

NEED OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

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Abstract

In all the colleges of science and engineering students are taught Humanities as a subject. What is the significance of these subjects for future engineers and scientists? Not only for the students of science & technology humanities is being applicable for all professionals whether an engineer, a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, a politician, a leader, an economist or even a businessman. Humanities provide an insightful understanding into moral, ethical, political & ideological forces. A society that comes under the category of successful society depends upon charity, altruism, civility, compassion and generosity. It is only Humanities that emphasize the importance of these characteristics. Today people are becoming too self-centered. They are doing things being in the little sphere of their own concerns without realizing that they are society and any action done by them for the welfare of society will come to them in turn ultimately. This paper will discuss the significance of moral values in professional education and role of humanities in developing these values in one's personality.

Key words-Humanities, Moral values, Character Education, Insightful understanding, Ethics.

In today's scenario there is a boom of professional courses. Most of the students are fascinated towards engineering and Management courses. They dream for a brighter future after the completion of particular course. In engineering college there are several branches in which a student can get the degree. Among different courses of study courses on good communication skills, professional ethics, industrial and social behavior, professional etiquettes, image management, also are included in their programs. These all are different areas of 'Humanities', which has been introduced as an indispensable department in all professional courses these days. Now the question arises in the mind of the people hail to technical world, what is the need of Humanities here? 'Humanities' in engineering and other professional courses helps in molding technical knowledge into an expansively human one. The term "Humanities" itself, meaning what is infused with direct concern for human beings, implies by its stem, in the words of A.F. Losev, not only the body of knowledge in Humanities but also a particular cast of minds, an affinity for free thought.

Mahatma Gandhi, in the context of professional Ethics mentioned the following ills of society which should be avoided:

Wealth Without Work
Pleasure Without Conscience
Knowledge Without Character
Commerce (Business) Without Morality (Ethics)
Science Without Humanity
Religion Without Sacrifice
Politics Without Principle

The above mentioned ills of society said by Mahatma Gandhi are definitely applicable in the present scenario and truly show the importance of right character in every profession. We individuals are part of society; we occupy a profession; we think that we are going to benefit ourselves with it; but through oneself each individual affects society: benefits it and sometimes harms it. All of these show the importance of values in the behavior and thinking specially 'Science without Humanities'. The progress of society and a nation to a large extent depends on the scientific advancement it's having. But only scientific inventions without seeing that what it is going to contribute to the society cannot progress it very far.

1. **Wealth without work:** the practice of getting something for doing nothing or try to get a lot for doing a little. In all professions people are doing this and even teaching others to do so. They know how to escape and to show only, how not to add any value to workplace and focus on getting only, how to manipulate the people and things. Today professionals seek to make money without taking any trouble and therefore professions are built around making wealth only. They don't want to work, they don't want to pay any attention to the feasibility of their work, they are willing to take benefits from free government policies without taking care of their contribution for its benefit. They try to enjoy all the perks of citizenship of country and membership of corporation without assuming any of the risk or responsibility.
2. **Pleasure without Conscience:** The ultimate desire behind every human work is to be happy; to get pleasure. But in running after their desired pleasures many people forget their conscience or sense of responsibility when you seek to get benefit without work, you may please yourself but not your Conscience. People are doing their things without seeing if it's going to affect the society, their neighbours, ignoring the comforts and discomforts of their relative's family members and even abandoning or utterly neglecting spouses and children in the name of doing their thing. You may do the things to cheat others; you may conceal the things but what about conscience. Can it be concealed from conscience? Definitely the answer is a big 'NO'.
3. **Knowledge without Character:** A little knowledge is more dangerous than not having the knowledge, even more dangerous is much knowledge without a strong, principled character. Only an education with character building can be beneficial in true sense. It can be done in the family, at the workplace, among the friends and even while talking to your neighbours. It, to a large extent, depends on the people around you. While providing knowledge, this is the responsibility of an institute, to ensure character building of their students and some necessary arrangement must be made on their level. It is not that difficult to decide, for example, that kindness, fairness, dignity, contribution, and integrity are worth keeping.
4. **Commerce without Morality:** Any economy, any business without considering moral values, morality towards human kind shall prove to be useless in nature. If foundation of economic and political system is not moral, the outcomes of this system also will be immoral or amoral

