

## AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH Dr. DARSHA JANI ON TOWARDS A BETTER EDUCATION

Interviewee: Prof. Dr. Darsha Jani, Principal, Smt SR Mehta Arts College, Ahmedabad

Interviewer: Rajesh Bojan

Category: Employability Skills

➤ **What do you think are the main reasons for students failing to meet industry standards?**

The students are not properly oriented according to the requirements of the industry. They simply complete their syllabi and prepare themselves to get good score in the examination. Moreover most of the students are not very certain about their life goals even after entering the college and enrolling themselves in a specific programme. Such students need career guidance, motivation and right kind of environment to flourish, brighten and radiate their skills for which the educational institutions are yet to do a lot. There are also such students who in spite of being toppers in the examination, fail to meet the standards of industry. It is inevitable for them to learn life skills, soft skills and practical skills to get qualified for a good job. It is not enough that they are masters of a specific subject because while dealing with a variety of professional people in the industry, they need to learn lessons of tolerance, adjustment and tactfulness. The young generation is yet to equip themselves with the virtue of focused and concentrated attention to achieve their goal; their irresistible addiction towards face book, Whats app, games and social media digresses them so much that they are unable to give their full while preparing for particular test or appearing for interview. All these factors result in students failing to meet industry standards.

➤ **What reforms at the curriculum level will you suggest to improve the quality of education in India?**

It is observed that in leading private technological universities, the students are offered the choice of combination of subjects i.e. they can choose arts or commerce subjects along with the core engineering subjects. But such a system is lacking in most of the Arts and Commerce colleges affiliated to various universities of India. Moreover only after completion of a bachelor degree in a specific subject, can a student is offered a Master degree and then a doctorate degree in the same subject. Also the student cannot change his core subject after entering the third year even though he is ready to appear for the test of the remaining papers taught in first and second year of the programme

along with the third year core papers of the subject. Due to the rigid system of the syllabi, the students are compelled to study the papers which do not interest them much.

It is high time that some ground making changes are made at the curriculum level to improve the quality of education in India. The changes include the necessity of more flexibility in terms of choice of subjects, the liberty accorded to the student to pursue Master Degree straightway after completing his/her Higher Secondary exam, though an entrance test could be taken before admitting the student to such a programme. This would help a bright student save his three years which otherwise he would have spent in completing his graduate programme. Moreover there should be a uniform syllabi in the universities of specific state. This would help the student in the circumstances when he is compelled to change the city for unprecedented reasons, yet wishes to continue his studies. Therefore a student who has completed two years of a specific programme in one university, should be allowed to complete the third year of the same programme (Course) in another university located in a different city but of the same state. Such steps, if taken by the universities, can prove to be of immense help to the students.

➤ **Students continue to lack practical exposure and application. How do you see this?**

It is true that the students' studying pattern and rigid university pattern leave the students deficient in acquiring practical exposure and application. On one hand, there is a pressure of completion of syllabus on a teacher in a stipulated time period, on the other hand, students' diverted interest in the classroom proves to be a big challenge for a teacher to provide add on information. It is also true that the students bunk classes and squander their valuable time in unreasonable and wasteful activities. They miss the practical sessions and seminars/ conferences organized by the institutions which would otherwise have been extremely beneficial to them.

➤ **Are faculty development programmes really effective? In what ways do such programmes contribute for skills enhancement of students?**

Faculty development programmes are organized with the purpose of sharpening the abilities of faculties, updating them and making them more affable, amiable and likeable among students. Such programmes can be more effective and productive if undertaken with due care and caution. There should not be common programme for faculties of all fields but should be organized separately depending upon the subjects and interest of the respective faculties. If done so, then the results could be overwhelming.

A motivated and well informed faculty can be an asset to the organization. He/ She not only teaches the students in an interesting manner but also becomes a role model for them. The students tend to imitate him/her and strive to develop qualities like their teachers. They observe their teaching methodology, their use of language, their personality and the tone of their voice and try to grasp everything provided by them. In this way, students' skills also get enhanced and ultimately their chances of success in their practical lives also augments.

➤ **What according to you are those qualities that will make students employable?**

I believe that the students need to develop their personality in such a fashion that they appear decent, well- informed, adaptable and honest. They must also acquire good communication skills – both oral and written so that they are able to convey the right information in the right way. Moreover they should adopt proper body language while dealing with a wide range of people. Good Computer literacy and knowledge of diverse Computer programmes add to the employability of the students.

➤ **The expectations of the industry continues to raise at an alarming rate, how do you think students should equip themselves to meet such challenges?**

In this competitive era, it is imperative for every individual to equip himself with current affairs, latest technological advancements, acquiring knowledge about recent developments in the specialized subject and over and above, develop the virtues of courtesy, tolerance and sympathy. All these are the expectations of the industry employers from the students. In order to meet such challenges, the students can follow the following principles:

- a. Utilize every moment of the day in a fruitful way. This includes waking up early in the morning, doing moderate exercise, spending some time in meditation & yogic activities and starting their day on a positive note.
- b. The students should continue to be learners and always try to procure the good qualities of others. This will make them better human beings each day.
- c. They should be compassionate, supportive, courteous and forgiving. Such virtues, if embedded in their personality, will incur encouraging results.
- d. They should attempt to learn at least two new things of their own field everyday through any source of their choice – Internet, magazine, books, T.V., radio, mobile app etc.
- e. Regular study with focused attention instils confidence and buoyancy; therefore the students should adopt these qualities and mould their temperaments accordingly. It is a well-known saying that “Rome

was not built in a day.” Therefore grooming oneself everyday will give promising results.

