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A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE ON SOFT SKILLS
WITH AN EMPHASIS ON ITS NEED AND DEVELOPMENT
IN PROFESSIONAL COURSES



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ABSTRACT

The paper reviews the literature on soft skills with an emphasis on its need and development in professional courses. These reviews have been sourced from well known database such as Pro Quest Dissertation and Theses, On Line Surveys and Journals and have been subjected to a thorough content analysis. Thus, the tool has been used for the present research is "Literature Survey". In this age of globalization it is very essential to develop soft skills in students along with hard skills for their good placement and professional growth. These skills include a set of abilities or talents that they should have to survive in their workplace and to get promotions in their professional life. Therefore, students need to develop a good personality, effective use of verbal and non-verbal communication, spoken English, presentation skills, understanding of professional ethics, techniques to manage the time and stress, skills to manage a team in a desired direction and the skills to discuss in a group logically. Through this study the author further explains that there is a gap between the skills delivered in the professional courses and the skills required in a workplace. Thus, there is an immense need of soft skills' training for the students in professional courses with the collaboration of industries and educational institutions to fill this gap for the workplace readiness of the students.



KEYWORDS :professional education, soft skills, need and development.

INTRODUCTION :

Professional education is a scholastic system that prepares beginners for highly skilled occupations, such as law, medicine and engineering, through theory and practice. The learning process ultimately leads to becoming qualified, licensed or receiving some other formal credential. It is very essential for the personal and professional development of the students. The great philosopher Mahatma Gandhi has emphasized greatly on the importance of practical education and stated that "This education ought to be for them a kind of insurance against employment, even so that state takes

the charge of the child at seven and returns to the family as an earning unit. You impart education and simultaneously cut at the road of unemployment'. In professional education we measure the Hard and Soft Skills of individuals, for their personal and professional success. The students and organizations that are most likely to succeed are the ones who have soft skills.

Experts believe that today a lot of professional students are unemployed. They earn the certifications, but the right attitude and values are missing. Wats, Meenu & Kumar, Rakesh (2008) have emphasized in their research "Developing soft skills in students" on the need of developing soft skills in students. The authors stressed that with the dynamical instructional trends, skillfulness in instructional courses, accessibility of lots of qualified personnel, the competition for job acquisition and job is property changing into harder. To get a position over the competitors, students square measure left with no selection however to feature values to their laborious skills with soft skills to exhibit their true potential. Hard skills square measure educational skills, expertise and level of experience whereas soft skills square measure self-developed, interactive COMMUNICATION, human and transferable skills. Literature suggests that arduous skills contribute to solely 15 August 1945 of one's success whereas remaining eighty fifth is created by soft skills. Most employers currently need to rent retain and promote persons WHO square measure freelance, capable, ethical, and self directed, having effective communication, willing to figure and learn and having positive angle.

Jain, A. & Mehta, S. (2011) explored in their research "Increasing the employability quotient by equipping better soft skills" that today; employers crave mangers with the critical soft skills. Some researches such as "Importance of soft skills development in education", by Jain, Vishal (2009), "Soft skills- A management introspects of an Indian techie" by Vijayalakshmi (2011), "Communicative Approach to Soft & Hard Skills" by Chaturvedi, Yadav & Bajpai S. (2011), emphasized on the importance of soft skills in the current global job market especially in the fast moving era of technology and called attention to that soft skills are must to be globally competitive. Goel & Goel, C. (2012), found it critical in their research that soft skills are vital in current job market in the fast moving area of technology, success in personal and professional growth and globally competitive. They also emphasized in their research the need of the training of soft skills to enhance the output of hard skills and a vast research to determine the specific soft skills to be implemented and used in higher education. They further stated that when the students have lots of technical skills but have the absence of soft skills, they have a soft skills gap. Thus there is a great need for bridging this gap between the skills delivered in academics and the skills required in a workplace.

