



## TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY–BEHAVIOURAL DIMENSION IN THE CONTINUUM OF EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

*Technology may be on the verge of replacing a teacher but the behavioural dimension could probably not be by a BOT. I believe behavioural connotations is crucial for the all round growth of students especially at the undergraduate level. It is a period of change, freedom, independence, maturity, graduating to a major in terms of age and the associated boons and banes. The dynamic elements of behaviour will bear fruits in the form of an effective engagement for students in the contemporary scenario who are dictated by technology, social media intervention and peer pressures. This paper is an attempt to emphasize the implication of behavioural learning on pedagogy that is vital for the growth and development of the students at the undergraduate level drawn from different states with varied backgrounds. The transition of the student from school to university or college is a sensitive passage that needs to be dealt with utmost care and diligence and belonging to the teaching fraternity, it becomes imperative that we handle them with care. In a diverse country like ours, the students with a backdrop of upbringing greatly influenced by culture, language and ethnicity, the progression of these students to adapt, change and merge with the mainstream is a challenge for the pedagogues as they need to be the link in the chain of continuum. Along with retaining the individual identity of the students in terms of skills, talent and academic qualification, the expectations of the students are normally sky high with fear and fragility thrown in and the culture clash in an urban city like ours is an inevitable outcome that has to be tackled upfront to avoid fading away of students into oblivion and obscurity.*

**Key Words:** *Transition, Student Diversity, Behaviour.*

### **Introduction**

Transition from school to college is a period of glorious uncertainties that can mark a great realignment of thoughts and systems. This upheaval of sorts brings with it lot of bounties and for many of them, it more or less becomes a natural phenomenon wherein they realign and reorganize their cognitive thinking. The commonalities that string these individuals are optimism, confidence and strong sense of adaptability which are the hallmarks of this change. The biggest change in someone's life, I believe is on this threshold, that brings with it responsibilities, independence, growth and maturity. The game changer for the freshmen and women is undoubtedly self efficacy, a remarkable ability that can work wonders for the go getters to accomplish the new tasks and goals very objectively in the environment that may be totally alien. The coping skills of such students do need to be appreciated in this contemporary world of challenges lurking in every sphere of activity. The exposure, knowledge quotient, expectations in terms of academics, internships, research projects, industry collaboration and eventually placements with decent packages even at the undergraduate level is immense and limitless.

But all is not hunky dory in this transition phase. Some may go through a massive upheaval that results in burn outs or disappear into total oblivion. A random study based on observations and through personal experiences has led me to believe that the gap between expectation and reality among the students belonging to this category is wide. Bridging this gap by setting realistic expectations and providing an ideal ambience for adjustments could be a prerogative of the teaching fraternity that could go a long way in preventing this kind of catastrophe. We, as teachers do have a fair share to start a dialogue and process that would make the students better prepared and fight adversities.



### **Purpose**

The intention of the author through this paper is to:

- a) Studying the transition state from school to college among students
- b) Understanding the realities and myths associated with freshers
- c) The cause and effect of culture clash and the behaviour of students coming from diverse backgrounds
- d) Researching the gaps between expectations and realities and suggesting solutions to prevent breakdowns.

### **Literature review**

The foundation of this paper lies in:

1. Professor Emeritus Vincent Tinto's research study on "Taking Retention Seriously: Rethinking the First Year of College Vincent Tinto, Syracuse University" reviewed from <http://www.nacadajournal.org/doi/pdf/10.12930/0271-9517-19.2.5?code=naaa-site>

"Four institutional conditions stand out as supportive of retention: information, advice, support, involvement, and learning. First, students are more likely to persist and graduate in settings that provide clear and consistent information about institutional requirements. Students need to understand the road map to completion and know how to use it to decide upon and achieve personal goals. Second, institutions that provide academic, social, and personal support encourage persistence. Support that is readily available and connected to other parts of student collegiate experience leads to retention. Third, students are more likely to stay in schools that involve them as valued members of the institution. The frequency and quality of contact with faculty, staff, and other students have repeatedly been shown to be independent predictors of student persistence. This is true for large and small, rural and urban, public and private, and 2- and 4-year colleges and universities. It is true for women as well as men, students of color and Anglo students, and part-time and full-time students. Simply put, involvement matters, and at no point does it matter more than during the first year of college when student attachments are so tenuous and the pull of the institution still so weak. Fourth, clearly the most important condition that fosters student retention is learning. Students who learn are students who stay. Institutions that are successful in building settings that educate their students are institutions that are successful in retaining their students.

