Teaching and Learning Political Science in 21ˢᵗ Century: Focus on Skills and Employability

Dr. Pramod G. Shinde,
Dayanand College of Law,
Latur, Maharashtra,India
pgshinde26@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Fast changing times of today require dynamic employability skills by the students to face the multitude challenges and to cope with them. In order to face and be successful in the in the 21ˢᵗ century workforce, our learners must be skilled communicators, able team-workers, creative inventors and critical thinkers. This requires goal-oriented instructional strategies on the part of the teachers coupled with needs oriented policies. Keeping this learners' needs to be successful in this technologically dynamic world, traditional pedagogical approaches to teach political science need a relook. In this regard, this paper attempts to explore the need for a new pedagogical approach and strategies to teach political science specifically in India to learners to make them ready to face challenges of the 21ˢᵗ century and to address their employability related issues by making them capable to enter the challenging job market successfully.

The need for the new approach stems from various lacunas in our existing pedagogical policies and approaches. Our pedagogical policies on teaching political science in India are extensively rigid designed with patronising approach. The traditional teacher-centred instructional approaches too often restrict providing learners the prospect to team up and acquire the 21ˢᵗ century skills of communication, teamwork, creativity, and critical thinking. The undesirable consequences of not providing our learners the opportunity to gain these success skills can end up in having unskilled and inadequately trained future workforce in our country. Researchers believe that critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and efficient communication are key skills expected from every learner who aspires to be successful. If our learners, of political science in particular, are to be successful in the workforce and compete in this dynamic society, our teachers and learners need to be provided with new instructional approaches and strategies incorporating these vital skills.

Diverting from our traditional teacher-centric patronising instructional approaches, our focus must be on developing interpersonal and problem solving skills of our learners to make them able workforce of 21ˢᵗ century. This also implies autonomy and flexibility to colleges to implement bottom-up, or backward mapped policies and practices to enrich learning outcomes so as to prepare them to be successful in their lives.

2. Rationale for the Alternative Pedagogical Approach

Political Science has been a key subject in the international arena revolving around rights and duties of not only individuals but also of nation states which demands activism and participation for diverse democratic world. This also demands effective instructional strategies to maximise our learners' participation in these processes. However, our policy and instructional approaches to teach Political science are turning out to be ill-equipped. As the learners get marginalised in the political participation process, the very existence and importance which this subject once had has become doubtful.

Research on the domain has been demanding that teachers and pedagogues of Political science need to be more planned and systematic in strategizing trainings to inspire and support learners from diverse backgrounds to consider political science as a profession and to finish graduate training in political science. To make our learners able and political science to be relevant in this changing time, special approach requires change in the existing methods of teaching political science. This also implies teachers of political science to be supported substantially for incorporating and implementing alternative strategies to teach political science. Colleges and universities should train teachers in employing more innovative approaches to teach political science.

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Page No.
23

Curriculum of Political science should be internationalised by advocating open discussion and communication about sensitive issues around the world to connect learners with real world issues, with people from divorce political environments, backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures. Global citizenship should be the focus of teaching political science connecting cultures of the world. Teachers should ensure that learners of political science realize their full potential as effective contributors to society.

Within the Indian academia in political science research, productivity is disheartening. On in contrast, multitude socio-political challenges keep emerging every day and to address these political science seems ill-equipped in a sustained way. This has resulted in many of the most affected members of political groups around the world being left substantially unexplored and, therefore, unexplained, within the discipline. Cohen (2009) deliberated that political science was facing existential relevance in wider social and political discourse regarding deep differences about the direction of the discipline, the questions which should be investigated, and the helpfulness of much of the research conducted. It was also reported and argued that the methods utilised to teach and study political questions time and again stress procedural intricacy leading to countless specialization where restricted questions get researched rather than addressing the large and incontrollable problems occurring in real life.

