

Fun Learning – Expediencies “My Experimentation”

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Abstract

One overriding challenge is now coming to the fore in public consciousness: we need to reinvent just about everything. It seems everything is in flux – and everything demands innovation and out of the box thinking. So it follows that education should focus on fostering innovation by putting curiosity, critical thinking, deep understanding, the rules and tools of inquiry, and creative brainstorming at the center of the curriculum. Whatever the profession a child wishes to take, managerial skills are becoming important and must. The students need knowledge in organizational behavior, leadership skills, managerial skills, competencies and much more. Today, many educational institutes use a set of cutting-edge tools to stimulate creativity and innovation. The tools include playful games and visual exercises that can easily be used in the classroom. One such tool is theater or plays. And the plays that has always ruled and will continue to rule is – “Shakespeare Plays”. Ben Johnson anticipated Shakespeare’s dazzling future when declare, “He was not of an age, but for all time”. The book, “Shakespeare on Management” by Paul Corrigan takes a fascinating look at the psychology of leadership using classic Shakespearean characters. He shows how, through his plays, Shakespeare demonstrates the different roles a leader can take, and the different skills needed. He analyses the decision making and actions of certain characters to see what can be learnt by today’s managers. Shakespeare gives us the insights that help us to understand people we are dealing with. Shakespeare has been a staple of management training for a long time. But only in the last few years have programs been started that use Shakespeare’s works to teach chief executives the vulnerabilities to which the powerful are susceptible. Very rightly put by James O’Toole, a prominent critic of business school curricula uses Shakespeare in his classes at the Aspen Institute. “It reaches these practical business people at a much deeper level than mathematical formula does”. I conclude by saying it is all about an idea, to let students see how literature and film connect with their experience in real life.

1. Introduction

This was presented in Conference on Education (CICE-2016) at the University of Toronto Mississauga, Canada. It spoke about how fun

learning can be a boon to students as well as teachers.

2. My Paper

The paper talks about my 25 + years’ experience in teaching students with different mind sets and the way to engage them for better learning. My teaching career began three decades back. Teaching was always fun and experience has been vast. Started with teaching the primary school children, then move to higher schools, and then finally to graduates and masters. One thing was common among all age group children – ‘learning was more when there was fun’. I realized that that where there was fun, there was involvement, and where there was involvement, there was learning.

I started working on teaching methodology. My keywords were – involvement and fun. Drama has always been very close to my heart and I thought of getting it into my classroom. Drama is a complete project-based activity and lot teamwork is required. Apart from fun and literature learning, it develops a lot of competencies in a child, which is very important for a child future endeavor.



Figure 1. Little fun and interaction. It keeps the students going. DSK International Campus

My course outline for management students was:

Business communication

- a) Presentation Skills
- b) Global Culture
- c) Case Study

Business English

- a) Business Writing

Soft Skills

- a) Personal Branding

- b) Managerial Competencies
- c) EQ

2.1. Let us understand few essential elements to make meaningful projects.

2.1.1. A Need to Know - The day is introduced with some knowledge through chats, videos, handouts and many such aids. This helps them to start thinking and then talking and finally start sharing. Teachers can be a powerful in activating interest and initiating questions. An entry event can be almost anything: a video, a lively discussion, a guest speaker, a field trip, or a piece of mock correspondence that sets up a scenario. With a compelling student project, the reason for learning relevant material becomes clear: I need to know this to meet the challenge I've accepted.

2.1.2. Trigger the minds to drive questions - A good driving question captures the heart of the project and gives the students a sense of purpose and challenge. The question should be provocative, open-ended, complex, and linked to the core of what you want students to learn. It could be abstract, concrete or focused on solving a problem. A project without a driving question is like an essay without a thesis. Without a driving question, students may not understand why they are undertaking a project. With these questions, objectives become clear.

2.1.3. Student Voice and Choice, to fit their style - This element of project-based learning is important. In order to make the project more interesting and meaningful, there should be voice and right to choose. My advice is to design project to match the students' style. On the limited-choice end of the scale, learners can select what topic to study within a general driving question and choose how to design, create, and present products.

2.1.4. 21st Century Skills - After the questions are clear and the students are sure about what really they want and how to go about, they form teams and delegate work. At work the students review each other's work and pay attention to collaboration and communication. The teacher can guide them to understand competencies and help them work on these skills. A project should give students opportunities to build such 21st century competencies as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, time management, creative management and the use of technology, which will serve them well in future endeavor.

2.1.5. Inquiry and Innovation - Students find project work more meaningful if they conduct real inquiry and at the same time put their personal experiences together. Here the knowledge is far

away from books and google. Here the students work on the questions and collect information from their experience, and this turns out to be real knowledge. With this knowledge they learn to draw conclusion. It is important to guide students in real inquiry, help them refer to the questions they generated after the entry event. Guide them as they discover new insights. The classroom culture should value questioning, hypothesizing, and openness to new ideas and perspectives.