➤ **What sort of awareness and training on Employability Skills does your institution offer for the students?**

Our institution attempts to implement Govt schemes for enhancing employability skills of the students. The Education Department of Govt of Gujarat has taken the initiative of introducing the Finishing School Concept for final year students of Government and Grant-in-Aid colleges of Gujarat. This initiative has been implemented by Knowledge Consortium of Gujarat (KCG). The objective of the programme is to enhance the employability skills of the students who are academically good, but lack in basic communication and life skills due to which they are unable to get secure jobs. It is a 100 hrs training programme which focusses on Basic Etiquette, Listening skills, Presentation skills, Body Language, Functional English, Interview skills, Communication skills etc. A certificate is also given by KCG to the students after successful completion of the course. This initiative has proved to be extremely beneficial for the students of the college.

Another scheme focused on “Swa Rojgar” in which the students belonging to SC, ST, OBC, Economically backward and girl students are given free computer training in which they are taught basic computer skills, animation, TALLY etc. The agency that runs this scheme enrolls the students of the college, imparts them training, places the trainees in a suitable company and only when the candidates gets their first salary which is deposited into their accounts, that the agency gets its remuneration from the Govt of Gujarat. This scheme has proved to be a boon for students hailing from humble background and all those who cannot afford high fees charged by private institutions.

➤ **What life skills do you think is vital for a successful career?**

Life skills as the name implies includes positive behavior that enables human beings to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of life whether at work or in their private lives. The development of life skills helps students to find new ways of thinking and trouble shooting. According to me, the following life skills are vital for a successful career:

a. Flexibility: It is of paramount importance that the students learn to adjust and adapt in the environment they find themselves. They should train themselves to quickly analyse what is going around them but take care that they give utmost priority to the achievement of goals they have set in their lives.

b. Coping with stress: Stress management is another vital life skill necessary for any individual in the present state of affairs. To cope with the increasing pace and change of modern life, the students need

to develop the ability to deal with stress and depression.

c. Empathy: The students need to learn and respect others' feelings or difficulties and try to help them when they are in distress. Developing this skill would link them with others and they as individuals would be able to understand what others are experiencing as if they were feeling them themselves.

d. Effective Communication: The effective communication does not merely include exchanging information but involves the proper understanding of the message and inferring the emotion and intention behind the information. One should listen in a way that he gains the full meaning of what is being said and the other person feels heard and understood. It would help build a stronger, deeper connection between you and him. So effective communication is less about talking and more about listening. Listening well not only means acquiring the information being communicated by the speaker but also understanding the emotions the speaker is trying to communicate.

e. Creative thinking : Creative thinking involves looking at something in a novel way i.e. "thinking outside the box." The students must acquire this ability of lateral thinking; the ability to perceive patterns that are not obvious. This would be helpful to them in devising new ways to carry out tasks, solve tricky problems and overcome challenges.

f. Decision making: The students should recognize the impact of their actions and learn to take responsibility for what they do rather than blame others.

g. Willingness to learn: The desire and willingness to learn is a crucial skill for surviving, improving and achieving success in the career. It is the readiness to know new things and improve oneself. Learning is a life long process and there is always more to know. The desire to learn is one of the best characteristics a person can master.

➤ **What are your suggestions for creating a better learning environment?**

1) I believe that the students should be properly motivated by the teachers in the educational institutions.

2) They should be regularly counselled by the respective faculties so that they express their concerns without hesitation.

3) There should be a positive environment in the premises so that the students are driven towards doing creative activities instead of indulging in harmful tasks.

4) The students should have freedom to express their opinions and give suggestions without any fear.

5) They should be provided with good basic amenities that includes clean premises, pure drinking water, clean washrooms, good parking facilities, proper security system, well equipped library, smart

classrooms, good playground, cooperative teachers and supportive administrative staff.

6) The students should be dealt with love, compassion and understanding.

7) They should be given free hand in organizing certain programmes, though permission need to be sought by them.

8) They should be rewarded and honoured for their achievements and accomplishments in a big way.

9) Responsibilities should be accorded to the students for managing significant activities and programmes at the institute. This will help them develop leadership qualities and collaborative skills.

10) Above all teacher-student bonding should be such that students take their teachers as role models and train their minds to reach the impossible, accomplish the most arduous goals and achieve the highest goals set in their lives. In this way, they can make the teacher and the nation proud.

### ABOUT THE GUEST INTERVIEWEE



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Prof. Dr. Darsha Jani (*M.A. Ph.D (English), M.A. (Hindi), LL.M. (Gold Medalist)*) is presently working as the Principal, Smt S R Mehta Arts College, Navgujarat Campus, Ahmedabad affiliated to Gujarat University. She has worked as the Associate Professor in English at Municipal Arts & U B Science College, Mehsana affiliated to Hemchandracharya North Gujarat University for 23 years. She served as the Head, Department of English and In-charge Post graduate department of English for 8 years. She is a Ph.D and M.Phil Research Supervisor of Hemchandracharya North Gujarat University, Patan as well as Gujarat University, Ahmedabad. Her areas of interest are Comparative Literature, Indian English Literature, British Literature and American Literature. She has to her credit one completed Minor Research project sanctioned by UGC and has contributed more than 35 research papers to various peer reviewed, refereed and indexed international journals. She is a prolific reader and takes keen interest in the research activities.