

Editorial

We are pleased to publish five essays as part of our co-sponsorship of the MAGIC (Methods, Aesthetics, & Genres in Communication) conference organized by the University of Petroleum and Energy Studies (UPES) in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India. This conference was organized by the Center for Professional Communication under the aegis of the College of Engineering Studies. The purpose of the conference was to bring together academicians and researchers to deliberate and discuss upon developing communication skills. The emphasis was on empowering the workforce with effective and sustainable communication skills. The conference also supports the efforts of Skill India to help enhance the skills of its populations. More about Skill India can be found here: <http://www.skillindia.gov.in/about-us>.

The conference had a number of focus areas. We have selected a number of essays related to communication and online, hybrid, and blended education. Dr. Sanju Choudhary discusses the role of literature in teaching English in classrooms where English language skill levels vary. Dr. Kshema Jose discusses English language proficiency in the context of digital literacy and describes the importance of English language acquisition as a key workplace competency. The author situates this in the context of the ecology of resources model and shows how the model can facilitate learning opportunities that enhance the power of language acquisition skills. Pooja Khanna describes how blended learning can be used to manage large classes. The author looks at all phases of implementing a hybrid course – design, launch, delivery, and completion and feedback – as well as the institutional support needed to support hybrid delivery. Effective delivery of hybrid education is particularly challenging in contexts in which learning online is very new. Urvashi Kaushal describes the academic-industry gap in which universities are not producing the skills in engineering students needed by employers. Skills in communication, teamwork, problem-solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organizing, managerial, interpersonal skills, and creativity, among others, as are noted as those that should be part of the curricular focus. The author advocates that these skills can and should be taught as part of the academic curriculum. Finally, Dr. A. V. Bharathi writes about English communication skills as the core of employability skills. The author describes how English language learning can also help develop problem solving skills in learners.

Each of these essays, from their own points of view, point to the importance of English language acquisition; the role that soft-skills plays in employability of graduates and how those skills can be taught within the curriculum; and how language acquisition can be used to facilitate the development of soft skills such as problem solving.

We are proud to have been a sponsor of this conference that is consistent with *Higher Learning Research Communication's* focus on digital teaching and learning, communication, and workplace skills development. We know there is much work to do in these areas of scholarship, and the scholars who contributed to this issue point us in some directions for further research.

Gary J. Burkholder, PhD
Editor-in-Chief
