

# Role of A Lecturer: Next Level Thinking- From A Position of Significance to Discovering the Significance in Students

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**Abstract:** Lecturers are involved in a profession which is noble as it is an investment in the lives of students. As lecturers one must keep abreast with the changing trends in teaching. The present generation, with their amazing technical skills, has information at their finger tips and is controlled by the switch of a button. Students at present are battling with the greatest disease of all times, 'BOREDOM'. The challenge lecturers face now is how to keep our students motivated and passionate. The earlier methods of control and discipline are soon losing its hold on students. A lecturer has to win them over and work as a team leader. When we address a class one should cease to look at students as ones who need to be overloaded with knowledge. The role of a lecturer may not appear to be as prominent as it once was with the traditional methods of teaching, but we need to go alongside the students developing them into leaders. It calls for a paradigm shift from the lecturer centric learning to student centric learning. This paper is an attempt to highlight the role of a lecturer as a leader developer, emphasizing the importance that needs to be given to as to when the process of leadership development begins and the steps involved in this life changing process.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Student Centric, Paradigm Shift, Life Changing

The role of a lecturer is undergoing a paradigm shift and the faster we are able to grasp this understanding the easier it will be to enhance our effectiveness as lecturers. The emphasis on leadership development requires a higher level of thinking, as it is an investment in the lives of students. Many times we try to dismember the mental faculties from the rest of a person's faculties namely the emotional, physical and spiritual aspects. Principle based character development does have an influence on the all round development of a student's personality as there is a strong connection between academic performance and character development.

## Leadership Redefined

I would like to reiterate the words of John Maxwell that 'Leadership is influence'. J. R Miller said it well: "There have been meetings of only a moment which have left impressions for life, for eternity. No one can understand the mysterious thing we call influence... yet every one of us continually exerts influence, either to heal, to bless, to leave marks of beauty; or to wound, to hurt, to poison, to stain other lives. Leadership is a choice not a position and Leaders are not born but made. We are called to develop leaders and influence is a skill that can be developed. When we enter a classroom do we look at the students as future leaders? Let us be honest with ourselves. We have created our own images of the batches of students we teach. We look at each batch as lethargic, useless, demotivated, 'good for nothing' etc. If we change our vision board which consists of our students as 'live models' and view them as future leaders, don't you think our perspective, teaching methods, language and mannerisms will undergo a sea of change?

The lecturer as a team leader should set the standards to be a role model, not just in terms of 'a storehouse of knowledge' but as a person who takes initiative to make good things happen. We should recognize that our role is to be a team leader. Stephen Covey in his book 'Seven Habits of Highly Effective people' throws light on habits which could be inculcated in students to ultimately become a powerful and balanced person. As part of my teaching career I have encouraged each class to actively participate in learning these principles through presentations, activities and illustrations. The first few classes have been dedicated to the explanation of these habits and it has been observed that there has been a genuine change in attitudes and those who have undergone this training have in many ways taken up a leadership post in different capacities in college. Being an educator for the past twelve years and dealing with students from the age of 13-20, it has been my observation that the needs of the students have changed over the years. The needs of students at present are that they seek to be respected and understood. To develop responsibility in students we need to give them responsibilities. The key to being a successful lecturer is winning the students by helping them find their inner voice. The emphasis that is being made here is helping them make these discoveries as early as the Montessori classes. It is never too early to start a leadership training programme and we should never hesitate to make a start as soon as possible. The point I would like to make is that all educational institutions should focus on a leadership themed curriculum.

## A Brief Overview of The '7 Habits'.

**Habit 1: Be proactive-** As facilitators we are developing leaders. This habit encourages students to take the initiative and the emphasis is on helping them be agents of change and not choose to be victims of circumstances. We should be proactive and just be reactors but ones who are response-able.

## Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind

A leader is a visionary. A lecturer should be responsible for creating leaders who sets goals and dreams dreams. Now how early do we start setting goals? The point I would like to highlight is that goal setting should begin as early as the kindergarten classes. It may be a simple task of tying your shoelace, waking up early without becoming cranky or learning a new rhyme etc. But let us imagine how differently children will begin to look at things. We are encouraging them to become responsible and by setting

goals we are developing children who are focused and who are achievers at their own levels. The dysfunction happens when students are in their tenth grades, pressure is suddenly put on them and they are expected to reach high standards and expectations. The vision should come from within and should not be thrust on them externally and should begin at a much earlier stage. We can use vision boards to enable children to visualize and dream of what they want to achieve. Hellen Keller the blind writer says "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision".

