

# Success lies beyond academic excellence

**FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS** Academic excellence and professional skills may help you get into a career. However, it is important to develop life-skills that will help you make a success of your career and manage personal success better, writes **V Pradeep Kumar**

The modern world offers a plethora of lucrative career opportunities in mainstream and offbeat careers. Paradoxically, it's also the place for increasing intolerance, conflicts, inter-personal problems and a general decline in values. With these increasing contradictions, essential life-skills comprising cognitive, personal and inter-personal skills are necessary, to thrive and flourish in careers and personal life. These skills enable the development of psychological and social competencies, in addition to academic skills, leading to a holistic development of your personality. However, our educational system being heavily oriented towards academics, fails to impart the essential life-skills.

## Learning beyond academics

As a student, realise the importance of life-skills, which help you succeed in your chosen field as well as manage your life successfully. The environment in which you grow up has a bearing on your personal characteristics, behaviour and attitudes. Similarly, the career that you choose, determines the type and extent of life-skills required to succeed. In general, the most essential life-skills to develop are:

■ **Decision-making:** Academic, professional and personal life decisions, are the most crucial, in life. Wrong decisions in life regarding a course or a career, can result in temporary setbacks or can affect you in the long-term, causing deep anguish and trauma. The ability to make the right decision at the right time is, therefore, a key life-skill.

Decision-making is a cognitive psychological process of analysing situations, researching for data, identifying and choosing the right alternative. Setting the right goals, organising the resources, periodic self-evaluation, and goal achievement, are important in all aspects of life.

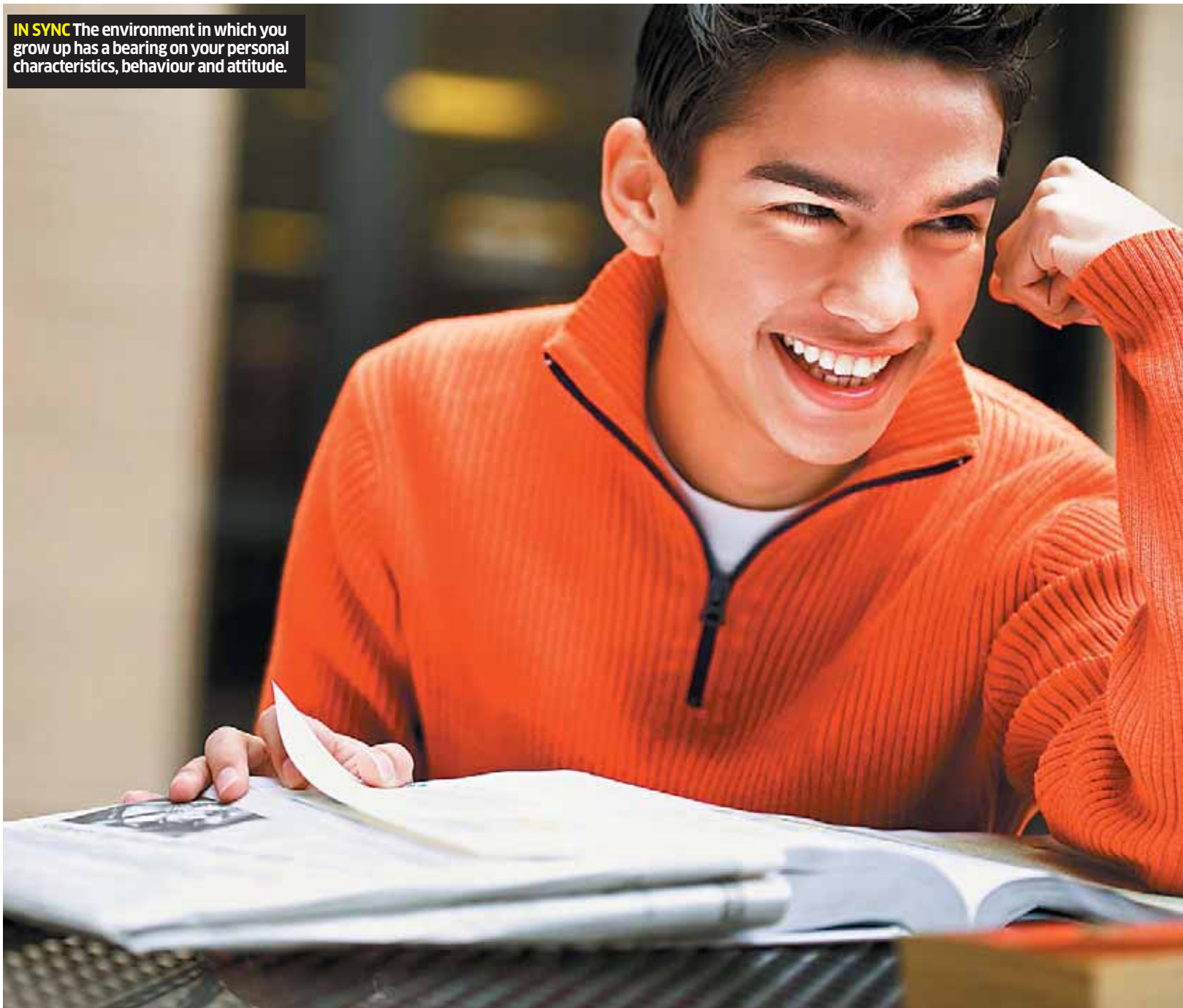
■ **Time management:** The universe gives each one of us an equal amount of time—24 hours every day.