The leaning contents by our political students is another deserving area requiring change. Most of our curricula is patronised dictating what must and must not be studies by our learners making it highly exclusionary. On the contrary, research requires that the complex subject matters in politics must be deliberated using countless methods if we are to achieve the significantly variable sorts of data, form the extensive range of powerful descriptive and explanatory concepts, and engross in the numerous sorts of inferential testing needed to accomplish rigorous analyses. That is why, Strickland (2009) advocates revolutionary research agenda for political science.

Smith (2010) accentuating on practical applicability of political science to our real world problems asserts that teachers and learners of political science should stress and seek to reinforce the impact we make to public life. That is, teachers of political science must teach students, and people at large, knowledge and skills useful for understanding and participating in politics. Ingebritsen et al. (2006) also believe that emphasizing on learning outcomes, motivating learners through active learning strategies and encouraging teachers with incentive and awards can be effective approach to explore political science pedagogy more effectively.

3. Approaches to Teach and Learn Political Science

The changing times and needs require balance between traditional and new approach to teach and learn political science. Traditional lecture and seminar methods should be blended with modern learner-centred, needs focused and employability skills and research oriented approaches. Teachers should receive ample technical, institutional, and departmental support while developing, implementing and assessing alternative strategies. Courses in teaching strategies for political science learners incorporating innovative approaches should be conducted both at the college as well as university level. Teaching of political science should be adapted in such a way that learners from divorce communities and backgrounds could see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

Political science curriculum must continuously be r internationalized to provide diversity and global perspectives in the classroom which according to Lamborn and Martin (2004) substantially impact learning process as well as teaching methodologies, materials and resources. The curriculum should focus on open debate and communication about complex issues in the world relating to people of different political environments, backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures. Active learning among the students should be emphasised to engage them and they must be asked to apply concepts learned in class to real world situations. Babst, DeGarmo, Harth, and Reinalda (2006) argue that the curricula of political science should move our learners forward with internationalization to catch up with other disciplines. Inside and outside the class, internalization efforts must be high lightened to provide learners greater exposure to and knowledge about our world.

As Nordyke, Wright, Kuchinsky, and Ediger (2007) argue, teachers of political science must

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Page No.
24

attempt to develop the notion of global citizenship among the learners to connect local with global and emphasise the need to break away from a purely a majoritarian narrow view of the world. Students should be exposed to wider diverse multicultural world by moving them beyond their comfort zones to witness and examine things from different perspectives through foreign and national positions of bias, intolerance, and nativism. Global internships should be promoted to juxtapose theory and student practical experiences insistently. There should be encouragement for the international dimensions of politics which must be sustained with fervour among the learners. Technological advancements should be consciously and effectively utilised through simulations to develop learners' acquaintance of the world. Learners must be encouraged to actively debate and discuss historical development of different political parties in our country and the impact of their positions on various groups and cultures.

After deliberating these scholarly perspectives, some of the practical approaches to teach political science can be briefed below.

3.1 Project Based Approach to Teach Political Science

Project based approach to teach political science envisages an inquiry oriented instructional strategies to create opportunities for learners to work in teams to solve a problem by simulating certain object or tangible end product. It is considered as an instructional method through which learners can advance knowledge and skills by working for a drawn-out period of time to explore and retort to an authentic, engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge. According to Galvan and Coronado (2014), the approach connotes an instructional strategy in which learners work cooperatively over time to create a concrete, substantial product. Markham (2012) views it as an extended learning process which utilises inquiry and stimulate the growth and mastery of skills. That is why project based approach has become centre of pedagogical deliberations to teach political science effectively as it builds success skills for college, career, and life of the political science learners. It is also advocated as it inquiry based approach for teaching and learning which is a learner-centred, inquiry-based process

resulting in better retention, more in-depth knowledge, and expanded curiosity among the learners.

The key components of this inquiry based approach encourage learners to exploit their critical thinking and problem solving skills. It also emphasises on collaboration and teamwork throughout the learning process which are essential employability skills of 21st century. It has been constantly argued that teamwork leads to deeper understanding, higher-order thinking, and better performance on complex tasks. Another key aspect of this approach is that it is centred on authentic learning from real world, real life contexts which the political science musty always aspire for. All these promising aspects demand for the approach to be incorporated in our teaching and learning processes.

