

# Personal Development and Soft Skills for Teachers

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## Abstract

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*Teaching is a profession and teacher education is a process of professional preparation of teachers (NCFTE 2009, p.15). One of the main functions of a teachers' training college is to produce teachers who are skilled in communication and present the updated subject matter in a manner that is interesting and easy to understand. At various forums people raise an opinion that the teacher education curricula lack training in development of the soft skills which are most essential for this profession. The training in interpersonal communication skills and language proficiency is found wanting. The NCF 2005 reiterates that 'the existing teacher education programmes do not recognise the centrality of language in the curriculum'. (NCF, 2005) School teachers continue to be isolated from centres of higher learning and their professional development needs remain unaddressed. (Batra, 2005). During an exercise on syllabus reforms at the Faculty of Education, Banaras Hindu University, this problem was realised, and an audit course of 1 credit on 'Personal Development and Soft Skills for Teachers' was proposed. This paper presents a detailed account of this exercise on two groups of 40 students each in two consecutive semesters of the 2010- 2011 batch of Bachelor of Education. The designing of the programme, its conduction over fifteen classes of one and a half hour duration, the modalities of interaction and training, and the evaluation as well as the outcome of the entire endeavour is presented in this paper.*

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## Introduction

Democracy is based on faith in the dignity and worth of every single individual as a human being. ... The object of a democratic education is, therefore, the full, all-round development of every individual's personality, i.e., an education to initiate the students into the many-sided art of living in a community. It is obvious, however, that an individual cannot live and develop

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alone. .... No education is worth the name which does not inculcate the qualities necessary for living graciously, harmoniously and efficiently with one's fellow men. (Secondary Education Commission, 1952–53, p.20)

The responsibility of providing such an education in schools and the classrooms is directly upon the teachers and indirectly upon the teacher training institutions. One of the main functions of a teachers' training college is to produce teachers who have democratic values, are professional in their disposition, are skilled in communication, and present the updated subject matter in a manner that is interesting and easy to understand.

The training programme being offered for teacher preparation, however, is unable to prepare pupil teachers for this. The experiences during the internship or practice teaching programmes indicate this deficiency of the programme. 'Pupil teachers' are found wanting in interpersonal communication skills and language proficiency in spite of being equipped with sound theoretical knowledge of skills and pedagogy. This has been pointed out in the National Curriculum Framework 2005, which iterates that 'the existing teacher education programmes do not recognise the centrality of language in the curriculum'. (NCF, 2005)

There are innumerable ways of looking at curriculum theory and practice. In *The Curriculum* Franklin Bobbitt (1918) writes:

The central theory [of curriculum] is simple. Human life, however varied, consists in the performance of specific activities. Education

that prepares for life is one that prepares definitely and adequately for these specific activities. However numerous and diverse they may be for any social class they can be discovered. This requires only that one go out into the world of affairs and discover the particulars of which their affairs consist. These will show the abilities, attitudes, habits, appreciations and forms of knowledge that men need. These will be the objectives of the curriculum. They will be numerous, definite and particularised. The curriculum will then be that series of experiences which children and youth must have by way of obtaining those objectives.

The urgency is to address ourselves seriously to examining the issues related to the preparation of teachers as well as to prune the theory and practice of teacher education (NCFTE 2009). In the light of the RTE Act 2009, there is a more pressing need to prepare competent teachers. "The most important factor in the contemplated educational reconstruction, is the teacher— his personal qualities, his educational qualifications, his personal training and the place that he occupies in the school as well in the community", very prudently pointed out by The Secondary Education Commission (1952). This responsibility automatically transfers to 'teacher training institutions' and 'teacher training programmes'. The existing teacher education curriculum and majority of teacher training institutions inherently lack in this regard. The NCFTE (2009) sums up the grim situation as:

At all stages, teacher education institutions are managed by faculty with little or inadequate professional training to handle the tasks of a teacher educator. The absence in the system of institutions and programmes focussed on the professional preparation of trainers/teacher educators for different stages of education accounts for the situation. (NCFTE 2009, p 83)

The entire programme of 'teacher training' needs to be restructured and redesigned with the changing social backdrop.

