



## FACILITATE LEARNING AND HUMAN CONNECTION THROUGH ANECDOTES

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### **Abstract**

Anecdotes help to transfer knowledge, share experience, build communities, enhances trust, form perception and develop bond. Storytelling is successfully being used in organizations to influence employees, impress stakeholders and enhance brand image. Seen as a part of marketing strategy, they touch the lives of people. How following the similar path can create conducive environment of learning for students is the quest for research in this article. The consensus is derived from research that storytelling is not only a means to convey but also learn and retain information. The authors suggest to document that how storytelling can facilitate not only learning in the form of information retention but also strengthen human connections across interdisciplinary students through literature.

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## Introduction

“What are the placement opportunities? What activities will help me get a job? Do I need to attend classes regularly? What will I learn from your syllabus?” First day of induction program ends with these questions from students in the first year technical and professional courses. In a way all being appropriate for the future nation builders. However, being educators for years, we believe in the classroom system and research to impart the best teaching and facilitate with the best learning environment. The only challenge apart from low attention span is that student learning will not happen without their buy in. In the era where there is already information overload, the classes not only need to be informative but also an addition to what they know through a connection that befits them. So as educators it becomes our sole responsibility to connect them to each other for knowledge sharing and see that learning just happens.

With the proposed, New Education Policy of India 2020 and its implementation in parts, the concept of adding skill based, value based and interdisciplinary courses have excelled in identifying the opportunities where conversations to make connections happen rather than mere wiring and academic study. The interdisciplinary courses help students to understand and interpret the new concepts through different lenses as across disciplines provides multi faceted approach to students. With the intention to make students corporate ready not only in terms of academic requisites but also organizational culture ready, we are trying to inculcate the learnings of , three professors from Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) formed as an experience that we call, “Exploring Human Behavior and Motivation and connections through anecdotes.”

The strong industry- academy interface developed through platforms like

Institution innovation cell, Entrepreneurship development Cell, IDEA Lab has lead to the comparison of course outcomes and their attainment through establishing connection between learning for life and motivation through anecdotes. We partnered, ie Engineering, English and Management department who formed clubs for professional activities that offers critical lens on interactions, exchange of interdisciplinary ideas, diversity across cultures and states, equity and inclusion through sharing anecdotes. Such interactions help students to dwell on not only the success stories of successful corporate/business people but also to believe in the journey of someone with whom they share common struggles.

The original word storytelling and what we have addressed it as anecdotes are a way to establish relation and can be used by students to foster thinking beyond personal biases. It also helps to express ourselves with others. This expression counts for critical thinking in students and for us educators it helps to create positive perspective for life beyond placement competencies and corporate requisites.

From the work of *Minds Made for Stories*, Newkirk (2014) we discovered that it's the experiences and stories that make a logical medium to connect among people so we thought of planning our teaching methodology with anecdotes. Importantly it's not only the narrator but also the content that helps. It also enhances the modality of storytelling and experience sharing. The learning community also share out of class experiences during their visits as interns and after industrial trips. So our goal of students realizing their own journey, listening to others and trying to evaluate others versions gets fulfilled.

## ANECDOTE EFFECTIVENESS – LITERATURE

The history of storytelling holds lot many uses of it. It tells us about diversity of age

groups, how values and knowledge passes by. The recent ones being their use in encouraging employees to encourage the new comes rather than holding the orthodox training programs ( Wijetunge, 2012)

the evidence from the existence of associations such as Suitcase Stories, National association of black story tellers suggest that though the avenue for story may change but people will continue to believe in its power. The much evident examples from India can be forums like “Landmark” where the transformation and approach towards life changes through anecdote and learning from them.

Sharing anecdote is embedded in courses as well and if practiced consistently can lead to increasing classroom efficiency by appealing the imagination of students, Woodhouse (2011). So its about that human touch that altogether alters ones question from “is it compulsory to attend the classes ? to I gain from the interactions! ”.

With multi disciplinary institute like ours, Student engagement is at the core of all teaching concerns. Khan(1990) has proposed three factors to explain work engagement – meaning, safety and resources. Our proposition on story telling addresses all the three in the classroom environment. The ‘meaning ’ being addressed by course content, ‘safety’ being addressed by sense of belongingness that story telling creates and ‘resources’ created by students cognitive efforts and attention towards the course content.

