Dear Teachers

Amrita Oval: Should Military Training be made Compulsory for all in India?

Amrita Oval is a project of Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham that aims to raise awareness of contemporary issues in engineering and education through a variety of inclusive, educational, and inspirational live discussions by academics from renowned institutions and leading schools.

The expert panel is debating the pros and cons of making military education a requirement for all kids as part of the curriculum. Experts from the panel discussed how military training can give students the life and career skills they need, while other educators suggested that team building and other development activities may be more effective at instilling discipline and teamwork in students than strict military training methods. The speakers present for the debate were Mrs. Kalpana Singh, Principal, Gurukul Academy, Lucknow; Mrs. Pinkey Singh, Principal, Royal Concorde International School, Kalyan Nagar, Bengaluru; Mrs. Nagaprabhavathy H, Founder Principal, Valiants Academy, Bengaluru; and Mrs. Seema Ramachandran, Principal, JRK Matriculation, Higher Secondary School, Vadapalani. The entire debate was moderated by Dr Shoury Kuttappa, Academic Manager & Counsellor, Directorate of Admissions & Academic Outreach, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham.

While the speakers who were in favour of including military education into regular education spoke about how it will inculcate morals of discipline, regimen and teamwork into students at an early age, the against speaker was clear to emphasis on the need for a holistic approach with choice for the students to choose their way to learn discipline rather than a single mode of training.

Speaking for the topic, experts agreed that military training has many value additions to the
process of education right from physical fitness awareness to time management, the educator speaking against the topic highlights how if the choice of mode of training is also levied to students, they can choose to learn all values in ways more suitable to their character and of free will. Both sides emphasise that education is not limited to knowledge sharing via books only but is also a mix of physical training, moral development and inclusion of 21st century skills in addition to holistic development of a student as an integral part of the society.

While military education can be beneficial in all aspects of growing up, it can also restrict the freedom of choice for students to indulge in their choice of training. Teachers’ emphasis on how military education can include the values of respect, punctuality and concentration in the students from a young age. On the other hand, the choice of incorporating these values with student-focused learning methods and other co-curricular activities is also an option. In the debate session, panels discuss both sides of the topic effectively, giving out a lot of knowledgeable methods to incorporate value-based learning, supported by the experienced moderator from Amrita.

My School My Pride: Journey to the Indian book of records

The third instalment of My School, My Pride by Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, an innovative program focusing student-achievers and their mentors took place in July. This was conducted on Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham’s own virtual event platform by the Director of Admissions, Br. Maheshwara Chaitanya.

The session conveys the journey to the Indian Book of Records and features the star students behind the efforts T Hariharan and D R Deepa Priyadarshini. Students from GTA Vidya Mandir in Chennai, Hariharan and Deepa took the initiative to assist their school in setting an Indian Book of Records record for drawing the most international flags on a single virtual platform. The event, in which 334 children participated and produced flags on paper using mathematical tools in under 1 minute and 10 seconds, was organised and directed with the able assistance of the teachers and management at the school.

In order to make this effort successful, both students from GTA Vidya Mandir brainstormed ways to set up the complete event, including the creation of concept sheets and collated data. The presentation that was developed by both of these students outlining the full event planning process from the beginning to the finish, the amazing experience the students gained in mentoring their fellow and junior students for the event, and the assistance they received from the school and its professors is what they have conveyed during the session.

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Both students talk in length about the experience gained by organising such a large scale event which helped them develop not only management skills but also soft skills like clear communication, patience, leadership and organisation. Planning the drawing of the flag under the given timeframe in addition to mentoring all participating students to reach the same goal was wherein both students placed their maximum focus on, they add. Their mentor also discusses in detail on how the support from the school and parents helped to make the event a success despite initial challenges. Facilitating virtual training sessions with the support of teachers and parents also helped in the successful completion of the record.

