

Prepare your faculty to excite the mind of the young generation

In this era of knowledge economy and constant change, where information can be obtained in seconds from the internet, youngsters show increased critical thinking and analytical aptitude in the information and knowledge they absorb. Moreover, the present society is demanding and competitive and expects the youngster to be flexible, resourceful, adaptable and polyvalent. Secondary education graduate profile has changed. The Tertiary education is required to adapt and to look for creative solutions in educating the young generation. These days, if the learning objectives of a course only focus on transmitting knowledge, it is considered inadequate. The focus should also include the attitudinal and skill factors that the student must receive. Education is no longer about knowledge, but also competencies and mindset. Consequently, the role of the educator is not only to transmit a piece of specific knowledge to the students, but also to prepare them with the skills and mindset needed to succeed in the society. The traditional teaching approach is no longer appropriate!

Traditional approach emphasizes the role of the faculty as the holder of wisdom and the transmitter of information (the concept of “teaching”). However, research on education suggests that “**how** people learn is more important than **what** people learn” (OECD 2001, page 20). Indeed, a good curriculum serves as the foundation of learning but faculty facilitation is actually the core of intellectual stimulation and the learner’s development of competencies. Simply stating, the role of an educator is to facilitate students’ own learning, so to be called, the facilitator. It is therefore required to emphasise on the need of an appropriate methodology and environment so that the skill of **learn how to learn** can be transmitted. Achieving this goal requires a change in the way learning takes place and the relationship between learner and facilitator—the art and science of facilitating learning. The challenge is that most faculty are born and educated in the old model and tend to stay within this comfort zone, which is natural. What is needed is to assist them to step out of old paradigm and get to understand the youth paradigm.

A good facilitator is someone who could impart his/her knowledge and share experience with the classroom with his/her own personality and passion and maintain the interested of the audience. To achieve this, facilitators need to possess the ability of collecting the knowledge

from the outside world and transforming it so that it could be interesting and provocative to the learners. This is what we refer as the art of facilitating. The science of facilitating focuses on the elements of verbal and non-verbal communication, the interaction between the learner and facilitator, and most importantly the application of appropriate question techniques in the classroom. The facilitator's role is to introduce subjects of discussion, encourage sharing of ideas, and integrate students' experiences. Hence, asking the right questions at the right moment is critical. For instance, the facilitator needs to judge when to ask an open question, a leading question, a reasoning question, a recall question, etc. so that the learner could deduce his own conclusion instead of being told.

A considerable portion of work involved in facilitating learning is the compilation of information, be they from books, research papers, your own experience, etc. The ability to assemble all the resources and select the right topic for discussion at the right moment requires a lot of preparation. The organization of the course, the sequence of the topics must also be carefully reflected. The use of training aids also affects the incorporation of information in students' mind. Long has been the discussion of PowerPoint as a must in education and its use for classroom presentation has considerably enhanced the professionalism of faculty. However, the abuse of PowerPoint could result in boredom. For instance, having too much text in a slide or all the slides are texts with no pictures is definitely not ideal. Besides, different people learn differently, some are more visual, some are more tactile. Therefore, the use of different training aids is necessary and it will also assist you to maintain the interest of learners. If you alternate your training aids during class (flip chart then PowerPoint, then whiteboard), it forces the learners to change focus and hence catch their attention and interest.

Improvements come from receiving feedback from others, who might observe aspects we overlooked. Self/Peer review of faculty class performance will certainly be an added value and it does not need to be done formally. Invite your fellow professors to sit-in on your class and ask them to give reviews on areas you wish to improve. For example, request them to give you feedback on how you use your PowerPoint presentations. Your objective is not only to hear positive aspects but most importantly aspects that need to be improved. Therefore, the input must be sincere and specific.

To make the transition to facilitator, a change of habits and, especially, a change of mindset are necessary. Facilitating is not about the understanding of knowledge of the professor; it is about helping the learners to achieve his own understanding. Facilitator's job is not to tell, it is to excite thinking, encourage exploration, share experiences, make associations, and be a link between the real world and classroom for the learners. The classroom is therefore a platform where learning takes place by sharing and exchanging information and that learning from each other becomes a habit.

Author:

Wei-Cheng Chen is Consultant at Lausanne Hospitality Consulting SA. His role involves designing and delivering executive education for international companies and developing hospitality learning centres around the globe. He is also responsible for the faculty development and training of EHL-certified schools—The Qualified Learning Facilitator Programme (QLF). Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne's Qualified Learning Facilitator's training is specifically designed for facilitators in the hospitality industry to enhance the skills involved in transmitting knowledge, competencies and mindsets to learners. This intensive 2-week training programme integrates different elements of the art and science of facilitating learning.



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