The training of soft skills helps the students to face the challenges in their workplace and to learn the interpersonal and psychosocial skills needed to succeed and advance in the workplace. Soft skills are what accompany the hard skills, and help the organizations use its technical expertise to full advantage. Expertise on these skills have become an important criteria for the selection of employees both in Domestic and MNCs as they are very important to be a good leader and a manager in a company. Sushasini, A. (2006), in her research "Enhancement of education through soft skills and ethical values" found that the knowledge of soft skills enhances the social behaviour of the individual and promote social adjustment and understanding. Thus it is essential for the universities to understand the need of soft skills for students and to provide them a proper training to develop them in their personality to sustain in their job for a long time and to get future growth in their profession.

A critical examination and review of the related research sharpens one's understanding of the existing knowledge and provides a back ground to the problem related. The researcher has reviewed the related literature extensively through books, magazines, journals, internet, educational surveys, published and unpublished thesis and dissertation. These researches have been responsible for the present attire of this study to a certain extent. In other words, these researches have been provided

conceptual and methodological support to the present study. The related literature reviewed have been summarized and presented here under the following category.

Indian Researches
Foreign Researches
Indian Researches

Some of the Indian researches have been studied with reference to the need and development of the students towards soft skills to cope with their professional life and have been mentioned below in a chronological order.

Sripala, B. & Praveen, G.V. (2011) conducted a research on the topic “Soft skills in Engineering education: Industry perspective” and published their paper in Journal named Language in India: Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow Volume 11:10 October 2011, ISSN 1930-2940. The authors emphasized that despite constant updating of syllabus and core content, it is observed that soft skills are not given a significant part among the various skills set imparted to an engineering graduate. On completion of the course, engineering graduates are supposed to step into their career with confidence and should be able to perform as per the expectations of industry. Modern HR selection process is competency-based and professional students are expected to practice Industry-demanded skills and be ready to face the selection process. Keeping this key aspect into consideration, the purpose of the study are (i) training is important for engineering students to enhance their skills and to achieve good placement in various Industries, (ii) training of students and equipping them with life skills is an important responsibility of the Institutions. Along with technical expertise, development of a holistic personality is also necessary. The present paper discusses the mechanisms which can reinforce the students’ abilities to secure jobs and retain the same.

Chandra, V. R & Zakkariya, K. A. (2012) conducted a study on the topic “Do soft skills matter for Indian B Schools? A content analysis of the advertisement of Indian B schools to identify the major focus area, with special reference to soft skills assessment and development”. There are over 4700 B-schools in India, as per records and more than four lakh management graduates are passing out every year. But, it is an undisputable fact that a vast majority of these graduates do not possess the required soft skills of a manager and hence fail in acquiring a decent placement. The main objectives of the paper are to check the major focus areas of Indian B-schools, with specific reference to soft skills assessment and development. The study was conducted by analyzing the content of the admission advertisements released by a sample of 200 B-schools from all parts of India. The Findings of the study brings out the major focus areas of Indian B-schools and their focus towards soft skills assessment such as (i) the necessity for improving the quality of management education with regard to soft skills of future managers and the need for benchmarking the levels of these skills to an accepted standard, (ii) it could be possible only when there is some common standard of assessment or an assessment tool in this area, which is presently not available.

Rodrigues, J. (2013) conducted a research on the topic “Personality Development through English to inculcate moral values in Indian Youths and Adults”. The purpose of the study is to emphasize on the problem that technical college’s emphasis on more on technical knowledge while Medical colleges stress on medical knowledge and MBA institutes brush the youth’s business skills. Though personality development is one of the subjects introduced along with English communication skills in colleges or professional institutes, very less difference is noted in behaviour pattern of youth today. They have successfully captured the English world but failed to win power over moral values. The