My School My Pride

Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham is here with a unique platform for student achievers – An exciting series that would give focus on students who have achieved exceptionally well in something beyond studies and their school mentors. A student stands out as an achiever when he or she wins distinction in academics or in any area of extracurricular activities like music, art, painting, sketching, graphic designing, debates, audio-visual flicks, team performances in sports or performing arts like dance and theatre. It could also be team leadership in clubs or social services. Students’ evolution into achievers includes their volunteering, aptitude identification, motivation, goal-setting, leadership, critical thinking, problem solving and

Amrita Café: Importance of Memory Training For 21st Century Learners

In the upcoming Amrita Café event, learn more about scientific methods for memorising Long theory, tough terms, and figures with award-winning memory trainer Dr. Tushar Chetwani. He goes into detail on how memory capacity is all about how it is trained to be used, as opposed to the incorrect belief that people are born with good or bad memory skills. He describes how to employ mnemonics, mind mapping, and other techniques to improve memory strength. Learn more about how memory training is important for kids' education and learning chances in this persistence. There’ll be no restriction as to the grade of students. Any young achiever can be highlighted in the session.

Mr. T. Hariharan
Class 10 Student
GTA Vidhya Mandir, Chennai

Ms. D.R. Deepa Priyadharshini
Class 10 Student
GTA Vidhya Mandir, Chennai

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My School My Pride

A webinar series mapping the journey of Young Achievers and Outstanding Students who have brought name and fame to their schools.

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day and age. The interactive session was of great value to the students since it provided answers to concerns about concentration, memory, retention, and recollection. He explains that memory, like bodily strength, is a case of "use it or lose it." The more you exercise your brain, the better you will be at processing and remembering information. There are several exercises also that you can do to boost your memory and retrieval capacity. Your memory, like bodily strength, improves when you exercise it and nurture it with a decent diet and other healthy practices. Memory, like bodily strength, is a case of "use it or lose it." The more you exercise your brain, the better you will be at processing and remembering information.

Dr. Chetwani described and proposed effective strategies for increasing productivity using simple and accessible examples. Goal setting, time management, and routine development were among the topics covered in depth by the students.

Amrita Café

Amrita Café by Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham is a forum for educators to meet the fraternity in education, academics, and research, both online and offline. The Café also serves as a forum for thought leaders to discuss their thoughts with professors and students.

Amrita Café is here to help you cope with the current educational landscape through a range of insightful, instructive, and motivating live programs. The institution intends to hold weekly seminars for instructors to assist them in dealing with the current educational environment, as well as supplementary sessions on related issues. It is a conversation for educators and instructors regarding current educational difficulties and solutions that may be taken to address them.

Through a variety of insightful, informative, and encouraging live programs, Amrita Café is here to help you cope with the present educational landscape.

amrita.edu/amritacafe

For Students, Teachers and Parents
We have not learnt how to use our Memory

The first fact that we have to accept is that we all have a terrific Memory, except that we have not learnt how to use our Memory! Just like muscular strength, your ability to remember increases when you exercise your memory and nurture it with a good diet and other healthy habits.

Memory, like muscular strength, is a “use it or lose it” proposition. The more you work out your brain, the better you’ll be able to process and remember information.

There are a number of steps you can take to improve your memory and retrieval capacity. Before discussing memory techniques, it is important to first discuss observation. The reason for this is that you can’t very well remember anything if you have not observed it. The eyes must see in order to interpret.

Do You Really See What You Look At?
For example, look at this box for a moment:

Now, what does it say? Does it say “Book on the Shelf”? Look again; I’d like you to be sure before we continue. Have you checked it out? You can look at it again, if you like. If you still think it says, “Book on the Shelf”, then you are like most of the people: You’re not Observing.

I’ve seen people look at it a number of times and that’s what they read. However, if you read it and point out each word as you do, you’ll see that it reads, “Book on the Shelf”! There is an extra “the” in the sentence. Perhaps you consider this example a bit tricky. Our minds tend to jump ahead, or to the end of the familiar phrases. But I still think it proves that most of us just don’t observe. Try this on your friends, you’ll agree.

If you don’t agree with that, can you answer the following questions? Do you know right now in which direction you turn the Key to open your front door? Do you know which light is usually on the top of the traffic signal, red or green? Do you know if the number six of your wrist watch is the Arabic 6 or Roman numeral VI? Do you know the colour of the socks you are wearing right now?

I think that everyone will agree that his or her capacity of observation requires some improvement. The first thing you have to learn is to look at things with attention and awareness.

