

RESEARCH ARTICLE



SOFTSKILLS THROUGH ELT CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

The introduction of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG) has created an opportunity for multinational firms to set up their facilities in India, leading to employment opportunities at every level and change in the recruitment process as well. Until recently, there was a general opinion that technical knowledge and certification are the prerequisites for an ideal candidate for well-paying jobs in these multinational companies. But this is not true any longer as there is an unquestionable paradigm shift in the demands of the corporate world.

Proficiency in soft skills is a mandatory requirement for any professional working in a global business environment. Employers expect the workforce to possess excellent soft skills apart from the knowledge and expertise in their respective technical field. In the present day workplace, individuals require a range of occupationally specific knowledge and skills, personal attributes and attitudes, the ability to transfer knowledge and skills to different situations, etc. Large scale surveys of soft skills reveal that the work force has to be constantly upgraded in terms of appropriate skills required. The leaders of industry have reiterated that in this changing milieu, they now seek potential candidates, i.e., graduates with sound technical knowledge as well as efficiency in soft skills. This can be achieved by giving the students adequate and appropriate training in soft skills, so that they are industry-ready and become productive from the day one.

It is the institution's responsibility to prepare our budding young graduates for the job market and to meet LPG challenges by reforming the curriculum, developing courses of study in order to increase students' understanding of global issues and cultural differences. Keeping this in mind the researcher aims to introduce Softskills through task based approach to rural based students at the undergraduate level.

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INTRODUCTION

The introduction of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG) has created an opportunity for multinational firms to set up their facilities in India, leading to employment

opportunities at every level and change in the recruitment process as well. Until recently, there was a general opinion that technical knowledge and certification are the prerequisites for an ideal candidate for well-paying jobs in these

multinational companies. But this is not true any longer as there is an unquestionable paradigm shift in the demands of the corporate world. As Carole (2002) puts it, "More and more corporations around the world recognize that, in order to gain a competitive advantage, they also need to make sure their people know how to handle themselves at work and how to relate with their customers and peers"[1]. To achieve this magical transformation, soft skills are essential.

Definition of Softskills

There is no precise definition of 'soft skills,' but in general, the term is used to describe on-the-job abilities that go beyond an employee's job description. For example, a computer programmer's ability to create and read programs would generally be described as a hard skill, whereas his or her ability to work effectively with co-workers, communicate with clients and manage projects would come under the soft skills banner. The term Soft Skills implies critical thinking, interpersonal communication and innovation. These are treated on par with technical skills and expertise. Soft skills are undetermined by oneself, but it is in detailed process to determine one's efficiency. It is a sociological term which refers to the cluster of personality traits, social graces, and facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark people to varying degrees. Soft skills complement hard skills, which are the technical requirements of a job.

Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills

A distinction is maintained between soft skills and hard skills. While hard skills refer to technical and academic skills, soft skills refer to wide-ranging of personal and interpersonal skills. Academic and technical skills can be more easily defined, observed and measured. However, the measurement of personal and interpersonal skills requires certain complex factors which are difficult to define, observe and measure. In short, it is intangible.

1. Hard Skills

Skills, Hard are technical skills like writing programs for computers, preparing a balance sheet, working on a particular machine for a particular process in a manufacturing workshop, acting in a television serial or a cinema film, carrying out a

surgery, etc. One must have proficiency in these skills in order to become a good professional in one's own chosen fields and to earn a decent living. Hard skills are important and it should not be underestimated. They are one's bread and butter skills. Hard skills are academic skills, that needs experience and a vision to expertise, whereas soft skills are entirely different. They are self-developed, interactive, communicative and above all it expects humanity which explodes transferable skills. Literature is one's field that suggests 85% of softskills through all emotions and feelings of various genres and mere 15% of hardskills are used to give a completion in literature. Nowadays the career market wants a readymade humans to retain and promote, where they are highly dependable, resourceful, ethical, and self-directed, having effective communication, eagerness to work, learn and have the very special quality (ie) positive attitude.

2. Soft Skills

Soft skills are behavioural in nature. It deals on how to communicate with the people, how good one in making business presentations, how empathetic one stands with the people when come across, how to work as a team member, how to manage the time well and so on. All these skills make a dynamic difference. One can achieve a higher degree of success if they equip themselves with soft skills.

