

An Analysis of Arts and Science Colleges With Respect To the Training Program Conducted For Soft Skills Development in Tirunelveli District

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Abstract

Soft skills (Hewitt Sean, 2008) are "non-technical, intangible, personality specific skills" which determines an individual's strength as "a leader, listener and negotiator, or as a conflict mediator". Most of the employers, after conducting the campus interviews, felt that "Students are good in their technical skills but they are not fair in their Soft skills". The reasons for giving this statement could be due to the focusing of educational institutions more on subject knowledge while comparing to the soft skills. Though the subject knowledge is playing a primary role for executing the work properly, soft skills are required for maintaining relationship and communication and also for growing in the career ladder. Many youngsters fail due to the poor awareness about the importance of soft skills. The developments of soft skills need to be effectively given in the Educational institutions, as the educational institutions plays a vital role in molding the young generation's future. This paper records the result of the data collected from 320 students in Tirunelveli district. Tools like Factor analysis and weighted average are used for analysis. Result reveals that the students rated soft skills as an important component in learning process and it should be concentrated in the trainings. Also it is identified that the students got developed in their capabilities and skills by attending the soft skills trainings.

Key words — Soft skills, Soft skills trainings, Educational Institutions, Students trainings, Skills of students.

I. INTRODUCTION

Soft skills are characteristic traits and interpersonal skills that characterize a person's relationship with other people. In the workplace, soft skills are considered a complement to hard skills, which refer to a person's knowledge and occupational skills. Soft skills training includes, trainings on Time management skills, decision making skills, Leadership skills, Communication skills and so on.

With reference to The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) (www.nacweb.org,

2009 viewed on 24.04.16) employers are expecting the below ten skills as the most important skills from the employees.

1. Ability to work in a team structure
2. Ability to make decisions and solve problems
3. Ability to communicate verbally with people inside and outside an organization
4. Ability to plan, organize and prioritize work
5. Ability to obtain and process information
6. Ability to analyze quantitative data
7. Technical knowledge related to the job
8. Proficiency with computer software programs
9. Ability to create and/or edit written reports
10. Ability to sell and influence other

According to the study of 'Stanford Research Institute' (www.stanfordinfo.org, n.d viewed on 24.04.2016) most of the CEOs suggested that only 25% of the technical skills are needed for the job success about 75% of the Soft skills are playing a vital role in attaining the job success. Only technical skills are not enough for working effectively in an organization but the employers are expecting the skills like dealing with the customers, working in a team and creative thinking are essential skills for the long term success.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Maureen Ellis Kisling; G.Hack Worth (2014) states that employers are giving more importance to the soft skills like, integrity / honesty, listening and serving clients and customers but these soft skills was not covered in the courses offered in the colleges ("Teaching soft skills employers need") in the 'Community college Journal'

I.k.Kilam; Jyoti Sharma (2013) states that among 3 models Hybrid model is proved to be the best model for the training. The training with both in house faculties and management experts will be the best for conducting the training ("Analysis and Evaluation of Various soft skills training models employed by private technical educational institution in India") in the Dawn Journal

Dr. Jessy John(2004), found that management students who attended the soft skills training developed in terms of soft skills components it shows that Soft skills training can improve the

employability of the students and it will develop the personality (“A Study on the Nature of Impact of Soft Skills Training Programme on the Soft Skills Development of Management Students”)

Dr.Mahesh Kumar.R; Santhosh Kumar.A.V (2015) finds that majority of the students accepted that acquisition of Soft skills plays an important role in today’s job context .The students rated the training programs that it was Interactive, quality of the trainer is good, increases the confidence level and the quality of the training material is good in their institution. (“A study on the perception of Management students about the soft skills training program in SFGC, Bangalore”) in the Global Journal of Research analysis.

Melvin R. Weber; Dori A. Finiey; Alleah Crawford and David Rivera, Jr.(2009) in “An exploratory study identifying soft skill competencies in entry-level managers” (Tourism and Hospitality Research) finds that, Competencies like ‘working effectively with employees and customers, setting a positive example, displaying honesty and developing creative solutions to problems’ are more important for the business among 107 competencies, 20 factors are more vital for the entry level managers.

Leach and Annie H. Liu(2003) in “Investigating Interrelationships among Sales Training Evaluation Methods” (The Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management.), identified that there is a Positive relationship between sales persons’ training reactions and his level of knowledge acquisition. Level of knowledge acquisition was positively related to behavior change. There is a positive relationship between positive reactions and learning the material. Thus trainees having high level of knowledge acquisition will transfer learned materials to the workplace. There is a relationship between reactions and knowledge acquisition with transfer of learning to behavior.

Norina Ahmad Jamil, Sariwati M Shariff and Zurah Abu (2013), in his research “Students’ Practicum Performance of Industrial Internship Program” (Social and Behavioral Sciences) states that from employers’ view the students are good in the learning capabilities; social and human inter relation skills. Employers have positive perceptions towards the practicum students. Industrial training program is effective for Business Management students. The students’ area of improvement is soft skill development and improvement in the quality of the project paper.

Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic , Adriane Arteché , Andrew J. Bremner , Corina Greven & Adrian Furnham(2010) in “Soft skills in higher education: importance and improvement ratings as a function of individual differences and academic performance” (Educational Psychology) finds that,

Soft skills have a positive relationship with academic performance. Soft skills have a relationship with degree engagement. There was a relationship between academic achievement and desirable job after graduation. IQ was negatively associated with soft skills.