### **Building bridges: understanding student transition to university A.R.J. Briggs, J. Clark & I. Hall**

<https://srhe.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13538322.2011.614468?src=recsys#.W1CgbNizZ0u>

It examines the complex liaison needed for students to progress to appropriate courses, settle into university life and succeed as higher education learners. It proposes that the development of higher education learner identity is essential to student achievement and is initially encouraged where schools, colleges and universities adopt integrated systems of transition. This has clear implications for practice for higher education administrators, academics and quality officers.

### **The Transition from High School to University: An Analysis of Advice for Students, Faculty and Administration Carol Mutch**

<http://www.cshe.nagoya-u.ac.jp/publications/journal/no5/10.pdf>

"Transition" is different from change. Change is external and visible. A transition is internal and less visible, the process you go through mentally when you face a big life change. 1) The research and theoretical literature recognises the first year university or college freshman experience as an identifiable period of transition.

To know how to teach them better, we must understand our freshmen better. We must have a clear eyed view of who they are, where they have come from, how they have been instructed, what values they hold, and what their expectations or goals are.

Erickson, Bette LaSere & Strommer, Diane Weltner, 1935- (1991). Teaching college freshmen (1st ed). Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco



“Gives new and veteran faculty practical guidance on how to most effectively teach and create academic support systems for college students in their first, most critical year. Describes how to design a useful syllabus, how to develop productive out-of-class assignments, how to enhance class participation through creative techniques, and how to evaluate student learning for better insights.”

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/6444658?q&versionId=7432782>

The observations in this paper are based on personal experiences, secondary data available on the subject matter and the views expressed are an outcome of these observations.

### **Analysis, Inference and Rationale**

The literature reviews under consideration by the author relate to a period between the 1990s and 2000, an era just when innovations in the technological spectrum are sprouting in India and much water has flown since then but the fact remains that students still are isolated, remaining in the cocoon that hampers growth and collaborative learning. We as teachers do ensure a balanced learning system that incorporates bridge sessions to make all students come on the same page, value added programmes that enhance skills, collective learning through tutoring, mentoring for freshers among various other skill development courses. But despite these best practices aided by a perfect blend of academic and non academic programmes, the aloof remain aloof and alienated, the poor communicators stay poor resulting in a clear demarcation between the adapters and disconnected. With the advent of mobile technology, social media and technology innovation, the levels of exposure are super high, the intelligence, knowledge, emotional quotient is indeed remarkable, but again this is applicable to the select few while many of them use these modern tools in an inappropriate and incorrect manner that further pushes them into the abyss of isolation. The classes are therefore dull, monotonous and mostly one sided and whatever little participation or interaction comes from a miniscule population and the rest are certainly disoriented. To bring the students to the mainstream cannot wholly depend on the stress on performance in academics and related activities but the teachers need to understand them inside out; their behaviour, upbringing, cultures, previous education, values and beliefs, expectations.

The rationale is based on the strong beliefs that burnouts and breakdowns could be drastically reduced with a little bit of support from the pedagogues. Bringing a cohesive environment in the present day scenario, in institutions that the author is familiar with, are all based on adding courses and programmes in order to make it conducive for retention of the students. But are they yielding the necessary results in terms of student compatibility with the culture and environs of the college? The pertinent questions with regard to favourably holding the students and make them perform in this paper is based on the logical reasoning of understanding the students' expectations and getting them into the thick of things by thoughtful involvement and intervention. This support based system of learning with the behaviour and background of individuals is the cornerstone of this research paper.