In this era of Globalisation and Liberalisation, 'teacher training' needs to be directed towards the needs of a more global citizenry. The teachers being produced must not only be worthy of being absorbed in all kinds of schools but must be able to make a place for themselves in the global market. Not just the trainee teachers but the in-service teachers too, need to be made abreast with the needs of the society. They should be provided opportunities for periodic enrichment of soft skills. Unfortunately, this is not the case as school teachers continue to be isolated from centres of higher learning and their professional development needs remain unaddressed (Batra, 2005). There is need to bring greater convergence between professional preparation and continuing professional development of teachers at all stages of schooling in terms of level, duration and structure (NCFTE 2009 p 8).

The NCFTE 2009 makes a mention of the need for such skills among teacher educators as well, and largely holds the

teacher educators responsible for this scenario.

By way of summing up, we may note that at all stages, teacher education institutions are managed by faculty with little or inadequate professional training to handle the tasks of a teacher educator. The absence in the system of institutions and programmes focussed on the professional preparation of trainers/teacher educators for different stages of education accounts for the situation (NCFTE 2009 p 83).

The NCF 2005 position paper on Teacher Education for Curriculum renewal elaborated this point and referred to the need to focus on pedagogies appropriate for adult learners for the preparation of teachers. (The weakest aspect, perhaps, of teacher education is the absence of professional preparation of teacher educators). These needs make it mandatory for teacher educators to function differently. They will have to prepare the pupil teachers who can present ideas better, speak more effectively, fluently and confidently in public, write reports, carry out group discussions, meetings or, to sum it all up, to perform better as professionals.

Thus, the curriculum for 'teacher training programmes' calls for new dimensions and new skills that need to be inculcated and imbibed as inherent personality traits of the new age teacher. The teacher today does not have the convenience of being revered as a '*guru*' from day one. The youngsters are free from inhibitions and are quite vocal about what is being served to them by their teachers. An efficient and effective

teacher will be one who is a professional with tremendous interpersonal skills and one who can continuously keep the youngsters in awe by one's bearing and disposition within the constitutional framework and core values. He/she shall have to be geared for numerous other roles that he/she would have to take on, such as, a leader, a team worker, an employee, a negotiator, and above all a professional with great human values and a role model for the coming generations.

### ***What are Soft Skills?***

Philip Moss and Chris Tilly (1996), define soft skills as "skills, abilities and traits that pertain to personality, attitude and behaviour rather than to formal or technical knowledge". Another study by Peter Capelli and Maria Ianozzi (1996) divides soft skills into three categories of work relevant attitudes: disposition or personality, motivation, and willingness to sacrifice self for the good of the group. As defined in Career Opportunities News, October 2002,

"A soft skill refers to the cluster of personality traits, social graces, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark each of us to varying degrees. Persons who rank high in this cluster, with good soft skills, are generally the people that most employers want to hire. Soft skills complement hard skills, which are the technical requirements of a job. The ideal, of course, is someone strong in both job and personal skills...."

For this reason, soft skills are increasingly sought out by employers

in addition to standard qualifications. In face to face interviews, employers focused on punctuality, attendance, and personal habits, including non verbal communication, dress and hair style (Moss and Tilly 1995, 1996; Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991; Kirschenman, Moss and Tilly 1995).

### **Background**

The teaching profession is probably the only one in which one's ability is evaluated by the performance of others. A successful teacher is one whose students have achieved great heights (in the area he was concerned with in particular and) in life. Likewise, a successful teacher educator is one whose students in their turn become great teachers. A good Teacher Training Institute is one which turns out professional teachers year by year. At a more practical level, we may say that the absorption of our pass outs and their further good performance speaks about our standards as teacher educators.

During practice teaching or internship programmes, pre-placement activities and during selection committees for local schools, where there was an opportunity to observe the trainee teachers, from the point of view of employers, the shortcomings of the training programme as far as soft skills were concerned became evident. Similar experiences form the 'fountainhead' of the course which is the focus of this paper. Propelled by such an experience, when the opportunity to propose new courses arose during an exercise of syllabus revision at the Faculty of Education, Banaras Hindu University an 'Audit Course' of 1

credit was proposed which was named "Personal Development and Soft Skills for Teachers". The course, which was planned over 15 sessions of an hour and a half each, has been successfully running on batches of 40 pupil teachers each in two semesters since the 2010–11 session.

This paper is based on the observations of the two batches of 40 students each in two semesters of the 2010–11 batch of Bachelor of Education. By virtue of being based on observation and experience and not on theory or logic, this paper may be taken as the outcome of an empirical study. It provides detailed narrations of on goings of the experiences on a group of pupil teachers.

