

A Study On The Challenges In Learning And Achieving Soft Skills

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ABSTRACT: Education in India largely focuses on imparting knowledge in the respective technical and core areas as well as value education keeping in view the demand of the high levels of people skills, also known as soft skills by the hiring companies. Despite the implementation of Soft Skills as a part of the academic curriculum, the latest census releases that more than eighty percent of the technical professionals is unable to cater to the requirements of the jobs due to lack of Soft Skills. The idea behind the study aims at identifying the problems involved in practicing soft skills by providing the reasons to analyze and overcome.

In fact, students held Soft skills as an instrumental source of employment via interviews. Thus it can be argued that unless comprehensive changes in the methods and methodologies of training and learning Soft Skills is unleashed, the country cannot march on further, in the trends of professional succession. Therefore measures to change the vision of the students on the importance and acquisition of soft skills are the need of the hour.

KEY WORDS: Misconception about Soft skills, Purpose of Instigating Soft skills, Experimental Learning.

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I. THE EMERGING TREND OF SOFT SKILLS

The popularity and importance of Soft Skills in the present job market has become so overwhelming that it is being taught as a separate course at the Master's level in several institutions. But students formulated a new based approach towards Soft Skills in building their careers aiming to identify the logics in projecting themselves and grabbing the opportunities. Thus Soft skills have been spread as a 'Competitive Weapon' to emerge students as competent individuals capable of managing their careers effectively but failing them in building their characters.

"A branding tool" is a technique that helps to build and refine the firm's reputation or increase the visibility of that reputation so also students prepared methodically Soft Skills as a measuring tool that develop them to project their distinctive attribute and increase the possibility of exhibiting their degree of excellence. Hence the emergence of Soft skills as a 'Branding Tool' is not so much a revolution as an evolution in empowering students with social skills to take along personality development.

II. AN ANALYSIS ON THE ACQUISITION OF SOFT SKILLS

One may be a computer whiz, a scientific genius, or a master of mathematical theories. However, to be successful, one need more than just expertise in one's own specialty. In fact, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employees (NACE), when participating employers were asked to name the attributes they seek in candidates, they responded as follows:

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| • 77.8% Leadership | • 67.5% Technical skills |
| • 77.8% <u>Ability to work in a team</u> | • 67.0% Verbal communication skills |
| • 73.4% Written communication skills | • 62.2% Computer skills |
| • 70.9% Problem-solving skills | • 62.1% Flexibility/adaptability |
| • 70.4% Strong work ethic | • 60.6% Interpersonal skills |
| • 68.0% Analytical/quantitative skills | |

Leadership is such an important trait that employers ranked it equally as important as a candidate's major, and when choosing between two candidates, leadership experience can be the deciding factor. In response to the demand for employees who also possess emotional intelligence, some postsecondary schools are incorporating soft skills in scientific and technical specialties. For example, Penn State's Engineering Department offers a career development class for junior and senior engineering students that includes such topics as teambuilding skills, communication skills, and leadership strategies.

III. THE SEVEN SOFT SKILLS ONE NEED TO ACQUIRE AS PER THE ANALYSIS

1. Leadership Skills.

Companies want employees who can supervise and direct other workers. They want employees who can cultivate relationships up, down, and across the organizational chain; assess, motivate, encourage, and discipline workers; build teams, resolve conflicts, and help to create the desired culture.

2. Teamwork.

Most employees are part of a team/department/division, and even those who are not on an official team need to collaborate with other employees. You may prefer to work alone, but it's important to demonstrate that you understand and appreciate the value of joining forces and working in partnership with others to accomplish the company's goals.

3. Communication Skills.

Successful communication involves five components . Verbal communication refers to your ability to speak clearly and concisely. Nonverbal communication includes the capacity to project positive body language and facial expressions. Aural communication is the ability to listen to and actually hear what others are saying. Written communication refers to your skillfulness in composing text messages, reports, and other types of documents. And visual communication involves your ability to relay information using pictures and other visual aids.

4. Problem Solving Skills.

Many people shirk from problems because they don't understand that companies hire employees to *solve* problems. Glitches, bumps in the road, and stumbling blocks are a part of the job. The ability to use your knowledge to find answers to pressing problems and formulate workable solutions will demonstrate that you can handle – and excel in – your job.

5. Work Ethic.

While you may have a manager, companies don't like to spend time micromanaging employees. They expect you to be responsible and do the job that you're getting paid to do, which includes being punctual when you arrive at work, meeting deadlines, and making sure that your work is error free. And going the extra mile shows that you're committed to performing your work with excellence.

6. Flexibility/Adaptability.

In the 21st century, companies need to change at the speed of light to remain competitive. So they want workers who can also shift gears or change direction as needed. Also, while the economy may be recovering, many companies are not fully staffed, so they want employees who can wear more than one hat and serve in more than one role.

7. Interpersonal Skills.

This is a broad category of "people skills" and includes the ability to build and maintain relationships, develop rapport, and use diplomacy. It also includes the ability to give and receive constructive criticism, be tolerant and respectful regarding the opinions of others, and empathize with them.

But suppose you don't have these skills? It's never too late to develop them. For example, you can learn a lot just by observing other people within the company who excel in these 7 areas. Also, offering to take on more responsibilities at work (serving on committees, planning events, etc.) can help you gain valuable experience. In addition, consider taking online soft-skills courses. Developing emotional intelligence will make you a more valuable employee, and increase your chances of career success.