Involvement in the classroom is defined as how much fun is there in the class room, Tews, Jackson, Ramsay, and Michel (2014) . Fun is further defined as fun in activities and fun in delivery. While the first is difficult in terms of involvement of all students while the latter is instructor focused which includes explanation of concept with stories, examples and adding pinch of humor to it. Their study

concluded that student involvement is impacted positively by fun delivery.

In the courses related to organizational behavior and change management, Jabri and Pounder (2001) that narration impacted work behavior in employees because anecdote based learning creates awareness of self and others through critical and multi faceted analysis.

Storytelling is all about crafting, the content and delivery both, So is the belief of Brittenham, McLaughlin, and Mick (2017). While students explore the time tested experiences and stories shared, they are able to present their oral and written assignments with added responsibility. This gives opportunities to the professors from Engineering, English and Management department tp partner and share how the stories are built for their respective courses.

Researchers also argue that storytelling provides to students many learning benefits like active listening, concentration and critical thinking. The greater is the active listening the greater it creates the bond between the teacher and student. In a way the notes making and retention part of students during exam also increases as per Gargiulo, 2005. Anecdotes elicit attention span, give them a longer memory and enhance recollection ability. Listening to experiences help to similarities, appreciate differences and argue with empathy.

Our Learning –

We anticipate to collect both qualitative and quantitative research to measure what we have discovered. We plan to include the experiences at all levels and modes of interaction like classroom, field and industry. The idea is to measure with those semesters where interdisciplinary subjects are introduced and anecdotes added to teaching pedagogy.S

To begin with, we have a fixed curriculum across all disciplines which is revised every three years. We have identified the courses where additional reading apart

from text books can be encouraged. We intend to connect them to utilization of anecdotes and what level of motivation and learning experience it creates. We ourselves read the books so that we can add insights to their experiences. For instance, the books related to communication, psychology and subjects like technical analysis were given for reading, time slots arranged in time table and common room for all disciplines was allotted and investing in me time was encouraged. Students spent quality time discussing post reading not only about takeaways but it lead to the development of powerful conversation resulted. The start was well where our focus was to build on student community, help them learn beyond, interact more on common and diverse topics and share as many stories as possible. The students were also asked to make personal journals and write all the learning from others storytelling and conclude the write up with their version.

Apart from reading an writing the experiences, the students were diverted to service activities that they take up during their NSS camps. They took field trips, listened to the stories from people across various industries and we could see them getting trained on cross culture awareness and competence. The learning interactions that we created were deliberate. For instance the visit to orphanage helped them calculate the poverty, illiteracy and economic percentages. SEBI visit made them discuss on vitality of stock market for our nation. Finally students had their own suitcase story about their nation. These activities showed the power of sharing stories, be more transparent to each other and remain empathetic to traumatic experiences. We made these qualitative observations and witnessed the remarkable impact of anecdotes on grooming of students.

We began first with the qualitative data we collected, and then we have intentions to quantify the data.

Measure –

- We have intentions to measure how anecdotes can impact students learning experience with courses. ( empathy, action, comfort with interdisciplinary, collaborative learning environment)
- A questionnaire on cross cultural awareness will be prepared on likert scale which will include questions about students' cultural awareness, sensitivity, and effectiveness in building relationships, modeling, simulation, with those from different branches. The items are identified form from Sucher and Cheung's (2015) scale.
- Appropriate sampling and testing procedure to be used will be statistically identified.

## CONCLUSION

Learning form storytelling is highly valued practice which connects the students to their community and to teachers. Our goal as educators is to offer courses learning which are beyond academic pedagogy and which they will value throughout life. To create belongingness towards campus is the first step to embrace differences. Kick starting an idea, socializing with new members, mending relations and spending quality time to think for actions is what anecdotes can do beautifully. Surpassing the personal biases and really understanding the multi-faceted nature of people is a sustainable outcome of learning. Connections with storytelling will be valued for life time as evident from the quote of one of our student -.

*“ I have always been fascinated by stories and experience sharing. I read the management funda by N Raghuraman and believe that stories matter. As everyone's*

is different, it make you learn and be wise”

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