### **Shaping the Course**

#### **Objectives**

Due to the fact that no such programme existed for teachers, input from school principals and senior professors was sought. After a lot of research and a series of group discussions among the teacher educators the course was structured in such a way that it may be contained within 15 sessions of 1 hour duration and be effective, precise and need based. At this stage it was decided that this course will be for a small group of pupil teachers and attendance and active participation will be the mandatory requirements.

The objectives of this course were:

- To bring about personality development with regard to the different behavioural dimensions that has far-reaching significance for teachers.

- To recognise feelings, diagnose needs and fears, and improve one's ability to deal with interview anxiety.
- To learn and practice new skills and techniques for effective outputs in job market for teachers.
- To get exposed to professional etiquettes to make a lasting impression.

#### **Selection Criteria**

The call for applications for the course was notified soon after the beginning of the semester. An unexpectedly overwhelming response of pupil teachers willing to take the course raised the issue of selection criteria. Finally, a list of names of all pupil teachers who had applied for the course was prepared and the names of 40 pupil teachers was drawn by lottery. This practice had to be continued in the next semester and has become the standard practice for selection of pupil teachers since then.

#### **Modalities**

The transactional strategy employed was basically of lecture cum demonstrations based on the supplied readings complemented by Power Point presentations, screening of film and video clips, sharing of experiences, mock interviews, role playing sessions, panel discussions, etc. The sessions and the content of each was organised and planned by the author in the capacity of Course In-charge. The programme of 15 sessions was conducted by a group of four teacher educators from within the Faculty of Education, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. The course content is divided into three main headings, i.e. 1. Preparation for the Job Market;

2. Prior Preparation for Interview; and
3. Professional Etiquettes.

### *Day 1*

**Theme:** Programme Overview, Introduction to Soft Skills, Self Motivation: Internal and External, Sharing of Expectations and exchange of emails!, What is to come....

The Day 1 was dedicated to a formal introduction of the course and sharing of expectations from and of the pupil teachers. The notice of the commencement of the course made a special mention of timely arrival to the programme as a mandate and expected arrival at least 5-10 minutes in advance of the scheduled time.

At the very outset the pupil teachers were supplied with an open ended questionnaire, which they were asked to fill up as they arrived and which was collected shortly afterwards before the beginning of the session. The questionnaire had the following questions:

1. What brings you to this programme?
2. What do you understand by personal development?
3. What are your high points? Enumerate any three things you like about yourself.
4. What are the deprivations you perceive in yourself? Enumerate any three things you dislike about yourself?
5. Where do you place yourself on a scale of 1-10 as a socially skilled person? (Low) 1... 2... 3... 4... 5... 6... 7... 8... 9... 10 (High). Why?
7. What do your friends like about you?

8. Which qualities of a person appeal to you the most?

9. Why do you think you should be recruited for a teachers post?

They were later given a presentation telling the details of the programme and what was to be expected in the coming days. The concept of soft skills was introduced and expectations shared. The students were introduced amongst one another and a brief outline of the fifteen days programme was described. The main ideas driven through were:

- Stand up and be counted or be counted out. Make yourself counted in the first few days, be visible. (This was to emphasise the need of participation and involvement in the course, as remaining in the background would neither have helped the pupil teachers nor would have done any good to the purpose of the course.)
- The trait of Accountability is highly valued....Do things right the first time. Diminish the need of constant supervision. (This was stressed upon to discourage attention seeking behaviour of some students who want an extra special treatment, and would not be satisfied with general instructions given to the entire group.)
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. (This was once again to encourage active involvement of the pupil teachers, and to facilitate the kind of environment in which they could feel free to ask questions to dispel any kind of doubt.)
- Ideas are everywhere... it's up to you to make them a reality. *Great ideas*

*without application have no value.* (This was intended to encourage students to incorporate their own ideas and to make use of their insights during trying situations particularly during interviews).

In the first batch only 17 of the 40 pupil teachers had personal email IDS (in the second semester all 40 pupil teachers had email IDS). Those who had email IDS were asked to help the remaining to create theirs. This was the first step which had two main consequences. Firstly, it led to a collaborative learning and strengthening of bonds between the pupil teachers (who were new to one another in the first batch). Secondly, it facilitated all further correspondence and exchange of information within the group. It also marked the first step towards being computer savvy for many of the participants.