As a student, you have multifarious tasks of attending classes, coaching classes, home studies, preparation for academic and entrance exams, sports and hobbies, and other daily chores. An effective studying technique demands a few breaks in between, to refresh and rejuvenate. It's not possible to carry out all these tasks efficiently, unless you learn to manage time.

The key to balancing academic and personal life, or balancing career and personal life after education, is time management. Knowing all your tasks and prioritising them according to their importance and urgency, is the essence of time management. Develop a sense of discipline to adhere to the planned schedules. Importantly, avoid doing only urgent and important tasks, which can be stressful.

■ **Health education:** Develop the right habits that nurture your personal health and fitness, to take greater responsibility and meet the challenges of managing a career and personal life. It is important to focus on your health by adhering to a healthy and

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nutritious diet, taking care of personal hygiene and not giving in to tobacco, alcohol, drug addictions.

The consequences of irregular eating and sleeping habits can cause acidity in the short-term and serious and lifelong health issues in the long-term. Diabetes became prevalent in India at least 15 years earlier than in several countries. An average Indian suffering from type-2 diabetes is 30 years old, compared to an average US citizen who gets diabetes at 50. According to a report, it's alarming to find 14 per cent of Bangaloreans affected by diabetes and 21 per cent, with high blood pressure. The incidence of diabetes in youth is on the rise due to modern lifestyle, excessive use of processed foods, and obesity among children and young adults.

Your general health and fitness is essential for any career and for a satisfactory personal life. For careers in Defence,

IAS/IPS/IFS, R&D, sales and marketing, travel and hospitality, especially, your fitness and physical energy levels play a critical role.

Realise the importance of health and fitness in your career and life. Choose home food over food from outside, fruit juices and tender coconut water instead of carbonated drinks. Get physically active and devote a minimum of 30 minutes a day for any intense sports/activity. This will raise your metabolism rate, helping to burn calories and keeping you fit.

■ **Communication:** Understanding theoretical concepts and their application in the profession isn't adequate; it's equally important to possess the

ability to express yourself effectively. Sharpen your communication skills, especially before participating in the campus recruitment process, involving group discussions (GD) and personal interviews (PI).

In a recent round of campus recruitment, amongst the students who cleared the written test by scoring above the cut-off percentage, only 25 per cent could actively interact and clear the GD. The rest of the students were mute spectators in the heated discussions, failing to participate and were eliminated.

Empathetic listening, powerful presentation of your views, questioning techniques, writing skills and an appropriate

body language, are essential tools of communication. A strong communication skill can help you develop your personality, enabling you to project yourself effectively, in any situation.

■ **Inter-personal skills:** The emphasis on teamwork has now extended beyond sales and marketing, encom-

passing other management functions. Strong inter-personal skills are necessary to understand and respect others, which builds an environment of mutual trust and transparency. Free flow of communication within and across teams helps align goals of individuals to those of the organisation, with synergistic results. Therefore, while recruiting from campus, HR professionals consider inter-personal skills and compatibility within teams, as one of the key factors.

Stress levels among students and young professionals have been on the rise due to increased inter-personal conflicts in personal life. To foster a positive environment at college/work/home, focus on problems or tasks separating them from people. Remember, people may not remember what you did, or what you said, but they will always remember how you made them feel. Therefore, don't express opinions callously and belittle others, or indulge in hasty retorts.

Communicate openly, addressing people by their name courteously. Respect opinions and use phrases like 'please' and 'thank you' in conversations. Help others if you can and make a positive contribution in the lives of others. The ability to build and nurture relations with colleagues, friends, relatives and in new alliances is extremely critical for success.

## Managing success

It's important to understand that becoming successful in your professional and personal life has no meaning unless you learn to manage success. People struggle for a lifetime to become successful, but in many cases personal success breeds arrogance, contempt for others and quest for more power or wealth. Remember, arrogance of success, wealth and supremacy leads finally to isolation and ultimate downfall.

Therefore, life-skills are critical not only to achieve success, but more importantly to manage success. These life-skills act as a lifeline increasing awareness of your strengths, vulnerabilities and limitations, enabling you to develop humility - the invaluable attitude of openness, and the right personal value system.

Academic excellence and related skills may help you get into a career, but life-skills help you to make a success of it, and become a better human being, capable of managing personal success. Excellence in life is therefore not an accident; it's doing the right things right, continuously. (The author is a management and career consultant.)