Soft skills in real makes a vibrant difference in the external and internal personality of the individual. People who possess soft skills of higher order are more sophisticated, more cultured, more reformed and are found to be more successful in every walk of life. In addition to being perfect in hard skills, one needs to be perfect in their soft skills too. Thus, soft skills improve one's emotional intelligence (EI).

Soft Skills: Vital Demand of the LPG Era

Soft skills have enabled mankind to progress in career and life. It is impossible to add value if one does not possess soft skills like Highly specialized skills, advances in technology, amazing inventions, spectacular breakthroughs the arts and sciences. Soft skills are very important not only for smooth running of a business enterprise, but it is equally important for the success and growth of

individual executives and professionals. In the age of globalization, soft skills are of paramount importance. The lack of proper soft skills creates barriers and distortion in communication which can have some very negative image of any individual for their future endeavors.

Proficiency in soft skills is a mandatory requirement for any professional working in a global business environment. Employers expect the workforce to possess excellent soft skills apart from the knowledge and expertise in their respective technical field. In the present day workplace, individuals require a range of occupationally specific knowledge and skills, personal attributes and attitudes, the ability to transfer knowledge and skills to different situations, etc. Large scale surveys of soft skills reveal that the work force has to be constantly upgraded in terms of appropriate skills required. The leaders of industry have reiterated that in this changing milieu, they now seek potential candidates, i.e., graduates with sound technical knowledge as well as efficiency in soft skills. This can be achieved by giving the students adequate and appropriate training in soft skills, so that they are industry-ready and become productive from the day one.

Soft Skills through Task based Approach

It is the institution's responsibility to prepare our budding young graduates for the job market and to meet LPG challenges by reforming the curriculum, developing courses of study in order to increase students' understanding of global issues and cultural differences. Keeping this in mind the researcher aims to introduce Softskills through task based approach to rural based students at the undergraduate level.

Task- 1

The students were asked to write an essay about the problems encountered by them in the college.

Duration:- 30 minutes, Skills aimed at:- Written communication

Description:- 50 students took part in the task. The students wrote an essay regarding the problems faced by them in the college. The researcher has gone through the essay written by the students. The teacher corrected the essay written by the students and pointed out the mistakes committed by them. A sample of one is attached. The teacher

listed out the major problems faced by the students on the flipchart.

1. Inadequate bus facility during peak hours
2. Need of interval in between class hours.
3. Less facilities to pursue extracurricular activities.
4. More space needed for two wheeler and cycle parking.
5. A Waiting hall facility should be extended.

Outcome:- 1. The students attempted to write essays on their own and gained confidence to write more essays like this more of this nature..

2. The students came to know about the mistakes committed by them through spelling, construction of sentences, punctuation etc. It helped them to reduce mistakes in years to come..

Task -2

Group discussion has been conducted among the students regarding the problems listed out on the flipchart.

Duration:- 30 minutes, Skills aimed at:- Problem solving, Writing, Decision making, Speaking

Procedure:- In continuation to the task 1 the researcher asked the interested students to participate in the group discussion. Only four students took interest in participating in the discussion. The researcher motivated the students to participate in the discussion. Finally, eight students took part in it.

Outcome:-

1. The students discussed the problems among themselves and come out with possible suggestions and remedies to the problems.
2. Only five students were able to speak in the discussion. The rest of the students were mum till the 11th minute.
3. They gained confidence to participate and speak in the discussion.
4. Out of their speech it is very clear that they are able to solve the problem. The students decided to approach the head of the institution to provide the facilities to pursue extracurricular activities, etc.,
5. The students developed the analyzing capacity and how to arrive at a decision and also it improves their writing ability.

6. The students decided to write a letter to the managing director, state transport corporation Gobichettipalayam branch to increase the bus facilities during the peak hours.

Task-3

In continuation to the task 2 the teacher gave a presentation about performance of the students in the group discussion and essay writing.

Duration:- 15 minutes, Skills aimed at:- Listening, analyzing, presentation skills

Procedure:-The students were given questionnaire on the list of softskills as designed by the researcher. The students were asked to analyze the components used by the researcher.

Outcome:-The students learned how to introduce the topic, how to organize the topic, how to manage the time as well. On the whole the students learned the art of presenting a topic.

CONCLUSION

On the whole, the students responded to each activity and took active participation in it. The teacher found that more activities like this sort would help the students to face the career life in a better and concrete way.

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