5. **Science without Humanity:** The state where science is allowed to become only technology, ignoring the humanity, it starts to generate a dangerous situation for human beings. Technologies come from the paradigms of science. And if there's very little understanding of the higher human purposes that the technology is striving to serve, we become victims of our own technocracy. We see otherwise highly educated people climbing the scientific ladder of success, even though it's often missing the rung called humanity and leaning against the wrong wall.
6. **Religion without Sacrifice:** It takes sacrifice to serve the needs of other people - the sacrifice of our own pride and prejudice, among other things. People do lots of activities like: going to temple, charity, worship etc. But they are neither God-centered nor principle-centered. There should be sacrifice: sacrifice of selfishness, of greed, of pride, of prejudice, of deceit.
7. **Politics without Principle:** There can never be a ground for anything without principles. You may say that you are having principles but you cannot show that you have principles. All politicians know that they need an image to be successful. You see politicians spending millions of dollars to create an image, even though it's superficial, lacking substance, in order to get votes and gain office. You can't show an artificial image for a long time. You have to develop, create, and nurture values in your personality to make an image.

All these are essentials in the character of every individual, every professional because the right use of all skills depends on the restriction of all above mentioned ills. Humanities are the need of an hour which is quite mandatory to understand the right use and the way to use this technical world.

Since the 1970s, the U.S National Science Foundation has funded programs which could promote the development of ethics that is related to professional engineering. During the 1980s and 1990s professional engineering societies expanded activities related to the formulation and implementation of ethical codes of conduct. In 2000, ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering & technology) began to require the teaching accreditation: from such concern has emerged the awareness of the importance of the Humanities in education.

This is a modern era where there is a cut throat competition everywhere. Even for a smallest thing thousands of people compete to each other. Mastery in communication is indispensable. Most of the engineering students are from rural areas. They have their own dialect. It is Humanities only which helps in sharpening their communication skills. Communication Skills and technical knowledge both go hand in hand. It is rightly said that "Communication is everyone's Panacea". Communication is important facet of life. Each & every day we communicate with others whether it is in oral or in written form or even through non-verbal what we call a body language. Whether we just say "hello" or have a long conversation we need communication. But during our tenure we have realized these things that professionals don't lack talent but their energies are not channelized. Speaking fluent English is a herculean task for them. We have diagnosed a number of problems which act as hurdles. Most of the students write well but they don't know how to express themselves effectively. Some have problem with vocabulary, with grammar and pronunciation as well.

In this existing age of globalization most of the multinational companies, public and private sectors want a fluent and confident candidate for an executive post. Whatever the recruiting criteria they have, one thing that is quite obvious that they want good communication skills of their employees. It is quite clear that a first class degree would not serve the purpose until the engineers will not be able to communicate effectively. Communication skills are quite beneficial in securing good jobs, gaining advancements and promotions.

Secondly English is considered as International Lingo. Now business and jobs are not limited within the boundaries of Country. After getting the degree the whole world is open for a candidate. But as we all know each and every country differs from each other in the aspect of culture, language, etiquettes and life style. Moreover etiquettes vary from country to country. Whatever is etiquette in one country is considered a sign of misbehave in the other.

Even the way of addressing and greeting the people also varies. So here we feel the need of learning cross-cultural communication. From this aspect also there is a need of Humanities also when it teaches cross-cultural communication.