purpose of the study is to emphasize that (i) syllabus designed for personality development in many Indian Universities and trainings for corporate are structured keeping in mind, the improvement of communication skills in English and interpersonal skills like leadership, time management, stress management, conflicts resolution, negotiation, motivation, team building, group dynamics, performance appraisal etc. Moral value is not included as the part of any curriculum in professional institutes, (ii) in personality development; it is observed that teachers teach only the tailored readymade notes rather than making the topics interesting, lively and practical oriented. They stress more on the different theories related to particular topic, thereby not giving any practical usage in day to day life during the lecture sessions. Hence, the youth don't get much from the lectures attended or they lose their interests in such subject. Both the student and teacher tend to have casual approach for it. He further gives the solution of the problem that values are the greatest unifying force in life. Inculcation of these values through personality development is the necessity of the hour to check the disintegration of social relations. Mere education doesn't build ones character. Education merged with values should really make a difference. Introducing moral values in personality development is constantly increasing as we continue to witness ever increasing violent activities, behavioural disorder and lack of unity in the society. Inculcating moral values to personality development syllabus will help students to get more general awareness as a youth, to cope up with their common problems, remove the tendency of committing suicide, maintaining personal relationships and the biggest task to make them understand the importance of respecting people and holding decorum in the society. To glorify our nation, good citizens are a must.

Agrawal, A. (2014) explored in his thesis on the topic "Study of developments and challenges involved in soft skills training in professional colleges" that there is a need to diagnose the pattern of skill development and personal development initiatives (education, training, etc). With rapid expansion of professional education system in India, it is alarming if we follow more of ineffective practices, which seems to be the case as one (among many) of the news items indicates - only 2.6% of engineering pass-outs are really employable. Employers are also frustrated with level of skills and commitments from fresher's. The research has been able to bring out successfully a model named 4-Q Model for Soft Skills Development. This Model can be used for reference for trainee assessment, soft-skills strategy, curriculum design, self-paced learning; and for further research; within Business Management education.

Engineers of Amity, (2015) published an article "Amity, National Skill Development Council offer Engineering training in telecom" in The Hindustan Times on 21st May 2015. They emphasized that in order to bridge the gap between the skill set of graduating students and industry expectations, Amity Institute of Telecom Engineering and Management (AITEM), Amity University Uttar Pradesh aligned with National Occupational Standards (NOSs) and offered two skill oriented modules related to the job roles of "Infrastructure Engineer" and "Field Maintenance Engineer", as specified by Telecom Sector Skill Council (TSSC). The first batch of B.Tech. Students of Electronic and Telecom Engineering have undergone the skill training along with their regular academic programme. Lt Gen S. P. Kocher, CEO, TSSC along with Lt. Gen P. D. Bhargava – Group Dy. Vice Chancellor, Amity and Advisor, Amity Institute of Telecom Engineering and Management (AITEM) awarded the certification to the students. Lt. Gen P. D. Bhargava congratulated the students on the successful completion of the module and welcomes them to the TSSC Alumni group. He averred they Private industry is the biggest and most preferred employee in India, which faces acute talent dearth at entry level. "What is required in industry, is most often, not taught in the classrooms, therefore, the students have to undergo the herculean task of unlearning what they have learnt in college and re-learning the basics of industry when they join it" remarked Lt.

Gen S. P. Kocher.

Foreign Researches

Malter, M. A. M. (2011) conducted a research on the topic “The status of professional development in independent schools related to teaching 21st Century skill”. The purpose of the study is to determine if the independent schools developing and implementing professional development opportunities for the teachers that address the challenges and complexities of 21st centuries teaching and learning. This mixed method research study included qualitative and quantitative data collected from a survey questionnaire from independent school administrators responsible for professional development and from subsequent interviews with independent school administrators who provide more detailed information about specific professional development programs. This significance of this study was three-fold. It provides benchmark data for independent school professional development programming as it is related to 21st Century skills and content. It provides independent school leaders with data that will enable them to examine their school’s model for professional development and determine if their offerings are enabling educators to grow in their professional practice. Finally it provides data for school-wide discussion about the impact 21st Century skills on change, innovation and creativity in the class-room, as well as the preparation of the students to meet the social and economic challenges of life and work in 21st Century. The findings in this study determine that professional development for teachers in independent school clearly focuses preliminary on 21st Century skills and content. Professional development for teachers targets for 21st Century skills and content, and the reasons for the focus on these particular skills and content, at this time, include preparing students to meet the challenges of the workforce, compete in the ‘real world’, because more globally aware, improve collaboration and cooperation, meet the need of diverse population, and, navigate their fast paced world in purposeful, thoughtful and meaningful ways’.