It may be mentioned that although, the need to develop a sense of dressing among pupil teachers was felt, it was not imposed immediately upon the pupil teachers. Within the group there were both types of individuals, those with good sense of dressing and those with poor sense of dressing. Some of

the pupil teachers who were dressed appropriately were called upon the dais and the others were asked to describe why their dresses were considered good. This was an indirect indication towards the importance of proper attire. All the pupil teachers were asked to use their discretion to dress appropriately as if they were to report for an interview on all subsequent days of the course. No tips on dressing were given on the first day.

During the same week, a content analysis of the open-ended questionnaire was undertaken which led to certain conclusions that helped to shape the programme. It was evident that most pupil teachers had strong inhibitions about their personalities and majority (90%) had mentioned that they had joined the programme to improve upon themselves while some had mentioned 'to be a socially skilled person'. Very few students (8.5%) knew precisely what is meant by personal development. As an answer to question 3, sixty-six of the seventy pupil teachers gave pertinent replies which are given below in Table 1. Four pupil teachers misunderstood the questions and their answers were restricted to their favourite hobbies.

**Table 1: High points/strengths reported**

<i>High points/ strengths</i>	<i>percentage</i>	<i>High points/ strengths</i>	<i>percentage</i>	<i>High points/ strengths</i>	<i>percentage</i>
positive attitude and thinking	33.33	laborious	26.6	empathetic	22.2
		helpful and kind	17.77	confidence	15.5
truthfulness	15.55	sincere	15.55	faithfulness	13.33
thoughtful	11.11	tries new things	11.11	devotion to duty	11.11
will power	8.88	respect for elder	11.11	honesty to profession	8.88
disciplined	8.88	punctuality	8.88		

patience	6.66	politeness	6.66	enthusiasm	6.66
focussed	4.44	responsible	4.44	strong determination	4.44
judiciousness	2.22	optimism	2.22		
team spirit	2.22	leadership	2.22	God fearing	2.22
giving ones best or 100%	2.22	never overconfident	2.22	good manager	2.22
				creative	2.22
being straight forward	2.22	understanding	2.22	trusting	2.22

The pupil teachers mostly reported positive thinking and positive attitude (33.3%) as their strength. In addition, laboriousness or hard working (26.6%) and an empathetic (22.2%) helpful and kind nature (17.7%) were also reported as their strength by many. The others included sincerity (15.5%), confidence (15.5%), truthfulness (15.5%), faithfulness (13.33), thoughtfulness (11.11%), and respect for elders (11.11%), devotion to duty (11.11%) and the motivation to try new things

(11.11%). Honesty to profession (8.88%), will power (8.88%), disciplined (8.88%) and punctuality (8.88%), were far less reported strengths. Surprisingly leadership (2.22%), giving ones best or 100% (2.22%) and good manager (2.22%) which are essentially the core strengths of a good teacher were rarely reported as strengths.

As an answer to question 4 the shortcomings reported are given in Table 2.

**Table 2: Weaknesses/shortcomings reported**

<i>weakness/shortcoming</i>	<i>percentage</i>	<i>weakness/shortcoming</i>	<i>percentage</i>	<i>weakness/shortcoming</i>	<i>percentage</i>
lack of confidence	35	inability to converse in English	32.5	stage fright	22.5
				recklessness	20
laziness	22.5			too emotional	20
shyness	17.5	nervousness	17.5		
not practical	15	poor time management	15	isolation	12.5
negative thinking	12.5			short temper	10
		self centred	7.5	confused	10
introversion	7.5	over trusting	7.5	negligent of health	5
talkative	2.5	jealous	2.5		
can't handle groups	2.5	argumentative	2.5	conservative	2.5
		old fashioned	2.5	liar	2.5



Answers to this question were more realistic and true sounding. 35% students had reported lack of confidence, 32.5% students had reported inability to converse in English while 22.5 % students had reported stage fright as their main weakness. This reaffirmed the need of the programme and laid down the main focus areas for the programme.

In response to question 5 related to placing oneself on a scale of 1-10 with regards to social skills, 6 out of 80 pupil teachers gave no response, which may be taken as inability to understand the question. The remaining pupil teachers (72) gave the following preferences.

**Table 3: Self rating of pupil teachers on a scale regarding social skill**

Index	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Opted by	0	0	2	8	28	14	10	8	3	1

The inference drawn from these answers was that most pupil teachers rated themselves as mediocre preferred to mark themselves at '5'; they had a lack of confidence and stage fright mainly due to their inability to converse in English. They also admitted that they were at times too emotional, nervous and lazy.

