream of crafting immersive narratives. This led me to the course on Communication Design at the Indian Institute of Art & Design (IIAD). The beginnings for this movie lie in a college project called “Personal Narratives,” where we created audio stories using only our voices and sound effects. I shared my first memory of meeting my father. The response it generated both from my classmates and my parents made me realise that the story had potential.

Three years later, when the opportunity came, I discussed the idea with my mentor, Professor Shaaz Ahmed, and decided to revisit it. That’s when I realised I needed to do more. So I talked to my parents, conducted more interviews, collected data and rewrote the story, adding more context to it. I also decided to focus more on my mother’s character. I made various drafts with different characters and structures but finally decided to concentrate on the core story. Interviews, revisions, conversations became my tools, with each iteration breathing life and depth to the essence of the story.

Challenges

However, the going was not easy. Time was a major adversary, demanding sacrifices and leading to the



trimming of cherished scenes. But I persisted, trusting my skills and making adjustments to complete the project on time. The dream sequences and the scene with the father were supposed to have a different treatment, but I couldn’t refine the visual style enough. Before colouring, we put together a work-in-progress version with line drawings and some animation to get the film’s first edited version. I used Photoshop to draw backgrounds, Blender for character animation, and After Effects to compose.

Turning point

While I was working on the film, Prof. Shaaz suggested that I consider submitting my entry to the ANN Awards. Intrigued, I began to research about these awards and discovered its

significance, particularly in the field of animation. The more I learned about the event, the more excited I became about submitting my film. The nomination itself was a significant achievement, as I realised that my work had gained recognition. But clinching the award for Best Student Film (Animation) was unexpected. Not only was it a recognition of my effort but also turned a simple trip into a momentous occasion.

Despite the mistakes in animation, the film received a good response from almost everyone who saw it. While my mother knew what I was doing, my father did not and I did wonder how he would react. Unfortunately I could not be there when he first saw it, but friends told me that his reaction was very emotional.

For now, the journey remains an odyssey of learning, embracing the pursuit of each creative endeavour. As the tale unfurls, chapter by chapter, my love for animation will guide me in my artistic pursuits. I’ve started thinking about my next film and my only plan is to learn more and do what I love.

The writer is a student of Communication Design (2019-23), Indian Institute of Art & Design.

Nitin Kumar Saxena

Aspiring entrepreneurs and business leaders increasingly recognise the value of learning from real-life experiences, especially failure. Failure, often seen as a setback, can indeed be a powerful catalyst for growth and learning. In the realm of business, setbacks are not unfamiliar. Start-ups fail, established companies face downturns, and entrepreneurs encounter roadblocks. Deconstructing failure involves dissecting the reasons behind it, analysing the decisions made, and understanding the consequences.

By adopting this approach, business students can gain insights into the complexities of the business world, learn the importance of staying agile, embracing change, and continuously innovating to stay ahead in the competitive business arena.

Resilience: Understanding how individuals, companies, or even entire industries bounce back from adversity provides invaluable lessons in perseverance. By studying real-life examples of resilience, students can develop the mental fortitude necessary to navigate the challenges of the business world with

Integrating social media into the hospitality education curriculum is essential to stay relevant in today’s fast-paced world

Rajiv Gulshan

In this digitally-driven era, social media has woven itself into the fabric of our lives. From connecting with loved ones to accessing news and entertainment, it has revolutionised how we interact with the world. The hospitality industry, known for its dynamic and customer-centric nature, has been profoundly influenced by this transformation.

The landscape of hospitality education has transcended traditional classroom lectures and textbooks. To prepare students for careers in this ever-evolving space, institutions must adapt and innovate. One of the most potent tools at our disposal is social media. Here are some of the most effective ways to support this transformation:

Real-time industry insights: Social media platforms offer students a unique opportunity to gain

real-time insights into the hospitality industry. By following industry leaders, companies, and organisations on platforms like X, LinkedIn, and Instagram, students stay abreast of the latest trends, innovations, and news.

Networking opportunities: Social media facilitates global connections and encouraging students to create and maintain professional profiles on platforms like LinkedIn can help them connect with industry professionals, alumni, and potential employers. All this helps lead to internships, job opportunities, and invaluable mentorship opportunities.

Interactive learning: Educators at well-known hospitality education institutions employ platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to create private groups or pages for their classes, where students engage in discussions, share resources, and collaborate on projects. This

enhances the sense of community among them and encourages active participation.

Showcasing student work: Hospitality students frequently engage in practical projects such as culinary creation, event planning, and hotel management simulations. Social media offers a platform to showcase their work to a wider audience, including potential employers. Many leading institutions create dedicated social media accounts or hashtags to highlight such achievements, serving as a portfolio of their skills and accomplishments. This encourages an innovative mindset and engages students optimally.

Guest lectures and webinars: Inviting industry experts to deliver guest lectures or webinars through social media platforms helps provide students with valuable perspectives and exposes them to real-world experiences and challenges. There is a tri-

partite learning opportunity created between the students, prospective employers and the teachers.

Promoting a global perspective: Social media delivers a dynamic platform for students to connect with peers, alumni, and professionals across the globe. Today, institutions actively encourage participation in online discussions, engagement in hospitality-focused groups, and the sharing of experiences. This not only broadens horizons but also nurtures a sense of community and collaboration among students.

Integrating social media into the curriculum of hospitality education is no longer an option; it is essential to stay relevant. Its impact on hospitality education extends beyond the classroom, shaping students’ professional lives and empowering them to thrive in this competitive industry.

