

A Study on the Soft Skill Development Training Programme and Its Impact on Engineering Students

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Abstract

The education as well as the market scenario is changing very fast. A decade ago, those individuals who had a brilliant academic record with added work experience were well sought after by most of the corporate institutions. But today hard skills and experience are not sufficient enough for the ingress and escalation in the corporate world. Employers prefer to hire and promote those persons who are resourceful, ethical, and self directed with good communication/ soft skills. Dearth of soft skills in the candidates has resulted in low hiring by corporate. In spite of such great significance of soft skills, many management colleges are reluctant to incorporate soft skills training in the curriculum of management courses. This paper is based on an empirical study conducted between students regularly exposed to soft skills sessions and those who are deprived of the same.

INTRODUCTION:

The education scenario in the recent times is changing very fast. No matter how well versed an individual think he is with respect to the technical skills he will not get success in the corporate world, if you cannot communicate well with your colleagues or clients". Communication skill is an important soft skills element and plays an important task in the business world.

According to Serby Richard (2003) modern corporate requirements are such that they look specifically for those candidates who can add value to their organization with their soft skills and the ability to develop and use soft skills which 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. All those candidates who wish to get an edge over their competitor are expected to refine their soft skills so that they will be able to emerge as a winner irrespective of the hurdles that they face in the recruitment process or during the tenure of employment. This view point is substantiated by Hewitt Sean (2008) that, employers value soft skills because they are just as good as indicator of job performance as traditional job qualifications. So today's professionals need to encompass a high soft skills quotient, apart from the domain knowledge in order to succeed in this competitive era .

Irrespective of the professional qualification and apart from the domain knowledge, today's professionals need to possess a high Soft Skills quotient in order to succeed in this competitive era. Hard skills contribute to only 15% of ones success while remaining 85% is made by soft skill (Watts M and Watts R. K, 2008). In spite of such great relevance of soft skills in the present corporate world some of the management colleges in Jaipur are yet to introduce soft skills in their curriculum.

This article intends to give an insight to these management colleges on the importance of incorporating soft skills in their curriculum, to ensure commendable placements. This paper is based on an empirical comparison conducted between the students regularly exposed to soft skills sessions and those not exposed to the same, with respect to their overall soft skills levels.

DEFINITION:

Soft skills are essentially people's skills or personality specific skills. According to Hewitt Sean (2008) soft skills are "non-technical, intangible, personality specific skills" which determines an individual's strength as "a leader, listener and negotiator, or as a conflict mediator". Soft skills are the traits and abilities of attitude and behaviour rather than of knowledge or technical aptitude (Tobin, 2006).

Soft skills are different and distinct from Hard Skills. Soft skills are those skills that add more value to the hard skills adorned by an individual. Martin Carole (2008) comments that hard skills are more "along the lines of what might appear on your resume" whereas soft skills are "cluster of personality traits, social graces, personal habits, friendliness and optimism." Soft skills are not a substitute for hard or technical skills, but they act as harmonizing skills that serve up to unlock the prospective for highly effective performance in people even with good hard skills.

The Center for Career Opportunities at Purdue University defines soft skills as "the cluster of personality traits, social graces, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark each of us to varying degrees." Their list of soft skills includes work ethic, courtesy, teamwork, self-discipline, self-confidence, conformity to prevailing norms, and language proficiency.

Over the years, researchers have developed systematic procedures for training evaluation. Some of them are presented here

- Kirkpatrick's four level model
- Hamblin's five level model
- Warr's framework for evaluation
- Virmani and Premila's model of evaluation
- Peter Bramely's model of evaluation
- David Reay's approach to evaluation
- Aima Zhang's peer evaluation model

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NEED OF DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS AND EVIDENCE RESEARCH

Superior soft skills play a very important role in this vigorous commercial epoch. Today there is a huge mass of qualified job seekers existing in the society and the competition within them for job acquisition and job sustainability is becoming tougher. To get an edge over the competitors they are left with no other choice but to add worth to their hard skills with soft skills to exhibit their true potential. If one has got advanced soft skills then definitely he will be able to establish themselves as distinct amongst other management job seekers.

Concerning the importance of including soft skills in management colleges, Thacker and Yost (2002) noted that students require training to be effective team members. Employers often come across that "business graduates lack good team leadership skills". Similarly, according to Knell and et.al. (2007) employers are continually asking for a work force rich in creativity, communication skills and cultural understanding.

SOFT SKILL TRAINING:

Irrespective of the target group or the institution where it is imparted, soft skills training programmes aims to improve a whole range of skills, like assertiveness, negotiation skills, communication skills and the skill to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships. Soft skills are perceived as those capabilities that are inherent in an individual. These competencies exist in every individual to a particular level. But if these skills are not used or if the individual who adorns these skills is unaware of it then that individual will never be able to utilize his / her inherent skills. The aim of any soft skills training programme is to remove these blocks or the barriers that prevent the individual from utilizing his/ her skills. Soft skills training will make the individual aware of his / her hidden capabilities and to refine it for the overall development and success of the individual. Everyone can benefit from the soft skills training irrespective of the skills they have inherited.

THE STUDY:

This paper aims to find out the significant improvement that soft skills training can bring forth in the life of a management student. The nature of impact of soft skills training on management students was measured by comparing their soft skills levels before and after the intervention.

OBJECTICE:

1. To find out the nature of impact of the soft skills training on the soft skills levels of management students.
2. To find out the major soft skills components that can be improved after the exposure to soft skills training

ANALYSIS PLAN:

The study assumes that both Experimental group and the Control group were homogeneous at the time of constitution and any significant differences found in the experimental group, compared to control group with respect to their soft skills is due to the impact of the soft skills training. The significance and the nature of impact will be calculated using paired samples't' test. SPSS 17 was used for the same. The outcomes of this analysis will prove or disprove hypothesis No.1. Researcher collected the data from both the experimental group and control group at the same point of time to avoid the influence of any extraneous variables like personality development sessions, placement related training, and maturity of the respondents.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

Limitation of the study was that the researchers were not able to impose equal control over both the experimental group and control group with respect to their overall life experiences, personality traits as well as the learning from daily classroom exposures.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

Average soft skills value was inferred separately for the experimental group and control group. First objective of the research was to find out the nature of impact of the soft skills training on the management students of the experimental group.

The impact of soft skills training was deliberated using the impact score, calculated as the difference between the post-test scores found separately for the control and experimental group. 't' test was performed to find out whether there is any statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of control group and experimental group. The outcome of the 't' test will prove or disprove the formulated hypotheses No 1.

CONCLUSION:

Today, new generation managers are expected to adorn soft skills along with the technical/ hard skills. The modern corporate managers should have the ability to understand situations, fill in the missing conversations, ability to connect and coordinate, and should know how to enlist the support from others. The ability to work in team and good interpersonal skills definitely add significance in the growth and promotion of corporate executive. The research results show that soft skills of the students can be refined if management colleges impart the adequately framed and standardized soft skills training sessions to them .

Paper proves that by regularly exposing students to soft skills training sessions, we can significantly enhance the soft skills of the students and in turn their employability. Those From the above figure it is evident that management students who where exposed to soft skills training adorned above average score with respect to all parameters of soft skills. Assuming homogeneity of control group and experimental group with respect to the extraneous factors the above results are attributable as the outcome of the soft skills training undergone by the experimental group. This shows that soft skills training can bring about significant improvement in students with respect to almost all the major soft skills components.

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