Suggested activity to improve observation power:

Get a piece of paper & try to list everything in one of your rooms, without looking at the room, of course. List everything you can think of – pictures, furniture, bed etc. Now go into the room & check. Notice all the things you didn’t list. Try listing again. The list will get longer after each inspection of the room. Try the same with other rooms. Keep this up for a while, & your observation will improve outside as well as within your home. Think of a familiar street, one that you’ve walked on many times. See if you can list all the stores on that street. Try listing them in their...
correct order. Then check yourself. If you didn’t list all of them, try again. Then try it with other streets as well. Look in the window of one of those stores, without looking, see how many items you can list. Try picturing a friend of yours & describing his or her face in minute detail. Then check the next time you see that person. Notice now what you never noticed before. There are many ways in which you can test your observation, & the more you test it, the better it will become. I only want to assure you that if you look & listen with attention & awareness you’ll not only save yourself a lot of time & trouble, but you’ll improve your memory immediately.

**Keep Your Mind Open:**

“Nothing dies faster than a new idea in a closed mind”.

Let me explain to you the importance of this with the help of a puzzle which I would like you to try & solve. ‘Here is the Roman Numeral IX. Can you add just one mark or symbol to this Roman numeral, & change it into 6. If you have a closed mind, you cannot come up with the answer. Or you will not even try. If you haven’t been able to solve this puzzle, here is the answer. Just add ‘S’ before the letters IX & you will form the word SIX. Your memory knows IX & S & SIX. But only an open-minded person can link them together & come up with a new concept.

“The human mind is like a parachute, It only works when it is open”

Dr. Tushar Chetwani
Memory Trainer,
Memory Infinite, Lucknow

**Expert Talk**

Curated by
Dr. Shoury Kuttappa
Academic Manager and Counsellor,
Directorate of Admissions and Academic Outreach
Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham

**Self Managed Teams: Key Skills To Foster**

The best team members we have ever worked with likely had one thing in common: Strong self-management skills. As a Principal/ Director/ Manager, we do not want to be pulled into double-checking every detail of a programme or answering minute questions incessantly. After all, we have our own responsibilities to focus on. The best staff are the ones who manage themselves.

How do we optimise for this? When hiring and training a team, we may need to pay attention to our potential team member’s self-management skills. Here are some skills to look out for and continually hone within the team:
One of the most important self-management skills a team member can enact is how they manage their time. In particular, this means they internalise priorities well, and know precisely what to work on first. Our team can only make strong progress if everyone is each working on what is most important for the team, in any given moment. An employee with strong self-management skills can discern which activities should happen “now” or “later.”

They can decide that one task can be afforded to be done quickly, while another task requires more significant attention. We need to keep in mind, as a manager, it’s our responsibility to share information with the team about company vision and progress so that they have a frame for what to work on first. Otherwise, we leave even the person with the strongest self-management skills out to dry.

**02: Can They Give An Answer When There Is No Answer?**

Sometimes, an employee (or) staff is going to have to make the call. Perhaps we, as managers, are out on vacation or out of the office for part of the day. Or perhaps it’s a decision that an employee should be making, as it’s within their domain. In most situations, that shouldn’t require the direct report to call us on the phone or seek our approval: They should be able to come up with an answer, even when there is no answer. Effective self-management skills call for confident decision-making. The team should become comfortable with our company’s mission, vision, and values and know how to respond to situations accordingly.

In the book, The Effective Executive, by Peter Drucker, decision-making is frequently discussed as an important tenet in self-management. And specifically, the ability to include a variety of opinions in making sound decisions. Drucker in fact recommends to not start with fact – start with opinions. Once we lay out opinions, we can then work backwards to figure out what all the potential courses of action could be, before then settling on the best decision.

This ability to think decisions through on their own, from all angles, should be something to seek out in our team members – or teach them.

**03: How Do They React Under Pressure?**

An employee (or) staff can only prioritize tasks and make good decisions if they are able to manage their own stress, to begin with. Someone who has a propensity for angry outbursts – or perhaps worse, does not speak up when they are overwhelmed – will only hurt

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[1]: amrita.edu/algoqueen

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the rest of the team disproportionately. Ideally, we want to hire someone who is self-aware enough to understand how stress affects them. Stress affects all of us – none of us are immune to it. And it all affects us differently, to varying degrees.

In the book, No Hard Feelings: The Secret Power of Embracing Emotions at Work by Liz Fosslien and Mollie West Duffy, a concept is espoused to stop feeling bad about feeling bad. Don’t blame ourselves for being stressed out and/or not being happy all the time. They write: “A better version of the familiar adage “Grin and bear it” may be “Sometimes you have to bear it, but you shouldn't force yourself to grin.”

