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Employability with soft skills: An overview

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Abstract

India has a lot of manpower resources. The present day youth are qualified enough to make use of wide scope of opportunities open before them. But they need to shape themselves to get into such jobs by acquiring soft skills. This paper is an attempt to emphasize the necessity of incorporating soft skills training programs in curriculum as well as various working sectors. It also highlights the objectives of soft skills and various teaching methodologies to be applied.

Keywords: soft skills, training program, personality development.

1. Introduction

Introducing the soft skill materials to the graduates in their syllabus would help students to understand the importance of soft skills for their employability. The soft skill training program should be imparted on to all kinds' levels of institutions like Engineering and Arts and Science colleges. Employability skills are a set of skills and behaviors that are necessary for every kind of job. Employability skills are sometimes called as soft skills, foundational skills, work readiness or job readiness skills.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the employability skills of students through soft skills. In today's competitive world there is a problem of employability due to the lack of soft skills. Effective training of soft skills can guide the students to improve their employability skills. Soft skill plays an important role in promoting job opportunities among students. Soft skills teach students to improve personal qualities, habits, and attitudes to interact with others. Employers consider soft skills as employability skills because they are needed to get along with co-workers and customers. An individual job performance and career success depends on the effective practice of soft skills.

Professional communication

The professional setting is entirely new to the beginners, and they know the fact that it is not easy to fit into such a challenging atmosphere. Then the ideas given in the soft skill text books prescribed to the students help them to learn and acquire knowledge about the professional skills through. The term soft skills refer to a group of skills and personal qualities that present day employers look for value in their employees. Soft skills relate to communication skills, both spoken and written, positive personality traits, social skills, personal attitudes etc.

The soft skill texts prescribed to the under graduation level highlights various methods of skills like basic employability skills as well as professional skills as mentioned below.

Foundational Skills

- Being organized.
- Punctuality.
- Being dependable.
- Having a positive attitude toward work.
- Exerting high levels of effort and perseverance.
- Completing tasks on time and accurately.
- Seeking out information to improve skills.
- Being flexible and adaptable.
- Completing all tasks, even if unpleasant.

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- Understanding dress code or uniform guidelines.
- Maintaining personal hygiene.

Communication Skills

Reading and understanding written materials.

Listening, understanding, and asking questions.

Following directions.

Clarity in speech and Writing.

Learning required technology and use appropriately.

Problem Solving and Critical Thinking

- Accepting change.
- Willing to start, stop, and switch duties.
- Working calmly in busy environments.
- Starting tasks without prompting.
- Asking questions to solve problems and do better.

Teamwork

- Being comfortable working with people of diverse backgrounds.
- Being sensitive to other peoples' needs.
- Taking responsibility for own share of work.
- Contributing to team goals.

Ethical and Legal Responsibilities

- Taking responsibility for own decisions and actions.
- Understanding and following company rules and procedures.
- Being honest and trustworthy.
- Acting professionally and with maturity.

Leadership

- Coaching and mentoring others.
- Be willing to take risks.
- Willing to negotiate.
- Motivating and directing people as they work.
- Demonstrating efficiency.
- Seeking to simplify processes.
- Saving time or money for the company by analyzing business needs.
- Building partnerships and teams with coworkers.

Career Development

- Learning new skills and take on different projects.
- Serving on work committees.
- Taking initiative and work with little supervision.
- Understanding your industry and common business practices.
- Aligning your work goals with the mission and vision of your employer.

The general employability skills above mentioned helps to secure any kind of job. In addition, anyone who wishes to advance in their career and people working in higher-level jobs should have the following professional skills. One of the most important soft skills that employers look for is communication skills, or proficiency in the use of language. This means the ability to read, write and speak correct English. Oral communication includes presentation, public speaking and telephone skills and Computer skills are also a part of soft skills. Following are the personal and interpersonal skills needed by leaders. A number of these skills are skills that are desired by all individuals. Several are unique to leaders working along other employees. Following is the list of eight such skills:

1. Collaboration/teamwork;
2. Communication skills;
3. Initiative;
4. Leadership ability;
5. People development/coaching;
6. Personal effectiveness/personal mastery;
7. Planning and organizing; and

Listening skills play a vital role in soft skills. Only by having keen interest in listening, a communicator can become a good speaker. Most people fail to communicate because they do not listen to the views of others. In order to win the respect of employers and colleagues it is important to develop the right work ethic. This involves the attitude or belief in the work place. Having positive attitude towards one's work gives professional satisfaction and success. Self-confidence is another valuable quality with in one self, having belief in one self. Helps to understand the own talents and. Being polite and handling the work commitments will give a due worth of work success.

Most of the work in any organization do not depend on a single person, hence soft skills promote team work rather than depending on a single person. As an individual along with the other group members one should function with shared aim and responsibilities, he will get a wide knowledge on collaborative ideas. It involves sharing views and ideas with others in the group and it gives the best possible solutions to solve problems. Most importantly, in order to function effectively as a member of the team one must learn to share both praise and blame with the other team member. Success in work is closely linked to negotiation skills that one possesses. As while interacting with colleagues and clients in an organization, it becomes necessary to make people agree to our suggestion.