The scientific knowledge and techniques the engineers learn in the college somewhere have a limited shelf life but mastery of Humanities provides tools to expand it. To be an independent learner, student needs self-critical reflection, adaptability and self-teaching and no doubt that will be provided by humanities only. Sometimes it happens that students choose a course without knowing its scope and value. Here also a student can take benefit from advice on which course to take.

Moreover it is general belief among scientists and engineers that science and engineering deals with facts whereas humanities deals with values. But as a great author quote **“Science, technology & medicine....far from being value-neutral ...are the embodiment of values in theories, things and therapies, in facts and artifacts, in procedures and programs.... I am suggesting that science is a part of culture... [And] that research traditions cannot be reasonably claimed to set above the prevailing world view or epoch”**

With the exploration of Humanities we learn the way to think creative and critically. With the studies of Humanities we achieve the skills that help us to gain new insight into everything. The ancient Greeks were the first who used Humanities to educate their citizens. Since then Humanistic subjects have been at the heart of all technical and professional courses. We can't forget world's Great personalities who changed the world to their will and made it a better place to live in also studied different discipline in humanities. Like Marx's interest was in law & Philosophy. Lenin was a student of law, Mahatma Gandhi & Pandit Nehru were law graduates while S. Radhakrishnan studied philosophy. If we talk about our country India, Civil Service Examination is considered as the highest competitive exam and a hard nut to crack as well. But the amazing fact is that majority of IAS aspirants prefer Humanities as their optional paper. Humanities papers make our general studies strong and sharp which provide us an edge in all the competitive exams in India. People who master the humanities and can “walk a mile in someone else's moccasins” will be more marketable than those who can't. Humanities knowledge continues to provide the ideal foundation for exploring and understanding the human experience.

Careers in Humanities are very lucrative option especially if anybody does not have technical bend of mind and not interested in medical and engineering. Churning out a career in any of the several career options of Humanities is a good decision. It is rightly said by Damon Horowitz that **“It is a convenient truth: You go into the humanities to pursue your intellectual passion; and it just so happens, as a by-product, that you emerge as a desired commodity for industry”**.

Mankind can live without science & technology but can't survive without the arts or humanities. Humanities play a major role in teaching and learning and if it is semantically oriented it becomes more beneficial for the students. In shaping the personality of the college students who are assigned a major role that is humanities only.

Derek Bok, a former president of Harvard and the author of several books on higher education, argues **“The Humanities has a lot to contribute to the preparation referring not only to writing and analytical skills but also to the type of ethical issue raised by new technology like stem –cell research. But he added; there is a lot more to a liberal education than improving the country. I think that it is one of the worst mistakes that policy makers often make-not being able to see by and that.**

Humanities offers students the unique chance of learning not only traditional wisdom but the chance to bring that wisdom to bear on a range of contemporary, economic, religious ,political and social questions”.

We will to make an engineer, a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, a politician, a leader, and an economist. Before deciding about all these there must be a certain decision that we will make a successful person and the success lies in fulfilling the purpose truly & honestly, and the ultimate purpose behind each profession is one that is the welfare of mankind, benefit of human being. If we remember a single thing that we are part of society, mankind and if this process of promoting human welfare goes on, in turn it will promote every individual, every 'I' and every 'You'. 'Humanities' gives that mindset, that insight which can distinguish between 'Right' and 'Wrong'. In fact this teaching be start at the early age of childhood, at home. But as we all know that at the time of graduation an individual develops his attitude, his point of view. This is an age when he starts to think independently and these subjects prove to be his/her best guides in developing a humanitarian attitude in his personality which helps him/her lifelong in taking right decisions for himself and for humankind as well.

In the end we can sum up with the words of Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, **"The humanities are like the great old Paris Flea Market where, amidst masses of junk, people with a good eye found cast away treasures...They are like a refugee camp where all the geniuses driven out of their jobs and countries by unfriendly regimes are idling."**

So humanities is one of the most intellectually stimulating enjoyable majors that presents plenty opportunities for the students to make their life satisfying and thrilling.

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