So yes, people are going to have to deal with stress at work but seeking out team members who understand how to pause, reflect, and calibrate their own reaction in a stressful situation is imperative. Figure out how the team members should be handling stress – and lend a helping hand.

04: How Proactive And Thorough Are They About Solving Problems?

Whether problems are technical in nature or interpersonal, an employee with strong self-management skills takes it upon themselves to solve them. At the end of the day, us as managers should not be the ones solving problems – we should simply be creating an environment for the team to solve problems on their own. As we interview, hire, onboard, and train the team, we will want to make sure our team member is both proactive and thorough in solving problems. Here are some questions to ask ourselves as a manager – or to pose to our employees – around how to ensure they’re able to solve problems well:

In short, problem-solving is important both to individuals and organisations because it enables us to exert control over our environment. We want the team member to have this ability to exert control over their own environment.

Effective time management and prioritisation, confident decision-making, graceful stress management, and strong problem solving are the biggest self-management skills we can be looking for when building our team. Let the people know that these skills are valued and part of why we hired them. It makes a world of difference for the individuals we hire to know these skills are valued by us as a leader, and it will drive them to maintain their self-management skills and keep them sharp.
Suggested Tool - Team Chartering:

It’s the practice of designing and building the team together. And even if it’s a team who has worked together for a long time, taking the time to go back and work through these steps helps. A team charter is an alignment tool. It’s an opportunity to identify agreements, expectations, and make commitments for how you’re going to work together. It brings clarity and purpose and promotes autonomy. It’s common that teams go to work but forget exactly what they are working towards, so this is a great way for any team to articulate how they are going to serve each other and the organisation.

A. Purpose:

Team chartering always starts with Purpose so that our entire team becomes aligned with what we are here to do. The purpose is the end result. Think of it this way: once we have accomplished what we are here to do as a team, how will the world be any different? Our purpose as a team then will nest up into the purpose of the organisation at large.

B. Mission

The mission is different than Purpose. The purpose is the ‘why’, our mission is the ‘how.’ How our team is actually going to achieve that purpose. It’s the shorter-term objectives and the results we want to achieve together.

C. Values

In addition to the purpose and mission, the team charter will also hold our values. And, again, like your Purpose, these values will nest up into the overarching values of the company. A great way to set team values is to have the entire team write down their personal values and bring those to a collaboration session.

Put them all up on a wall and then the team can filter through those and decide which ones make the most sense or are relevant to the mission and purpose they are looking to accomplish. Try to narrow it down to no more than ten. And when things get hard, bring the team back to these values, the mission, and the purpose.

D. Communication & Workspace

Another part of designing how the team will work together is specifying communication and workspace preferences. This is how the team will share information and communicate. Adaptive, high-performing teams work out in the open so that information is accessible to their teams at all times. So when we are identifying the communication and workspace pieces of our charter, we will want have the discussion of both
behaviours and tools. The team will want to decide which tools are available to the company so that we can work out in the open. But it’s important to remember that it is less about which tools we are going to use and more about how they allow us to accomplish our mission and purpose.

E. Meeting/Operating Cadence

With team chartering, we will also want to work out the team’s general operating rhythm. How will one organise the work and move it forward? How are we going to meet and for what purpose? Maybe we will have a live stand-up every day/once in three days to remove roadblocks that are coming up. Maybe we have 60-minute coordination meetings on Mondays to organise and align the work. Maybe we have Retrospective meetings on Fridays.

Meetings are a big one because it’s where we can waste most of our life if the meetings are not purposeful. So we want to be thoughtful about the purpose the meetings serve. There’s a ton of opportunity to increase performance — and morale — simply by being clear about the meetings we need as a team in order to do our work. Use retrospective meetings to continuously work on self-awareness, trust, and vulnerability with each other, discussing what we have learned and what we can do better as individuals and together.

F. Guardrails and Norms

The final piece to the team charter is setting guardrails and norms where we are identifying anything that may getting in the way of accomplishing our mission and purpose. For example, if the team burns out, they can’t do anything, so maybe we have a norm that we keep an eye on each other’s health, or we decide we will take mental health days once a month. Guardrails may be things like how much we can spend on travel or what the budget looks like in general. Important things to name and talk about as a team. Guardrails and norms are also some of the most dynamic parts of our team charter. When the team works through conflict, identify whether we need to adjust the guardrails and norms so that the team continue to be as autonomous and harmonious as possible.