Self-discipline is important at work and is a personal quality in life. It is a most effective form of discipline which comes from within oneself. It will help us to make work a pleasure if one sets his or her own strict standards like punctuality, quality of work and loyalty to employers. Self-motivation makes things without anybody else's support. Everyone understands the significance of leadership qualities from soft skills. They involve the ability to take the initiative to motivate and lead by reasons rather emotion to resolve conflicts, also to accept blame when things go wrong, to handle emergencies and unforeseen situations, and to display good organization skills at work.

Managing time contributes a great success at work. Learning to use time wisely will help you work faster and better. It involves prioritizing tasks to be completed in a day by delegating work and organizing work practices well. Managing your time well will help an individual stay on schedule and meet deadlines. Unnecessary stress and anxiety will only have negative effect on your work and so it is a must to learn how to manage time. One can analyze the reasons for feeling stressed through careful time management and by making sure that you have a healthy diet, exercise and enough time to relax, we can overcome stress.

The ability to respond positively to the feedback on one's work, with out getting defensive or accepting unfair criticism meekely is a soft skill that will help to make a place for yourself in an organisation. Soft skills help to handle several tasks together at one time and also to coordinate between different people. This indicates that peer assessment is of adequate reliability and validity in a wide variety of applications. Peer assessment of writing and peer assessment using marks, grades, and tests have shown positive formative effects on student achievement and attitudes. These effects are as good as or better than the effects of teacher assessment. Peer assessment of presentation skills, group work or projects, and professional skills enhances the improvement of students. Computer-assisted peer assessment is an emerging growth area.

Students studying in under graduation level need to have various skills like public speaking skills. A lot of plan is required to make a good speech. An effective speech depends on three factors the topic, purpose and audience. A good speaker must have clear view about the audience, their level of understanding and interest. The topic should be of interest to the audience. There should be a specific purpose behind an informative speech. A good speech must have an effective ending too. Thus the ability to render speech helps a student to face criticisms and praises. Students should be encouraged to participate in programs and deliver welcome address, vote of thanks in order to develop their speech strength. Soft skill promotes not only the growth of a student's speaking capacity but kindles them to participate in conference and seminars. Attending

conferences and seminar will give a student a complete knowledge of a particular subject.

This is a world of fierce competition and getting a job is a challenging task. There are endless number of educated youth waiting to achieve a foothold in some important service of the country like administrative, managerial or technical. Hence candidates are called for interviews to assess and evaluate their past and present performance. An interview is therefore an important for the employer to assess the worth of the candidate. The main qualities the interviewer looks for in a candidate are: a pleasing personality, good communication skills, knowledge, loyalty and dedication, your probable contribution for the growth of the company.

Points to remember during the interview:

- Be on time.
- Wear neat cloths.
- Be yourself.
- Be brief.
- Keep the interviewer's attention.
- Avoid the use of slang.
- Be poised.
- Be well-mannered.
- Listen carefully.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Be consistent in your claims.

Employers now days are not satisfied with just mere interviews in order to assess a candidate's abilities. They also assess the behavior of a candidate in a group. A group discussion has three major objectives to test the candidate's subject knowledge, to check his/her communication skills, to assess his/her personal traits, leadership qualities, spirit of accommodation, tolerance and self-confidence. Soft skills are learned behaviours which require training and focussed interest. Soft skills will enable students with a strong conceptual and practical framework to build, develop and manage teams. They play an important role in the development of the students' overall personality, thereby enhancing their career prospects. Soft skills include concepts such as problem solving, team work and adaptability to change. Soft skills are essential qualities required for full development of an individual. Grooming of the students with soft skills will enable them to successfully take part in various selection procedures.

The teaching methods in the soft skills training should include lectures, projects, role plays, quizzes, and various other participatory sessions. The emphasis will be on learning by practicing all sorts of soft skill programs. Since the method of training is practical and highly interactive, the students imbibe the skills and attributes. The students will not only learn the skills and attributes but also develop their interpersonal skills over a period of time. Internalization ensures that the skills and attributes become part of the students' nature. Changes are bound to occur in their behavior and outlook, and these will make them more self-assured and confident. Moreover, the behavior changes will be gradual and natural and will not appear artificial. Thus, the changes in them will be genuine and positive.

Effective communication and interpersonal skills are crucial to increase employment opportunities and to compete successfully in the business environment. The real key to the effectiveness of professionals is their ability to put their domain knowledge into effective practice. In this context soft skills have a crucial role to play. To enhance the soft skill traits among students some training modules have to be made at college under graduate level.

To conclude, the soft skills program is about enabling and empowerment. With these training programs students have a smooth transition from aspiring students to young successful managers. Therefore this paper throws light on the need of soft skills training programs in colleges and workplaces. The paper also puts forward some suggestions for making above initiatives more effective for developing students fully equipped with relevant soft skills. Improving soft skills gives opportunities to interact with

others, will expose you to people with different backgrounds and experience, select different people to work with group projects.

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