Claudia, O. et.al (2011) Northern Michigan University, USA, Bruce Sherony, Northern Michigan University, USA, Carol Steinhaus, Northern Michigan University USA, conducted a research. In their research paper “Employer perception of student informational interviewing skills and behaviour” they conducted a longitudinal study at a Midwestern University’s AACSB accredited College of Business to determine the soft skills that employers believe students need to improve on to be successful. The purpose of this study is to determine the soft skills employers believe students need to improve on in order to be successful. It is hypothesized that achieving effective soft skills will lead to interviewer success. Results of this research will help faculty to assess and improve their instructional methodology to better prepare students to meet employer expectations. The findings of the study are that (i) the professionals are very impressed with the student interviewers. The most impressive characteristics were the students’ manners, preparation for the interview, positive attitude and ability to close the interview, (ii) the rating was very high were the interviewer’s consideration of the business professional’s time, clarity of purpose, appropriate introduction, and use of correct grammar, (iii) the business professionals’ ratings were positive on the characteristics of good posture, being well groomed and dressed appropriately, and demonstrating skill in questioning. However, students could improve on these characteristics; (iv) approximately 61% of the responding business professionals strongly agree that the student interviewer would likely be an effective employee.

Zhang, A. (2012) emphasized in his research paper “Peer Assessment of Soft skills and Hard Skills” that both the information technology (IT) industry and the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) demand soft-skill training in higher education and require IT graduates to demonstrate competence in interpersonal communication, teamwork, and conflict management.

Group projects provide teamwork environment for soft-skill training, but their practical success is difficult to assess. Group activities often take place outside classroom, and instructors are kept out of communication and interaction loops. Free-rider problems arise when some students are doing less work and awarded the same grades as others who contribute more. Many studies have suggested that, for group projects, peer evaluation is more effective than instructor evaluation. This study aimed (i) to promote soft-skill training by designing and validating a peer assessment scale, (ii) describe challenges and demands faced by educators (iii) to prove valuable for educators to promote soft-skill training in an active learning environment and (iv) to use peer evaluations to achieve success in IT education. This study designed a peer assessment scale for soft-skill and hard-skill evaluations. The assessment scale was administered on a small sample size of 24 students in an IT course and data was collected. To ensure sampling adequacy, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's tests were conducted. Two dimensions, soft-skill and hard-skill, emerged from factor analysis and captured 67 percent of variance. Items on the assessment scale passed a reliability test with Cronbach's α values greater than 0.70. The findings of the study are that (i) students majoring in IT are hard-skill orientated or that our IT program emphasizes hard skills over soft skills, (ii) Group projects provide teamwork environment for soft-skill training, but individual performance of group members is difficult to assess. IT education should prepare future IT professionals with hard and soft skills to communicate with end users, to resolve conflicts, and to bring different functions together toward a common goal.

Pereira, O. P. (2013) explored in his research paper on the topic "Soft skills: From university to the work environment, Analysis of a survey of graduate in Portugal", that there is a gap between the soft skills acquired by the professional students in their colleges and the soft skills required in a workplace. Results demonstrate a significant difference in perception, which might reveal a structural maladjustment in the interaction between universities and enterprises. A questionnaire was used, designed in a Likert scale, which was handed out to graduates of different universities and different areas of knowledge. The outcome of the study indicates the importance of new thoughts on corporate needs. It also indicate the need to reflect on the role of University, repositioning it in the centre of society as an Institution which produces and spreads knowledge par excellence, making it more intelligent, more efficient and more inclusive. Along this path there is also the need to rethink the curriculum and align it with corporate needs.

