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Rethinking Professional Communication Education for A Better Future

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University life is about more than earning a degree; it's also a valuable time to prepare for the workplace and the realities that come with it. We cannot be certain what the workplace will look like five or ten years from now. With rapid advances in technology, we may not even know what some future jobs will be called. The future is unknown and unpredictable. The only certainty is the importance of interacting with others, expressing thoughts and ideas, and communicating effectively with diverse people to accomplish a common goal. Communication is essential to completing tasks and handling the challenges and problems that arise along the way.

What should universities focus on? Should they prepare students to succeed academically, or should they also prepare them for the challenges they will face after graduation? Preparing students for the communication demands of the workplace is one area where this challenge becomes particularly clear. Preparing presentations, writing memos and letters, and conducting meetings may not be enough to prepare students for real-world communication. As educators, we should pay more attention to the gap between theory and practice in communication education.

A behavioural needs analysis of diploma students in a professional communication course showed that students demonstrated a high level of task completion but had low levels of participation and digital engagement in the classroom (Salim et al., 2025). Several factors may explain this, including students feeling disconnected from the learning process and/or lacking motivation. While it is important to assess whether students are completing assigned tasks, it is also important to assess what they experience while doing so.



This is where blended learning comes in. Learning occurs both inside and outside of the physical classroom. Students can access learning materials and engage in learning activities and tasks outside the physical classroom, including communicating and learning with peers. Students can take greater control of their learning by integrating various information and communication technologies. This is also supported by Mohd Salim et al. (2026), who highlighted the importance of autonomy, competence, and motivation in students' perceived outcomes when using mobile technologies for English language learning. Even when technology is integrated into learning, students still need guidance and opportunities to interact with their peers and engage meaningfully in the learning process.

Research has also shown the value of integrating these elements. For instance, Pinphet and Wasanasomsithi (2022) integrated communication strategy instruction, online tasks, and project work and reported positive impacts on their undergraduate engineering students' oral communication. Shi et al. (2024) also adopted project-based learning to enhance university students' English public speaking.

This approach also creates opportunities for students to learn from one another. Adnan et al. (2024) highlighted the role of informal learning communities among international postgraduate students in Malaysia. They noted that academically related groups, interpersonal contacts, and online groups helped students engage in joint activities and provided opportunities for social interaction and support. Through purposeful activities, students can strengthen their communication skills by interacting, listening to others, and resolving conflicts together.

The focus of the tasks is also important. Mohamed Khalil et al. (2025) used a sales display task to develop their students' English communication skills. They found that the task improved students' confidence and motivation to communicate in English. Choosing an appropriate task helps achieve the goal of integrating communication into language teaching.

Recent innovations also provide new opportunities to integrate diverse aspects of communication into the learning experience. Shah et al. (2024) used 360-degree videos to help students prepare for workplace meetings. Such innovations should not be incorporated merely for novelty; they should support students' classroom communication. Students should practise communication in realistic situations and settings.

Virtual reality (VR) or other innovations can help bring realism to the classroom. They can also expose students to communication situations that are less predictable and not entirely controlled by the instructor. These innovations should support students' learning in realistic settings rather than simply provide instructors with new classroom activities. Students should develop skills in reaching out to others and communicating to resolve issues and conflicts before completing their studies, with the help of teaching innovations.



There is no guarantee that a particular innovation will enable students to learn to rely on others to manage communication or navigate the many uncertainties of the real world. Through a range of realistic learning situations, students should develop the ability to address communication challenges that instructors cannot always anticipate or recreate. The focus, therefore, should be on creating learning situations that reflect the realities and uncertainties of communication beyond the classroom, while integrating teaching, learning, and innovation.

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