The writer is Dean, Le Cordon Bleu, GD Goenka University.

Embrace failure

Deconstructing mistakes from the past helps students develop a holistic understanding of the multifaceted corporate landscape.



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grace and composure.

Critical-thinking: Deconstructing failures demands analysing the situation critically, identifying the root causes, and formulating effective solutions. This process sharpens critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. Business students can enhance their analytical abilities by examining the failures of others, which allows them to dissect complex problems, explore various perspectives, and devise innovative strategies.

Emotional intelligence: Behind every business failure lie human stories of disappointment and struggle. Delving into these narratives can help business students cultivate empathy and emotional

intelligence. Understanding the human aspect of failure fosters compassion and humility. Empathetic leaders are better equipped to connect with team members, clients, and stakeholders, creating a positive and supportive work environment.

Improvement and innovation: History often repeats itself when valuable lessons from the past are ignored. By deconstructing failures, business students gain access to a treasure trove of knowledge about what doesn’t work and can identify patterns, recognise red flags, and avoid similar mistakes. This proactive approach prevents costly errors and promotes a culture of continuous improvement and

innovation.

Inspire creativity: Some of the most groundbreaking innovations emerged from the ashes of failure. Deconstructing failures can inspire creativity by encouraging students to think outside the box. Students can brainstorm alternative solutions and innovative approaches and prepare themselves to tackle challenges with inventive thinking and a willingness to take calculated risks.

Ethics: Ethical failures can lead to severe consequences for businesses. Deconstructing these allows business students to understand the importance of ethical conduct in the corporate world. By examining case studies, students understand the

pitfalls to avoid, promoting a solid ethical foundation in their professional lives.

Teamwork: Many business failures can be attributed to a lack of collaboration and studying this emphasises the importance of effective teamwork. Business students learn how a cohesive team can overcome challenges and achieve collective goals, fostering teamwork skills and encouraging them to work collaboratively.

Leadership: Effective leadership is vital for the success of any business. Failures often highlight shortcomings in leadership styles and decision-making processes. Business students can gain valuable insights into what not to do as leaders by analysing these failures and learn the significance of communication, delegation, and fostering a positive organisational culture.

In the dynamic world of business, failure is not the end; it is a chapter in a continuous learning journey. By embracing failure as invaluable teaching moments, business students can develop a holistic understanding of the multifaceted nature of the corporate landscape.

The author is a Professor at Jaipuria School of Business.

Assess yourself

Question banks and sample question papers help students understand the test format and assess their strengths and weaknesses

Swaati Jain

Preparing for board and competitive exams can be daunting due to the volume of information and the pressure to perform well.

However, there are valuable tools such as question banks and sample question papers that can help students understand the exam format, assess their knowledge, and build confidence.

Understand the format
Board exams: Understanding the format is crucial as it helps students manage their time effectively during the exam. Most board exams have a fixed number of questions for each subject, but they may vary in terms of difficulty.

Question banks and sample question papers give students a chance to practise within these constraints. Moreover, they of-

ten include examples of new question types, allowing students to prepare for changes in the exam pattern.

Competitive exams: Competitive exams often have multiple-choice questions, subjective questions, or a combination of both. By practising with sample question papers, students can develop strategies to tackle the kind of questions that may be asked. This will help reduce anxiety during the exam.

Identify weaknesses

Beyond practise, question banks and sample question papers also help assess one’s knowledge and identify areas that need improvement.

Board exams: Since it is essential to cover the entire syllabus, question banks often cover a wide range of topics. By attempting questions from different chapters, students can gauge their rea-

diness and pinpoint areas where they need to focus their efforts.

Competitive exams: Known for their rigorous content, sample question papers designed for these exams can help students identify their strengths and weaknesses, and create a study plan that addresses areas where improvement is needed.

Builds confidence

When students face unfamiliar questions in the actual exam, it can lead to anxiety and reduced performance. However, by practising with question banks and sample question papers, students can build confidence in their abilities.

Board exams: Since they often contain questions that require critical thinking and application of concepts, practising with a variety of questions helps students develop problem-solving skills and gain the



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confidence to tackle any question that comes their way.

Competitive exams: These are notorious for their challenging questions, and regular practice with sample question papers gives students the confidence to handle difficult problems.

Time-management

Many students struggle to complete their papers within the allotted time, leading to incomplete answers and lower scores.

Board exams: With strict time limits for each section, students have to pace themselves. By practising with sample question papers, they can allocate the right amount of time to each question. This

can make a significant difference in their final scores.

Competitive exams: Each section has time constraints and some questions may be more time-consuming than others. Practising with sample question papers allows students to develop strategies to manage their time effectively, complete the paper and maximise their score.

Question banks and sample question papers are invaluable resources when preparing for exams. Remember that consistent practice, coupled with a well-structured study plan, is the key to achieving one’s academic and competitive goals.

The writer is Editorial Director, Oswaal Books.

ON THE SHELF

The Spark That Lit The Revolution

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin visited London six times at the beginning of the 20th century. This book narrates the story of Lenin’s relationship with Apollinariya Yakubova, a revolutionary known to her comrades as the ‘primeval force of the Black Earth’. It is based on a series of new

archival discoveries from the British Library, as well as photographs and details of the Russian revolutionaries (and international police spies) who congregated in the East End of London, known then as the ‘Little Russian Island’. It reveals Lenin’s London-based accomplices and political rivals, and sheds new light on his world-view.

Author: Robert Henderson
Publisher: Bloomsbury
Price: ₹699