Bilsland, C. & et. Al. (2014), explored in their research paper "Planning the journey to best practice in developing employability skills: Transnational university internships in Vietnam" that Western Universities need to establish and implement effective WIL (Work Integrated Learning) in their offshore campuses. A research in Vietnam indicates that there is a lack of employability skills among the graduate population include: the seminal findings of the Dearing report (1997) in the UK; the OECD Skills Strategy report (2011); and, a Manpower Group survey on global talent shortages (2012). All documented a mismatch between the skill levels of graduates and the expectations of their graduate employers. For the purposes of this research employability skills are defined as: communication, interpersonal, teamwork, problem solving, research and analytical, planning and organizing, technology, and lifelong learning skills. To address the issue, some universities have established work integrated learning (WIL) programs that incorporate more industry-relevant activities with closer participation and partnerships with industry. WIL programs endeavour to enable graduates to learn and to demonstrate greater work readiness, and internship placements represent one important aspect of work integrated learning. The research instrument was the Intern Performance Evaluation that the interns' work supervisors submitted when the internship was completed. The performance evaluation consisted of a ten-item five-point Likert scale questionnaire made up of five "professional

skill” and five “personal skill” items. Garson (2005) observed that the minimum recommended resolution in Likert scales is three points, as anything less produces too great a departure from normality. Ethics approval was secured from the FUV (Foreign University in Vietnam) College of Business. The paper concludes by proposing WIL research initiatives aimed at incorporating richer communication and involvement with the company representatives frontline supervisors; understanding relevant factors of importance held by industry; and building closer connections with industry. (Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 2014, 15(2), 145-157)

Washor , K. S. (2015) conducted a look on the subject “Bridging the soft skills gap from education to employment through internships” . In his treatise he stressed on each onerous (academics and technical) and therefore the soft skills (personality traits and habits, COMMUNICATION, teamwork, initiative, and, analytical thinking) that should be possessed by the skilled students for his or her geographical point readiness. Pre-post retrospective surveys were administered to students associate degreed one to corresponding supervisors to live modification in soft-skill development throughout a thirteen week semester as an instantaneous result from taking part in an billet. 278 students (88%) and 287 supervisors (91%) consented to participate within the study and completed all of the things on the survey relating to soft-skill development. Macro level applied math testing victimization (MANOVA) was conducted to explore the link between the experimental variable, time (13 week semester) and therefore the dependent variables, soft-skills. Micro level paired samples t-tests were conducted on every scale and every item for college students and supervisors. Results of the analysis of all soft-skill development things recommend that there area unit patterns among student and supervisor pre and post responses. Students and supervisors rumored gains across all soft-skill development scales at the conclusion of the billet. Findings recommend that taking part in associate degree billet contributes to student soft-skill development.

DISCUSSION OF RELATED LITERATURE:

The study of the literature related to the research provides through knowledge about variables and methodology. Researchers gets help in taking decision about his/her research for formulating the hypothesis, their variables, research design, selection of methods, tools and techniques and analysis process from the discussion of these fact. The discussion of related literature has been divided into two groups in reference to conceptual and methodological background.

Discussion with reference to conceptual variables:

From the review of literature it is clear that mainly soft skills and its different aspects has been continuously a subject of research.

The researchers such as Agrawal, A. & Thite, Mohan (2003), Goel & Goel, C. (2012), Rodrigues, Joseph (2013), have experienced the importance of soft skills for professional students in their future workplace at leadership position in any organization.

Chandra, V. & Zakkariya, K. A. (2012), have conducted their research to bring out the major focus areas of Indian institutions of higher education and their focus towards soft skills assessment such as (i) the necessity for improving the quality of professional education with regard to soft skills of future employees and the need for benchmarking the levels of these skills to an accepted standard, (ii) it could be possible only when there is some common standard of assessment or an assessment tool in this area, which is presently not available.

