

Take your project work seriously

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For most engineering students, its 'that time of the year'. Some dread it, some love it, some pull through while the rest outsource it. Yes, we are talking about 'project work' time. With final year students in most engineering colleges if not all – entering their final semesters, students are running all around finalising a topic, researching information, finding the right project guide or even getting the funds in place to execute the project. Amidst all this confusion, the relevance of project work in the larger scheme of things is sometimes lost.

What is the purpose of project work?

Although different curricula have different intended outcomes from project work, as a general thumb rule, they aim to :

1. Test student's ability to apply knowledge gained from the course

Most subjects taught during the course are theory based and do not effectively test how well a student can put it to the best practical use. Project work is a platform that calls upon the application of the collective knowledge gained throughout the course.

2. Teach them to work in teams

Traditional educational systems foster individual growth but do not effectively cultivate team working abilities. Project work is an area that requires excellent team work, clear communication channels, effective networking and task delegation abilities.

3. Take them out of the mould of conventional syllabus

Normally, the curriculum in any engineering course is well defined and structured. What project work does is, it helps students plan for the unexpected and handle uncertainties and all this while working towards a larger goal.

In a broader sense, project work gives a student the scope to hone his personal and technical skills and to develop techniques of communication – both oral and written.

Bridging the gap: The three points discussed above play a crucial role in bridging the gap between the academic college life and the professional work life. Project work helps us to integrate the knowledge gained through the subjects of the course into a hands on

experience in practicing it at a professional level. In work life, one needs to think on one's toes, rely on their own judgement and discretion and think out of the box to solve everyday problems – all of which we are exposed to in the project work.

Universal value: Students graduating from a non-IT engineering backgrounds and wanting to enter the IT field may wonder how a project work undertaken in their area of specialisation might be relevant in the field of IT. Similar is the case with engineering graduates who go on to pursue a management or a non technical post graduate study. The relevance of a technical project hovers over the minds of most engineering graduates.

Project work however has an universal value to it. Students applying to universities abroad find it more useful than the rest because it is one of the major points of evaluation, more so when applying for a post graduation in the same technical subject. When moving from a technical under-graduation to a non technical post graduation, reviewers from a non-technical background who are not capable of evaluating your project work still use your project work to benchmark your communicational, analytical and team working skills. Same is the case when you move from an under graduation, directly into professional work life.

How to get it right: When deciding upon the topic for project work, students need to take care of certain aspects like:

- Choose a topic from one's area of interest
- Read widely on the subject
- Evaluate the work already done in that area as well as the future scope

Irrespective of the branch of a student's undergraduate study or the career aspirations project work should be taken up with sincerity, dedication and passion. Project work should not be done with just the fulfillment of the academic requirement but for the value additions that result from it.

The last few months of one's undergraduate study, specially those during the project work period are the most valuable times of one's life. The time spent in the library, the frictions that arise while working in a group, the last minute changes, the ingenuity, the challenges that one overcomes, the initial confusion, the final chaos and lastly the completed project – all these put together are treasured moments. For most people who start working straight after an under graduation, these last few months of student life are even more valuable.

So leave your worries aside and put your heart into your project work. Its better late than never.

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