2.1.6. Feedback and Revision - Here, meeting the students is very important and giving them regular feedback helps them to be on track and produce correct information. Students need to learn that most people's first attempts don't result in high quality and that revision is a frequent feature of real endeavor. At this point few experts can be called and also the students can be helped with few contacts and references.

2.1.7. The Final Presentation - Schoolwork is more meaningful when it's not done only for the teacher or the test. The students work on various audio-visual aids to showcase their research and work. When students present their work to a real audience, they care more about its quality. The presentation should be well rehearsed. The students should have the art of presenting themselves and their work in the best of manner. I turned towards Project Based Learning. PBL is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for extended period of time to investigate and respond to a complex question, problem or challenge. Few elements of Project Based Learning include: 21st century competencies, voice and choice, in-depth inquiry and many more. A project is meaningful if it fulfills two criteria. First, students must perceive the work as a task that matters and that they want to do well. Second, a meaningful project fulfills an educational purpose. For this a well-designed project is required and it should be well executed.



Figure 2. The end result – the final presentation day is overwhelming. DSK International Campus



Figure 3. Students working on a project and they do take their breaks to have fun. DSK International Campus



Figure 4. Handling waste material. DSK International Campus



Figure 5. Innovation out of waste material. DSK International Campus

Engagement is a very important factor while working on a project. This is one of the most important skill of a 21st century. Teamwork is a major competency.

Let us talk about how engagement adds value to team projects.

Engagement needs to be customized according to the subject and required end – result Engagement manages focus, and alignment of ‘short term vision’

3. Some of the ways this can be achieved

- Create interest – where there is interest, education happens.
- Tempt with benefits – marks and awards.
- Stick to your promises – keeping up to promises – builds credibility and trust.
- Help students maintain a work life equilibrium.
- Make happy and productive students the leaders. Students engagement works best when results are interwoven with relationships.
- Work on creating an environment of success by providing right and optimal resources only.

4. Project Based Learning adorned with Innovation

Properly structured, group projects can reinforce skills that are relevant to both group and individual work.

1. It helps to break complex tasks into parts and steps. It makes it simpler to understand, follow and work.
2. Well planned and with innovation helps to manage time well.
3. Structured planning with good innovation allows good and healthy discussion and explanation.
4. Feedback on performance becomes constructive.
5. Challenge are taken in a very healthy manner.
6. Develop stronger and professional communication skills
7. Helps in providing an insight to understand behavioral patterns.
8. It reflects the student’s own character and judgment.
9. It proves to be a stress buster as it is planned and well managed with innovations.

5. Talking about Parameters or Grading

Putting across parameters for students are important as it acts as a motivation. Grading helps the students to understand their capabilities and puts them in a situation to think, inquire, discuss and evaluate themselves. Parameters can be knowledge based, creativity based, and personality based.

5.1. The Yardstick

5.1.1. Enthusiasm: is about your subject, it is about others, it is creativity and fun. Of course, we want to

perform at our best in every situation, but I feel the word 'confidence' creates more problems than it solves. I usually advise students to change the word to 'enthusiasm'. The word enthusiasm creates a spark.

5.1.2. Quick Decision making: We cannot expect to remain forever in the process of decision making. The end or the results of this process is a decision. The students must learn to improve the quality of decision.

5.1.3. Time Management: Time is limited. The students need to learn how to value time. Good time management allows the students to accomplish more in a shorter period of time, which leads to more free time, which lets the students take advantage of learning opportunities, it helps lower their stress, and helps students to focus, which leads to more career success. Each benefit of time management improves another aspect of your life. All we need to do as teachers is get the cycle started.

5.1.4. Innovation: is important as it encourages the students to come up with new ideas and implement them. The ability to manage innovation is a great competency.



Figure 6. Creative Work

5.1.5. Gracious Professionalism: This is all about learning and collaborating. More importance is given to this than winning.

5.1.6. Team guidance: Leaders are identified here.

5.1.7. Leadership: Leadership is an important function which helps to maximize efficiency and to achieve goals.

5.1.8. Waste Management: It is all about safety and environment. Students understand the value of material and right disposal.

PBL gives loads of contentment. It is fulfilling and fun. There is lot of positive side to it. The work

is fulfilling, exciting and varied. The 'buzz' around adds to the sense of enjoyable learning. Transforms the theoretical knowledge, in the real world. Maximizing the available time. Approach towards task and solving problems in a novel and interesting ways. Group task mostly ends with a celebration.

6. Conclusion

I feel elated to share this paper for I have always experienced joy working with students and working with many innovative ideas. Creating is fun for students as well as teachers. My advice is always to make learning simpler and fun.

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Figure 7. Thank you, dear students, and DSK International Campus