### **The Dilemma**

#### **One sided conversations with very less participation**

We still live in an age where the system of education is essentially a one sided phenomenon with teachers imparting whatever they know which the students absorb giving little room for participative learning. Though the scheme and methodology of learning implies role playing, case studies, presentations; these do not happen instantly and is a slow and gradual process by which time the new comers are already tackling varied problems. The effectiveness of these methods also depends on the acceptability of the individual with the new age learning tools.

#### **Unrelated subjects and contents**

Though the universities update and streamline the courses, streams and their contents, there is still a mismatch between the skill sets and the requirements. The content of most of the subjects lean towards theory leaving no room for practical or application learning and this poses serious problems for the first years who are already tottering with communication issues.



### **Communication barriers**

The biggest challenge standing like a rock of Gibraltar is the medium of instruction which in many cases is a massive shift from vernacular linked understanding to a rigid form of learning in an alien language.

### **Wrong choice of stream**

The Indian society and the mindset of the parents still act as a stumbling block to the choice of subjects based on interest, passion and inclination backed by talent and skills. The convictions and dogmas are so skewed in favour of a degree that is considered elite which sidelines the aspirations of the students at large. The inflexible and uncompromising attitude of the parent disallows them to chase their dreams.

### **Over expectations**

Hopes are pinned on the students right from day one and even before they enter the corridors of higher education and this presents itself from three directions – the parents, the student community themselves and the faculty leading to disappointments, frustrations and depressions.

### **Incompatibility**

Incompatibility with the new surroundings in terms of cross cultural issues, technology adaptation, rural-urban divide, financial stress and strains is a major hindrance for adjustment resulting in distorted cognitive thinking resulting in disintegration.

### **Isolated learning despite being in a group**

Excessive domination by a select few, favouritism, in group behaviour exhibits by faculty can cause alienation of the students who therefore remain aloof and detached.

### **Excessive influence of gadgets and Social media interference**

A bane of technology has been in the student fraternity avoiding social interactions on a personal or group level as these gadgets become their companions and this social disconnect has immense implications on behaviour.

### **Wrong choice of friends' circle and role models**

Students succumb to influence of local students and do end up with a wrong group who may have a strong negative influence and this causes to deviate from the main path of trajectory eventually to a point of no return. Also the choice of role models and inspirations can be a roadblock to transition. There is also a great risk of students falling prey to alcohol abuse, smoking and substance use.

### **Disconnect with the faculty**

The indifferent and callous attitude of the faculty towards the lesser mortals due to many reasons such as academic performance, attitudes and perceptions, communication barriers, in and out group tendency, prejudice, bias and favouritism creates a void.

### **Political ideologies and inclinations**

Many institutions become hotbeds for nurturing political ambitions and students go astray with the ideologies and mob hysteria syndrome.

### **Easy admissions with low cut-offs and quotas**

The colleges are bogged down with admission numbers to fulfil the university quota requirement and so the selection process is diluted with easy cut off that affect the quality on inputs as many of them may fail even in the basic prerequisites.



### **Influence of movies**

Easy access to movies on their smart phones has disengaged the students and allows them to slip into a world of fantasy and the fallout is discontinuity in education.

### **Parental ignorance and illiteracy**

These set of students may be first generation learners in the family who therefore do not enjoy any academic as well as non academic support from their parents.

### **Implication of Behavioural Learning In Pedagogy for Smooth Student Transition**

Fitting the college to the student irrespective of the background is the order of the day and this indeed needs a 180 degree turnaround that makes the student to match the institution. To inculcate a sense of belongingness by bridging the gaps and providing the right support system in the form of correct information, building bonhomie through rightful interaction, cohesive and community learning approach, involved, participative learning and inclusiveness become imperative for reducing the student dropout rates.

While most of us may be feeling that most of the aforesaid are being carried out in letter and spirit, the outcomes have still not had the rightful impact. The student dropout rate is still alarmingly high and those who survive the odds, fight isolation and the associated challenges and threats.