### **Habit 3: Put first Things First**

We are constantly being bombarded between choosing between the urgent and important. Goal setting helps us to differentiate between the two and it will help us to prioritise our time as well. We should set goals for each of our different roles. The role of a lecturer is to be instrumental in helping students find their inner voice and to help them convert their goals and dreams into reality. The ripple effect is very evident, for when a student has reached the goal of being a coordinator for a club activity for example. This achievement will in turn create a desire in them to excel in academics as well.

### **Habit 4: Think win win**

The emphasis that this habit stresses on is the importance of cooperation. The Lecturer and students have to work as a team that seeks mutual benefit. Common efforts and goals should consciously worked on together. Shared objectives and generation of new ideas from the students will help in raising the morale of the students. A sense of belonging is what will develop a drive in students. The drive quotient is sometimes so low in students that lecturers are faced with a big challenge to first win the students over. Long lectures on motivation, discipline etc. alone will not bring about any drastic changes. This drive can be generated if we persistently channel our energy towards a chosen purpose.

### **Habit 5: Seek first to understand, Then to be understood**

Creating an atmosphere where we seek to understand rather than be understood requires us to be courageous. Mutual respect and understanding will help us be better achievers. The role of a lecturer may seem less prominent than in the earlier days but the impact that one has on the lives of students will go a long way. The lecturer as a facilitator and mentor should be first to find our voice and then to help others find their voice too.

### **Habit 6: Synergize**

When we work as a team we complement or synergise. We are putting all our strengths together and in this way we are compensating for the weaknesses of others. If we make this paradigm shift in our thinking and capitalize on our strengths we can do wonders. When we synergize the morale of the group goes high and this sense of belongingness will only result in higher levels of motivation. There will be no room for boredom and lack of enthusiasm.

### **Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw**

We are a combination of the physical, social, spiritual and mental faculties. We should take the time to renew each of these faculties. Our effectiveness in life depends on how we develop these areas of our lives. Integrity is the quality of a person wherein you are able to keep the promises you have made to yourself and others. It is abiding by principles even when no one is looking.

### **Impact of This Training**

I have quoted a few instances where the "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" have been used in the curriculum and its life changing impact on a student. Here are a few examples of leadership-themed schools.

"Despite all the emphasis that academia places on hard skills, topping the list were soft skills such as basic teamwork, problem solving, the ability to prioritize and plan and the ability to communicate effectively with others inside and outside of the organization."

I would like to quote the example of A. B Combs Elementary School which has incorporated the '7 Habits'. A. B Combs devotes the first week of every year to working with students to recreate their leadership culture'

"Although A.B Comb's new theme focused on teaching leadership, not on academic achievement, test scores began to rise. The percentage of students' end- of- grade tests rose from 67 percent to a peak of 97 percent".

Dr. Bruce H. Leslie, Chancellor Alamo Colleges emphasizes "The 7 Habits provide a framework for thinking independently and looking for synergies. I believe it will certainly help students to be successful adults, no matter what they major in."

'The leader in Me is a whole school transformation model that empowers students with the skills they need to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Modeled after Stephen Covey's "7 Habits of Highly Effective People," the doctrine is powerful...it serves as a foundational operating system for the school, improving relationships, transforming culture and motivating staff members and students.

I would like to include a few testimonies by students who have been undergone the training in the 7 habits in my present batch of students.

"The first thing I learnt was to be proactive and I discovered my positive and negative qualities. After reading the '7 Habits' goal setting has become part of my life and it has enabled me to take steps to reach my goals. I have learnt to prioritise my time and not procrastinate. I have involved in things I have never thought or imagined I would involve in. I have involved in music, theatre, competing etc. It makes me happy to know that I can do so much and I have taken up different leadership roles like Youth Red Cross Leader in my first year and this year I have been elected as the President of the College Student Union." Rajat Chaddha

“The 7 Habits helped me to be proactive, manage my time and to delegate my work well. I have learnt to develop my leadership qualities. I have changed from an introvert and someone who always stayed away from responsibilities to a confident leader. My communication skills have improved and I have learnt how to mingle with people. I personally feel everyone should be given the awareness of the ‘7 Habits’ as it has improved my academic progress even though the focus has been on leadership development. I am proud to say that I have improved from a mere 58% to distinction (above 75%).” Chethan Kashyap.

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