The answers to the remaining questions reiterated these preferences. None of the pupil teachers could give a pertinent reply to the last question "Why do you think you should be recruited for a teachers post?" This background information helped a great deal in shaping the course and planning the subsequent sessions. It also helped during the mock interviews as each one could be given appropriate feedback and suggestions.

### Day 2

**Theme:** Skills for writing Job applications 1.Preparing your Curriculum Vitae (CV) and précis 2.Writing SOPs (Statements of Purpose) 3.Writing applications for various purposes.

The second day was focussed on preparing the proper Curriculum Vitae, capsule CV and writing the SOP or 'Statement of Purpose'. They were at first told the important features of a good CV and were then supplied with blank formats to prepare their own CV. They were asked to email their CV for corrections, and later to print the corrected CV, and to come prepared with hard copies of their CV and Précis in proper folders to all classes. The pupil teachers were also given brief instructions on the nuances of writing various applications and 'covering letters'. They were supplied with an elaborate school application form and were asked to fill it up.

The majority of pupil teachers had turned out in crisply ironed shirts and trousers. However, the footwear was full of variety. They had avoided informal clothing. Most girls reported in white suits. A few still resorted to fancy party wear and were told that they were not dressed appropriately for an interview. No tips on formal dressing were given on the second day as well.

### Day 3

**Theme:** Prior preparations for Interview; Pre-interview Checklist; What you need to carry to the interview; From CV to shoes; From entry to retreat.

The third day was dedicated to prior preparations of job interview. The pupil teachers had reported with

hard copies of their CV and précis in neat folders as instructed. A detailed presentation on prior preparations for interviews was made. The importance of proper planning and keeping time was reiterated. They were asked to prepare a checklist of all that they would carry to an interview. Any additional important items missed out by them were suggested, and a proper pre-interview checklist was prepared. The proper dress code for men and women were discussed in details separately.

The pupil teachers were made to practice entry into an interview board room several times. Most pupil teachers had a tendency to avoid eye contact while they were entering the room. None were smiling, and nearly all were very tense and nervous during the first trial. Some slopped on the first available seat without waiting to be asked to sit. The retreat from the interview room after the interview was also practised. Their mistakes were pointed out individually, and the appropriate way of entry and retreat from an interview board room were demonstrated. The pupil teachers rehearsed it in small groups among themselves.

#### *Day 4 and Day 5*

**Theme:** Prior preparations for Interview: Common interview questions and interview mistakes. Negotiating and Marketing what you have.

The fourth and the fifth days were devoted to rigorous preparations for a job interview. On the third day the pupil teachers were familiarised with the common interview questions that might be asked during an interview for a teachers post. They were also made

aware of the common blunders that people tend to commit during interviews. All pupil teachers were asked to prepare replies to three questions,

- Tell us about yourself?
- Why do you think we should take you?
- Do you want to ask us any question?

This exercise went a long way in preparing them for being impressive at the interview. These replies were then practised as dramatisation in front of the entire class.

The fifth day began with screening of video clips of interviews and their dramatisations to emphasise the extent of damage certain mistakes committed by the interviewee may cause. The pupil teachers were prepared for three more questions.

- Why did you give up your last job?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Why do you want to join us/take this job?

The pupil teachers were handed a list of 20 questions and were asked to discuss appropriate answers to them in small groups. The groups were supervised by individual teachers and the queries resolved.

#### *Day 6 and Day 7*

**Theme:** Presenting yourself at the job interview; Introducing oneself at the interview; Manners in public places.

The sixth and the seventh day were devoted entirely to, mock interviews. The pupil teachers were instructed in advance to come dressed formally for an interview. On the sixth day they were marked on the basis of their confidence

in answering, fidgeting, mannerisms and body language. Not much heed was given to the quality of answers. The pupil teachers were at first divided into five groups of eight members each. They were further divided into two sets of four. The two groups were to role play as interviewers for each other. The pupil teachers were thus made to face a panel of five interviewers (one teacher and the remaining four pupil teachers). The pupil teachers involved in the role of interviewers were encouraged to ask simple, easy and good questions, and not get too personal or critical. The idea was to give a pleasurable experience to the pupil teachers to boost their self confidence. The teachers, however, had the liberty to ask any kind of questions if they felt that the particular participant was in the right state to answer them. The seating plan was simulated as close as possible to an interview room keeping the semicircular arrangement to facilitate effortless eye contact with each interview board member. The individual teachers' chambers were made use of for the purpose.