Adhering to the university curriculum, academic knowledge development, syllabus completion, training on exam perspective may all be high on the agenda in the minds of the teachers, but at the same time, critical thinking, shared learning, moulding with the new environs, providing an ideal support system for inclusive and conducive learning need to be adopted by the faculty community to prevent students from being square pegs in round holes. The delicate and sensitive transition period could well use innovative practices that aid and abet interactive learning by recognition of individual strengths and weaknesses. Certain dimensions have been strung together in the following paragraphs as suggestive measures which are purely conceptual and would be taken up by the author in the field of explorative research study in future.

### **Recommendations and suggestions**

1. Peer tutoring – overcoming cultural barrier. The doggedness of the teachers with regard to cultural differences could well be overcome by involving the students from the same geographical location in the form of peer tutoring giving way to better understanding. This is an age old tried and tested formula to overcome the regional bias in creating an ideal environment for early adaptability. It also assists in team building with shared responsibility. While this will genuinely reduce the difficulties arising due to culture differences, this remedy may prove detrimental as it may create demographical imbalances and groupism. The dyadic communication at the initial stage has to be elevated to interlinking conversations by forming random groups.
2. Similar interest group circles – roping in students from across communities, lands, streams of learning to be part of a common activity which could be non academic can go a long way in creating positive vibes within the non starters. Linked courses and classrooms, typically in the form of clubs of interest generate curiosity, and to unleash the hidden talent and interdependence. This will also generate social interaction thereby avoiding introversion patterns of behaviour.
3. Bangalore University has beautifully interwoven skill development activities within the content giving room to application based thinking. However, very few colleges have effectively implemented this construct. The primary fault is that we are trying to implement these without the fundamental requirement of addressing the basic issue of communicative English. Any such activity could bear fruits only if the student gets the communication clearly. Bridge courses to help learn the rudiments of the language would enable a better handling of these activities.
4. The University curriculum also includes skill development courses such as understanding Indian Constitution, learning personality dimensions, knowing the culture, society and diversity, being creative and innovative in various semesters which is an effective add on to the value of the course. The effectiveness of such an add on can be further enhanced by having ice breaking sessions which would



include reality check, pegging expectations that can be matched and doing a SWOT on the students in order to make these programmes successful in setting the stage for student transition.

5. Inculcating value in the individual by frequent interactions, encouragements and motivation and appreciations even for the smallest task accomplished. This goes a long way to promote positivity in the disconnected students.
6. Inviting parents, siblings over – frequent meetings with the family members and guardians can help the teachers to understand the background better and is an ideal platform to highlight the problems and challenges the students are facing in the new atmosphere. This will also help to get into conversations with the students in an effective manner.
7. Dropouts from other streams and students who juggle jobs early on due to financial stress and strain need to be given extra care and attention as they may be already on the verge of breakdown. Motivational pep talks by seniors and alumni who may have overcome similar challenges could guide these students mentally to make them emerge stronger.

### Conclusion

The continuum of education depends on the smooth transition from school to university and as teachers at the undergraduate level, we need to mind the gap existing and make sure that the students retain their identities and do not pass into oblivion. The emotional interaction and connect between the pedagogues and students can alleviate the dislocation, alienation and exclusion of students coming in from different parts of the country with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. To a large extent, reducing the drop out or under performance or dissatisfaction rate rests with a joint effort between the student community and the teaching fraternity. The ever changing family structure and pattern with the strong influence of the social media and a history of the disconnect already present in the students in earlier academic pursuits or the pressures of a part time job to tide over a financial crisis could leave ample room for a bumpy transition causing havoc to these students psychologically and scarring them beyond repair. The qualitative and quantitative measures entailed above may have to be effectively incorporated with the teaching tools to have a seamless transition and they have to be constantly monitored to yield maximum performance. Instructor's care, transparent and interactive approach topped off with acceptance and inclusiveness is a concocted mix of ingredients for an ideal student retention recipe.

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