THE NEED OF THE HOUR

1. To modify the study of soft skills into the acquisition of soft skills through experimental learning.
2. To spread the outcomes and consequences of the implementation of soft skills.
3. To blend career and character.
4. To make a progress in acquiring soft skills in order to balance personal life and professional life.

CHALLENGES IN LEARNING SOFT SKILLS

Skill development has become extremely popular today and is being emphasized in various professional courses including MBA, Engineering and civil services examinations and in several competitive job oriented courses level, but the trend has drastically failed to meet the demand of hiring companies. On the other hand it is observed that the students' objective of achieving Soft Skills is mismatching with the purpose of its instigation. The behavioral traits of the students and their consistency in making their profession is challenging, in spite of tremendous implementation of Soft skills programs through academic curriculum.

Ultimately, Soft Skills is a perception, wherein Students are driven into profession by rules but not by values. The challenge is to motivate a significant majority of students to perceive Soft Skills as an experimental learning which is important to achieve their aims in their lives.

THE MAJOR IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Students fail to know the actual meaning of Soft skills.
- Students not knowing their roles and responsibilities in acquiring Soft Skills.
- Students not realising the importance of soft skills.
- Students not realising the difference between Soft skills and Hard Skills

PROBLEMS THAT ARE TO BE CHECKED OUT

- Soft skills are measured in terms of theoretical/written exam.
- The skills taught are uniform and undifferentiated.
- There are no significant steps/methods to be followed.
- The acquisition of Soft skills is based on techniques but not by logics.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

A career without goal, a goal without plan and a plan with no implementation is the present status of the students in the professional and Technical courses resulting, poor performance in academics and drastic fall of sustainability in jobs. In spite of the awareness of the necessity of soft skills and the implementation of the same as a part of curriculum, most corporate companies complain the deficiency of soft skills. This is because the educational institutions have failed to promote the difference between the process of achieving soft skills and the achievements after possessing soft skills.

- Achieving Soft skills is referred to the process of receiving, understanding, realizing and utilizing the capabilities to project one’s prospects.
- Achievements after possessing soft skills is referred to the awards and rewards attained as a result of the application and execution of the skills.

Modern corporates look specifically for those candidates who can add value to their organization with their soft skills and the ability to get an edge over their competitors. Developing and using soft skills can make the difference between a job offer and enjoyment of new employment. This requirement of soft skills in a job has made the competition for job acquisition and job sustainability tougher.

Therefore to meet with the desired result there is a necessity of changing the process in procuring soft skills. Further adopting and promoting new methods and methodologies in training soft skills is highly essential.

IV. WHY SOFT SKILLS ARE DIFFICULT TO BE ACQUIRED

Soft skills are difficult to be acquired because it is a process of the human psyche and personality. It is a cluster of personality traits/characteristics which can be more acquired through social interactions, exposure and adaptability. Therefore the learning process of soft skills is basically informal wherein the required practice goes beyond classroom. **It deals with the concept of personality, its various traits and characteristics, and types that are significantly depending on interpersonal relations and communication.**

Unlike hard skills, which can be proven and measured, soft skills are intangible and difficult to quantify as the table below explicit the difference between hard skills and soft skills. Some examples of soft skills include analytical thinking, verbal and written communication, and leadership. Hence, a person with soft skills becomes more sociable and acceptable to the society at large. The spirit who is in you is more powerful than one who is in the world.

Differecnce Between HSD and SSD

Hard skills	Soft skills
Intelligence	Commonsense
Imparted	Self oriented
Achieved by applications	Achieved by spreading manners
Practicing formulae	Practicing mental process and stability
Experimentation	Experience
Creativity, Innovation	Adaptability
Development of the organization	Self Development
Achieved by reading	Achieved by realizing
Subject to the matter	Subject to the manners

In the present period, Students are urged to have not only the hard skills but also the soft skills. In order to develop the students’ soft skills, it is likely that it can be learned and improved in varied activities of curriculum besides the extra curriculum in professional education.

On the other hand the designed syllabus and the implementation of soft skills have revealed the concepts, scope and importance of soft skills. Although the students have successfully understood the theoretical meaning and concepts of soft skills, they fail to cope up with the demands of the corporate world which is revealed by the analysis made by the job market.

V. THE PROCESS AND PROSPECTS OF IMPROVING SOFT SKILLS

The challenges in learning and acquiring Soft Skills is to be conducted focusing on the state and status of the students wherein theoretical concepts, ideas and ideologies are to be practiced as a process of learning and acquiring them. The first step of learning Soft skills is to understand the attainability of the same.

The working professionals, desiring to get soft skills to start an independent practice in order to enhance their prospects in current job or to look for better opportunities in education, training, learning and development or similar sectors. In response to the demands of knowledge, application, preparedness and acquisition of soft skills, students' participation may not be generalized.

Integrating the soft skills elements in the lesson will enable the students to better prepare for the examinations and the real world. Further the applied methods help to understand the alterations and develop amendments in acquiring the required soft skills through a modified protocol.

VI. CONCLUSION

Soft skills are essential in today's challenging professional world but acquisition of the same is misconstrued in the process of teaching and learning these skills. Therefore it is important for one to personally feel the ownership of the acquisition of soft skills. The real life learning are the best examples of acquiring Soft skills. Thus it aims at bridging the gap between the teaching-learning situation in the classroom and the professional expectations current in the industry.

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