Each participant was to enter the room after seeking permission politely. Having entered, they were to give, each interviewer, a copy of their précis or capsule CV. One of the interview panel members, most often the teacher, would ask them to take their seat. They were to introduce themselves after greeting the interviewers and then sit facing them only when asked to. The body language of the pupil teachers was closely watched all through and noted down by all five for feedback. The pupil teachers who were not ready with multiple copies of précis were asked to give blank sheets of

paper bearing their names, pretending it was their précis. It was found that as a consequence of having practiced in the previous session, the entry and retreat of participants was far more relaxed, and they could make eye contact with the interviewers, and in general remain calm.

At the end of the exercise the individuals gave feedback to each participant. Thus each participant got feedback from five individuals. This exercise was beneficial to the pupil teachers in two ways. One obvious benefit was the experience of having taken a mock interview and simultaneously responded to five individuals. The other advantage emerged from the pupil teachers' role as interviewers. They could realise the importance of proper posture, body language, eye contact, and speech quality, proper framing of answers, facial expression and much more than what any lecture would have taught them. This turned out to be the most remembered and highly appreciated experience cited by all pupil teachers.

The seventh day was more rigorous in the sense that the pupil teachers were asked tricky questions which led them into traps. They were rebuffed, slighted wherever possible, and their patience put to test. The pupil teachers' attitude as reflected by their answers to random questions was carefully recorded for feedback. Body language was carefully monitored. Even correct answers to questions were rebuked and dismissed as wrong. This was to test the confidence and conceptual clarity of the pupil teachers. The procedure followed was the same as that on the

sixth day but different groups were formed, and the pupil teachers were sent to different teachers. The interviewers were free to ask trapping questions, and no element of sympathy was to be incorporated. The pupil teachers were given detailed individual feedback about their performances. How an individual was trapped due to an answer was discussed, and how a participant clearly escaped a potential trap was also described and appreciated.

They were also given practice in public manners such as hand shake (man with man, woman with woman and man with woman), giving and receiving a business card etc. Common etiquettes were discussed. They were provided readings on interpretations of body language. Those with incorrect manners were told so, and those who had overcome difficulties pointed out earlier were lauded.

#### *Day 8*

**Theme:** Structuring Communication: Introduction, Main body, Summary, Keeping it Short and Simple

The eighth day and the subsequent days were related to communication and its related competencies. The importance of effective communication, more so for a person involved with the teaching profession, was asserted by means of a lecture supplemented by a Power Point presentation. The nuances of effective communication were explained keeping in mind all significant aspects. The pupil teachers were briefed about the organisation of the content of 'communication' laying emphasis on the three important parts viz., the introduction, the main body

and the conclusion. The 'working' of human attention and its shortcomings were explained, and the importance of short and simple sentences emphasised. Inputs from various teaching skills taught as a part of the B.Ed. curriculum (such as skill of introducing a lesson, skill of stimulus variation) were utilised. Ideas and experiences of speeches given by persons with good opening sentences or conclusions were shared.

#### *Day 9*

**Theme:** Listening Skills, Importance of Listening for Effective Communication, Active, Passive and Reflective Listening

The ninth day was reserved for discussions on 'Listening' skills and their importance for making effective communication. The fact that, 'good listening involves encouraging other people to say interesting things, understanding the things that they tell, and being sensitive to the thoughts and feelings that underlie the things that they tell', was established by the help of a Power Point presentation. Several instances of disasters resulting from inability to listen carefully were cited to draw the point home. Active, passive and reflective listening was also described. They were explained why it is not enough just to listen, but to enable the speaker to know that one is listening and how the combination of body, face, eyes and voice indicate to the speaker that one is indeed listening. Interpreting the body language of the listener and drawing feedback from it was also explained. The pupil teachers were asked to narrate their experiences and life events, if any, when 'Listening and listening skills' had played an important role. Several

instances were narrated to establish the importance of listening for effective communication. Finally, tips to improve one's listening skills were suggested.

#### *Day 10*

**Theme:** Important components of a Dialogue: pitch, inflection, courtesy, tone, rate of speech, enunciation, improving voice and speech. Non-verbal communication: expression, posture, gait, body language and eye contact.

The session on the tenth day was divided into two sections. The first was about components of a dialogue: pitch, inflection, courtesy, tone, understanding, rate of speech, enunciation and improving one's voice and speech. The second part was about non-verbal communication in which the importance of proper posture, gait, body language, etc. was emphasised in connection with non-verbal communication.