3.2 Employability Skills oriented approach to Teach Political Science

Political Science is a broad discipline which according to Tashfeen (2019) is often under appreciated by employers because of the apparent lack of convertible skills which basically deals with questions about power and covers the study of processes, policies and institutions of various political systems to help train learners in critical thinking, rigorous and systematic analysis to assist them in addressing practical political issues and challenges, while contributing to the wider society and community. The discipline is looked for careers public sector, private business, international relations organisations, non-profit organisations and academia. However, in these dynamic times dominated by techno-economic influences on every aspect of our socio-political lives, the very relevance of political science has been questioned due to the discipline being highly theoretical and offering not much employability prospects.

Hale (2008) has noted that employability agenda has been the key issue within the political science curriculum which requires increased focus on career development and advancement prospects. Ahmad (2015) asserts that the world is constantly changing which requires strategies for the political science to be adapted to prepare our learners to cope and deal with them changes. Franco (2018) has emphasised the need to develop and hone political science learners with social scientific and practical

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Page No.
25

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skills. Clark and Martin (2016) have also stressed on the importance of transferrable skills attainment for making students more employable and marketable in the present context. They suggest political science students to be equipped with key skills like data gathering, analytical and synthesis, self-management and reflection, awareness, teamwork, collaboration, communication and numeracy, IT skills which are found to be employability assuring skills.

It has also been contended that liberal education be advanced by providing students real life practical global citizenship experience and career opportunities. Off campus internships and exposure to political process scenarios be systematised as a part of teaching and learning process at the institute level. Learners also be trained in acquiring core building block skills and competencies such as critical thinking, analytical and their applications to real-life problems. To utilise the advances in technology, teachers need to develop high impact instructional models accentuating political engagement. Acquiring high impact practical oriented learning experiences through the use of learning communities and groups, cross cultural exercises and projects to increase collaboration, interaction, team work, engagement, peer cooperation and diversity skills need to be encouraged constantly.

Institutional efforts must focus on developing core writing, researching and critical thinking skills of political science students supported with experiential learning experiences via internships and exposure to civic and political engagement projects. The feeling among political science students, after their study, that their studies could not adequately prepare them for the future job-market must be addressed strategically providing all the trainings and assistance in the development of their employability skills. Institutions need to take all the corrective measures to prepare their political science students for the world of work. As our curricula of Political Science discipline are highly inadequate for the advancements of skills and practical capabilities required to prepare students in the world of work, the same need to be changed with focus on needs of the learners and means to achieve them through degree in political science.

4. Sum Up

The world is changing persistently due to technological innovations creating new realities around us. To cope with them, our teaching methods, pedagogical strategies and course teaching and learning objectives must match with these changes in society as well as correspond with how our learners respond to these changes. The traditional approaches to teaching and learning have lost any relevance owing to these technological impacts rendering them inadequate and ineffective. In this regard, its obligation on teachers of political science to develop the capacity to implement more creative ways to meet the emerging unique learning styles of students in these dynamic times influenced by the emerging technologies. Dramaturgical approach may be exploited while addressing these challenges to transform the traditional classroom setting into a more innovative one. However, this transformative process warrants collaborative and sustained efforts by all the stockholders related to the discipline of teaching, learning and assessing political science. Stronger partnership needs to be built between the academic institutions and prospective employers with regular meetings and collaborations between both on sustained efforts to train and accommodate political science students in the emerging workforce.

Innovative pedagogical approach focusing on modules-based methods combined with active learning components to constantly provide opportunities for expanding recruitment, employability and teaching must be implemented. A needs focused, employability skills oriented systematically designed instructional and pedagogical approach to teach and learn political science is the need for the 21st century political science learners to cope and successfully establish themselves as an independent, collaborative global citizens of the world.

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Page No. 26

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