Wats, Meenu & Kumar, Rakesh (2008), Sripala, B. & Praveen (2011), have conducted their research to reduce the yawning gap between industry requirements and the present inadequate skill levels of students in professional courses. There is a need to tailoring the curriculum of professional

colleges. It can be done through increasing the employability quotient by equipping better soft skills which will add value to their hard skills and to exhibit their true potential. It will also help them for their job acquisition, sustainability and retaining in a competitive job market.

Jain, Vishal, (2011), Vijayalakshmi (2011), Chaturvedi, Yadav and Bajpai, S. (2011), find it critical in their research that soft skills are vital in current job market in the fast moving area of technology, success in personal and professional growth and globally competitive. They also emphasized in their research the need of the training of soft skills to enhance the output of hard skills and a vast research to determine the specific soft skills to be implemented and used in higher education

Sushasini A. (2006), conducted a research to enhance the professional education through soft skills and moral values. She emphasized teacher trainees are given multiple activities which enable them to improve their soft skills and ethical values of education, which gives importance to intelligence as well as behaviour patterns, to develop emotional bond between the individuals which is highly essential for co-existence, responsibility towards society, promote social cohesiveness, create peaceful living lifestyles and, promote international understanding.

Rodrigues, Joseph (2013), conducted a research to bring out some factors which create personal and professional stress in one's life and affect ones performance in work place. He also suggested some of the stress releasing techniques and revealed the facts that better communication skills for the professional students are essential which comes under the ambit of soft skills are essential to share ones ideas, thought with customers and end users of foreign and for beneficial interaction globally.

Engineers of Amity (2015), emphasized that there is a need to start a training of soft skills development in the students with the collaboration of industry in order to bridge the gap between the skill set of graduating students and industry expectations.

From the above description it is clear that, maximum researches have been conducted related to soft skills and its impact on professional students. The researcher observed that many researches have been conducted on different aspects of soft skills but very few studies have been done till now on the perception of the students on the need and development of soft skills with respect to their background variables.

2.5.2 Discussion with reference to methodology:

From the review of literature it is clear that researchers have used different qualitative and quantitative methods and techniques for the fulfilment of their objectives.

Researcher such as Jain, Vishal (2009), Vijayalakshmi, N.S. (2011), Chaturvedi, A., Yadav, K.A. & Bajpai, S. (2011), Rodrigues, Joseph (2013), adopted a qualitative approach by using Descriptive study methodology in their research.

Sripala, B. & Praveen, G.V. (2011), did his research by Personal Observation. Wats Meenu, Kumar Rakesh (2008), used Questionnaire and Interview method in their research. Secondary Source Research was adopted by the researcher Chandra, V. & Zakkariya, K. A. (2012).

Wats, Meenu & Kumar, Rakesh (2008), adopted the method of Actual Observation in their research. Skill Status Inventories and Five Point Scale were used by Goel & Goel, C. (2012), in their research.

Engineers of Amity (2015), has collaborated with the industries such as Amity Institute of Telecom Engineering and Management (AITEM), Amity University Uttar Pradesh aligned with National Occupational Standards (NOSs) and offered two skill oriented modules related to the job roles of "Infrastructure Engineer" and "Field Maintenance Engineer", as specified by Telecom Sector Skill

Council (TSSC) to develop the soft skills of the students in desired directions for their workplace readiness.

Thus from the above description we can conclude that different authors have presented their different concepts and methodologies to develop soft skills in professional students for their workplace readiness. It is a very complex task for the academicians providing education in professional courses because in these courses students come from different backgrounds. Some students come from rural areas with Hindi medium and some from urban areas with English medium, their age, gender and streams are also different. Thus there is a great need to identify the students weak with soft skills and to develop them in a desired direction. It can be possible only through the training of soft skills which helps the students to face the challenges in their workplace and to grow in their professional life. Some innovative courses should be started with the collaboration of industry in order to bridge the gap between the skill set of professional students and industry expectations. Thus, the current study can open many new aspects of dynamic thinking, intellectual pursuit and collective action, not only for the betterment of professional students but also for the industry and society in general.

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