The modality adopted in the first section was lecture accompanied by demonstration of each component. The importance of each was established. The pupil teachers were asked to judge their voice qualities, rate of speech and pitch in pairs. The queries regarding these were resolved as a whole group. Practice on inflection (tone of speech) was given, and interpretation of upward and downward inflection was clarified. The pupil teachers were asked to list words with difficult pronunciations. These and others (from the faulty pronunciations of the pupil teachers) were repeated with corrections. The importance of proper enunciation and pronunciation was emphasised.

The second session on nonverbal communication was initiated by

randomly selecting three pupil teachers and asking them to speak about their childhood. The remaining pupil teachers were asked to give feedback on the non verbal aspects of their speeches. Most important points were noticed by the pupil teachers, and the remaining points were brought to notice by the teachers. This enabled the pupil teachers to understand the importance of proper expression, eye contact, body language etc., and the difference they make upon the overall impact on the audience even during an impromptu speech.

Another demonstration was made by the teachers' to show the impact that posture has on the sound that we make. The sound produced while sitting or reclining is quite different from that produced while standing. Thus the importance of proper posture not only for effective communication but also for voice quality was established.

#### *Day 11*

**Theme:** Communication skills: How to make sure you are not only heard but also listened to? Nuances of public speaking.

The eleventh day was devoted to the nuances of public speaking. This was covered in three parts:

1. Preparation and research.
2. Structuring one's speech
3. Effective delivery.

In the first part, the importance of prior preparation and research into the kind of audience, their area of interest, their knowledge of the subject, their attitude towards the subject, the size of the audience was focussed upon. Further, the importance of being prepared for the kind of questioning

and cross questioning to be expected and with relevant statistical data was reiterated. The introduction and the conclusion of a speech and the do's and don'ts thereof were dealt within the second part related to structuring one's speech. The pupil teachers were narrated anecdotes of some instances when an effective introduction swept the mood of the audience and held them spell-bound throughout the speech. The third part dealt with the effective delivery of a speech that is not impromptu. Keeping points ready on a slip or making use of Power Point presentation tricks like 'using presenters view' on a second monitor were discussed and demonstrated.

In addition, pupil teachers were asked to practice compèring, welcoming a visitor or a guest (welcome address), farewell speeches and thanks giving speeches (vote of thanks). Some pupil teachers were asked to come on the stage and make announcements in different settings and of different issues. Some were asked to greet people from the audience, and thank them for their support publicly. These activities were fun for all and gave them grounding in what to expect from their future profession as teachers. The pupil teachers were made to pick a chit with the activity to be performed from a pack of chits containing several such activities.

#### *Day 12*

**Theme:** Professional etiquettes: How to present yourself to people— seniors, co-workers, parents, subordinates and students. Greetings, Introductions, Announcements.

The twelfth day was devoted to professional etiquettes expected from a well-groomed individual. Here again the transactional strategy employed was of role playing. At first the importance of 'etiquette' for a well read and educated person was discussed. This was followed by the demonstrations of appropriate body language, tone, inflection and gestures for interactions at different levels, particularly, while greeting seniors and co-workers. They were also briefed about 'Parents' – Teachers' Association' and the expectations of parents. They were made to practice formal introductions and announcements. Practice in volume and voice projection during announcements and introductions was given. The pupil teachers were asked to introduce two other participants and say something interesting and in character about them to a fourth pupil teacher.

#### *Day 13*

**Theme:** The art of Conversation: How to make proper introductions; Paying and receiving compliments; small talk and networking; Joining and leaving a conversation.

The thirteenth day marked the practice of soft skills related to the art of conversation. Practice on initiating conversation and small talk (initiating conversation with a stranger) was given to the pupil teachers. A group activity on 'paying and receiving compliments' was organised, in the form of a game, and the most appropriate compliments paid in the most befitting manner were highlighted. Practice on introducing a person and adding a snippet of

information about that person while introducing was undertaken after dividing them into groups of four. Each participant was asked to pick any two persons of the group and introduce them to the fourth, assuming they were not acquainted. They were explained the fine difference between intrusion in a closed group, and joining a group which is accommodating, and how to make such a judgement instantly and how to proceed to join such a group. The skilful withdrawal from a group at an appropriate moment was also explained.

#### *Day 14*

**Theme:** The Personality: What should the teacher's personality be like?; Personal grooming and hygiene; The do's and don'ts in dressing; positive attitude and zest for the future

The fourteenth day was dedicated to the teacher's personality. The importance of positive attitude and thought was emphasised. The teachers' conduct and its importance in shaping the life of children were stressed upon. Pupil teachers were asked to come up on the dais and recall (from their childhood experiences) a teacher who had a long lasting impact on their lives, and speak of whatever was unique about that teacher's personality. One participant was asked to write the qualities narrated by the pupil teachers on the board.

