



The Role of Soft Skills in Enhancing Employability of Technical Graduates: A Study

A.K. Mathur

Professor, Department of Applied Sciences,
Amrapali Institute of Technology and Sciences, Haldwani, (Uttarakhand) India

ABSTRACT: 'What oft was felt but never so well required- is the true spirit required in a technical expert so that he goes out in this wide, wide world as a 'weapon polished and keen'. The present study is the result of a keen observation of the young graduates seen roaming about in the streets, kicking the shoe-toes, desperate with lost luster in their eyes as they find no 'green grass' on either side. Their faces describe the tragedy that they have missed 'something' that might give them an upper edge, that there is something rotten 'in the name of Demark'. In this conceptual paper an effort is made to highlight the importance of soft skills requirements initiated due to employers' complaint about the lack of soft skills among technical graduates.

Index Terms: Soft skills, Human interaction skills, Communication skills, market requirements.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nobility and dignity, self abasement and Servility, insolence and vulgarity are reflected in the face and in the attitude of the body whether still or in motion

...Socrates

About a decade ago the Knowledge Commission (2006) headed by Sam Pitroda has pointed out that many students graduating from different institutions and universities are not employable due to their lack of employability skills. Higher education, especially technical education, needs to be integrated with the finishing school concept of imparting employable skills, more so, soft skills. A 'Professional' is a holistic term, and, incorporates into its notions of an individual who possesses not just the knowledge and information which go into the profession, but also the requisite skills to execute the various tasks related to one's sphere of activity. A modern technocrat should be well-versed in skills such as communication, organizational aspect, on-site management, human resource management etc; and equally important, in other related skills of self-motivation, decision-making and time-management.

II. GENERAL REVIEW, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

We are hired for our technical skills, but fired for the lack of soft skills; so said Shiv Khera, founder of Mathur

Qualified Learning Systems Inc. USA and a motivational management Guru. It has been estimated that it took a hundred years in the nineteenth century for knowledge to double itself, whereas, today, it is doubling every year. Technology and technicians can always be purchased with money; but the wealthiest person in the world must build and create relationships. The organizations and persons that are likely to succeed are the ones who have excellent soft skills. Experts believe that today ninety percent of graduates are unemployed or under employed. Our universities give the certificates, but the right attitudes and values are missing. Soft skills or Behavioral Skills training have definitely a philoso[hy behind it. The purpose of training an individual is to try to enhance his/ her "existing skills set", to try to transform the individuals into better performing individuals and above all preparing them to be "more employable".

When Joseph Nye coined the term 'soft power' almost four decades ago, not many foresaw the range and impact of that power. Experts classified power as soft and hard and even culture too as pull (soft) and push (hard). Materials, weapons and laws come under hard culture category while ideas, creative work and culture belong to the realm of soft culture. Soft Skills have assumed considerable importance in both the academic and administrative world. To many it would be heartening to note that India is a 'super power' in

English language; so crucial for modern computer-dominated technology. No country in the world has so many English knowing people as India has and that is one of India's major strengths today. Soft skills are considered vital for the development of human personality and professional excellence- Knowledge is power but culture is a shock absorber for both the individual and the institution in which he or she works.

The training in soft skills is, therefore, vital for quality education which many top universities and educational institutions are vying with one another to provide for the benefit of the younger generation.

The Collins English Dictionary defines the term "soft skills" as 'desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge. They include common sense, the ability to deal with people and a positive flexible attitude.' In the 21st Century soft skills are a major differentiator, a **sine-qua-non** for employability and success in life. A study conducted by the Harvard University noted that 80% of achievements in career is determined by soft skills and only 20% by hard skills. Experts say soft skills training should begin for persons when they are students, to perform efficiently in their academic environment as well as in their future work place. A public interest study conducted by Mc Donald's in UK predicted that over half a million people will be held back from job sectors by 2020 due to lack of soft skills. In 2016, Bonnie Urciuoli hypothesized "skills" with occupational demands of neo-liberal economies, workers are required to "own their skills" and successfully market them to employers. Training to rewarding for personal habits or traits such as dependability and conscientiousness can yield significant return on investment for an organization. For this reason, soft skills are increasingly sought out by employers in addition to standard qualifications. Studies by Stanford Research Institute and the Carnegie Mellon Foundation among Fortune 500 CEO's established that 759 of long term job success resulted from soft skills and only 25% from technical skills (Sinha 2008). Hence soft skills are as important as cognitive skills (John, 2009, Zehr, 1998). In the research paper, 'Importance of Soft Skills in Your Career' Urban Pro asserts "for engineering and manufacturing sector, as in any other type of jobs, besides technical skills, the management is keenly looking forward to a distinct kind of skill in its potential employees. Whatsoever role you may be looking forward in your organization, possessing strong soft skills can put you a step ahead in the competition and make you a true professional.

While working in key areas of your profession, soft skills make the following four major contributions:

- Making you an effective communicator
- Helping you emerge as a strong leader
- Helping you develop lateral thinking (taking critical decisions at challenging times) and,
- Helping you become a key influencer.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Studies reveal that when compared to task and machine interaction skills, human interactions are the most required. Possible explanation to this result stems from the enormous change the software industry has gone through in the last three decades. Originally, the most important qualifications of engineers and technicians were related to their technical capabilities. However, with the rapid technological developments and the pivotal role computers play in the organizational success and development these qualifications have changed. In the present scenario our engineers are involved in many activities of the organization, communicating with users across all functional units. And this requires excellent communication and presentation skills.

A general analysis of the 'situation vacant' type of advertisements has revealed that 41.2% of the soft skills advertisements required human interaction skills is very significant. The bottom-line is that the academic institutes should embrace this change and modify the learning outcomes to include developing and enhancing the soft skills. How well one interacts with others influences the success of his career.

"If you want a job, have technical skills. If you want a career, have people skills."

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