In the later half, the personality of the new-age teacher was discussed. The need to adapt with changing times was stressed. The role of a teacher as a role model and harbinger of values was stressed.

The do's and don'ts in dressing and grooming were also taken up. The

concept of a smart teacher in a smart class was discussed. The professional attitude and the tendency to look at things with a positive perspective were emphasised. Discussions based on the readings provided (*On Saying Please* by A. G. Gardiner, and excerpts from the book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie) were held.

#### *Day 15*

**Theme:** E-mail etiquette: Sending effective messages; Responding to messages; Organising the different parts of an email.

The fifteenth day was the last day of the course. The students were briefed about the email etiquette. They were told why they must make it a habit to check their email every day and reply instantly. They were told about the various features of an email such as carbon copy (cc), blind carbon copy (bcc), e-signatures, customising one's mail box, adding filters and other relevant features. They were advised to have two separate email id's, one for professional correspondence and the other for personal correspondence. They were cautioned against spam and internet crime, and why it was important not to divulge their email passwords to others.

#### **Evaluation**

The programme, had been designed in such a way that each session had scope for evaluating the learning of the pupil teachers simultaneously. These pupil teachers were watched closely by the teachers and the changes in their overall disposition were very visible. For the sake of a formal grading the pupil

teachers were evaluated on the basis of another mock interview. They were also asked to write about their experiences during the course, and how it had made a difference in their perception about themselves (mainly for feedback about the course).

### **Outcome**

Since this was the very first trial of its kind, and it dealt with youngsters who had undertaken a course for developing soft skills and to bring about certain changes in their perception of themselves, it is not easy to quantify the outcome. The participant's performance in the final interview, their feedback and the observations of the concerned teachers are the only cues or indicators of the accomplishments of the objectives of the course.

Over the period of two months that this course was spread upon, the changes in the pupil teachers were quite visible. They were more, participating more confident and assured of themselves, not just during the course class, but in other classes also. They had become more conscious of their grooming and were invariably properly attired (decent and teacher like). They knew how to frame their ideas, asked more questions and were conscious to apply what they had learnt from the course in all their dealings.

In the final interview, their performance was far much better and improved as compared to the earlier experience. The students had overcome interview anxiety to a great extent and gave smart replies to majority of the questions. Their disposition throughout the interview was positive, coolheaded

and under control. No instances of perturbed behaviour or nervousness were reported. They were conscious of their body language and almost all sat erect, on the edge of the chair, without leaning back, throughout the interview. The answers they gave indicated a positive attitude of a promising individual. They had proper explanations for their gap years. They convincingly advocated their cases when asked why they should be selected.

Going by the feedback of the pupil teachers, it can be assumed that they were more prepared for not just interviews but also other challenges that they may come across. One of the pupil teachers had mentioned "*I feel that I was an uncut piece of rock earlier and this course has polished me into a gem.*"

Many of the pupil teachers went on to appear in job interviews after the completion of their Bachelor's programme. Many of them reported that they felt no anxiety during the interview and the very thought that they knew how and what to face gave them confidence. Some of the pupil teachers sent written testimonials to the teachers and a few of those have been published in the e-News Letter of the Alumni Association of the Faculty of Education, BHU, available at <http://www.auebhu.com>.

### **Conclusion**

The outcome of this exercise leads to the conclusion that it was certainly, fruitful exercise which succeeded in transforming a group of youngsters, and helped them to overcome their anxieties and fears. Going a step further, one may say that this kind of training should be



made a mandatory part of the curriculum for trainee teachers, since mere bookish knowledge and degrees alone do not suffice for a professional course. Such programmes on preparation of teachers as well as teacher educators provide the right kind of direction towards school education. When we churn out future teachers they must be able to make a mark among other teachers from any part of the globe and carve a niche for themselves as capable individuals. They must be balanced, confident individuals

with proper grooming and soft skills to match the finest.

### **Epilogue**

Two fresh batches of 40 pupil teachers in each semester of the 2011-12 batches have also undertaken the course. In addition, this course was also organised for 40 girls from an affiliated college of the University at their college by the same group of teacher educators. All pupil teachers gave overwhelming responses and feedback to the organisers of the course.

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