Mohd Yusof Husain, Seri Bunian Mokhtar, Abdul Aziz Ahmad, Ramlee Mustapha(2010) in his research “Importance of Employability Skills from Employers’ Perspective” (Social and Behavioral Sciences) identified that, the employers related the importance of employability skills at a higher level employers in the field of Civil Engineering Electrical and Mechanical Engineering are accepting the importance of employability skills like Interpersonal skills; Resource skills; Basic skills; Information skills; Thinking skills and System and Technology skills. There is no significant difference between the size of company and employability skills.

Airil Haimi Mohd Adnan, Sangeeth Ramalingam, Nurulhayati Ilias, Tahirah Mt Tahir(2014), in his study “Acquiring and Practicing Soft Skills: A Survey of Technical- Technological Undergraduates at a Malaysian Tertiary Institution” (Social and Behavioral Sciences), finds that, the soft skills like, critical thinking, problem solving, lifelong learning, information management are the most important skills needed for the technical undergraduates. Most of the respondents perceived soft skills as the important skills to be included in the curriculum. Most of the respondents acquired the soft skills throughout their graduation. But especially the skills lifelong learning should be focused.

Larisa Nikitina ,Fumitaka Furuoka(2012) in “Sharp focus on soft skills: a case study of Malaysian university students’ educational expectations” (Educational Research Policy Practices) identified that, the educational expectation are varied and it divided in to three types a. Life skills b. Subject matter (Hard skills) c. Soft skills and the students are considering soft skills as an important part of university education.

III. METHODOLOGY

Students from various Arts and Science colleges are selected for this study. Convenience sampling method is used for the data collection. The questionnaire method was adopted and it was distributed to the respondents. The samples size is 320. The collected data were analyzed using Factor analysis and weighted average.

Among the respondents 49.3% are from the age group (18-20); 49.3% are from the category (21-23) and 1.4% from the age group (above 24). 21.5% of respondents are male and 78.5% of the respondents are female. 19.9% of the respondents are belonged to

B.A English; 50% are belonged to B.Com; 4% are belonged to B.Sc (Computer Science); 7.6% are belonged to B.Sc (Information Technology); 4.3% are belonged to B.Sc (Micro Biology); 0.7% is belonged to BCA; 1.3% is from M.Phil (Computer Science); 2% are belonged to M.Sc (Mathematical Economics); 3.6% are belonged to B.A History and 6.6% are belonged to BBA.

The given 24 variables are categorized in to 8 factors namely, Working readiness; Development of personal abilities; Readiness to practical situations; Exploring and development of skills; Ethical development; Adapting to changes; Innovativeness; and Awareness about the situations.

Factor analysis

	Rotated Component Matrix ^a							
	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Workplace	.804							
Pre training	.785							
Career opportunity	.736							
Teamwork	.445							
Rapport		.739						
Confidence		.733						
Time management		.731						
Real life problem			.771					
Performance			.671					
Responsibilities			.611					
Employability skills			.475					
Analytical				.681				
Hidden ability				.679				
Proactive				.628				
Problem based				.590				
Decision					.817			
Integrity					.766			
Listening					.546			
Behaviour						.742		
Academic achievement						.713		
Critical thinking							.707	
Set goals							.653	
Information share							.586	
Situations								.744
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.								
a. Rotation converged in 13 iterations.								

Working readiness (Factor 1) includes Awareness in workplace environment, Pre training expectation, getting career opportunities and Ability to work in teams. Development of personal abilities (Factor 2) includes Developing rapport with others, increasing confidence level and Ability to manage time effectively. Readiness to practical situations (Factor 3) includes Awareness about the real life problems, increasing performance level, Managing responsibilities and improved employability skills. Exploring and development of skills (Factor 4) includes Development in analytical skills, identifying hidden abilities, Proactive to situations and Problem based learning. Ethical development (Factor 5) includes Ability to take strong decision, acting with integrity and Ability to listen. Adapting to changes (Factor 6) includes Changes in behavioural patterns and Improvement in academic achievements. Innovativeness (Factor 7) includes Critical thinking and problem solving skills, Ability to set goals and Effective sharing of information. And Awareness about the situations (Factor 8) includes Understanding the situations.

Weighted Average

In the factor 1 (Working Effectiveness) the variable, Ability to work in teams stands first among the other variables. The variable, Ability to manage time effectively is marked in the top most position in the factor 2 (Development of personal abilities). In the factor 3(Readiness to practical situations) variable, improved employability skills is getting the maximum value among the variables. The variable, Problem based learning is in the first place in the factor 4 (Exploring and development of skills). Acting with integrity and effective listening are marked in the top position in the factor 5 (Ethical development). In the factor 6 (Adapting to changes), variable named changes in behavioural pattern is agreed more by the respondents. The variable, setting the goal stands in the top most position among all the variables and it is belonged to the factor 7 (Innovativeness).

The respondents agrees the entire factor 1(Working effectiveness); factor 2 (Development of personal abilities); factor 3 (Readiness to practical situations); factor 4 (Exploring and development of skills); factor 5 (Ethical development); factor 6 (Adapting to changes); factor 7 (Innovativeness) and factor 8 (Awareness about the situations).

Weighted Average

Factors	Variables	Average	Result	Average	Result
Working Readiness	Work place environment	4	Agree	4.06	Agree
	Pre training expectations	4	Agree		
	Career opportunities	4	Agree		
	Team work	4.27	Agree		
Development of personal abilities	Rapport Building	4.09	Agree	4.17	Agree
	Confidence level	4.3	Agree		
	Managing time	4.14	Agree		
Readiness to practical situations	Real life problems	4.21	Agree	4.20	Agree
	Performance level	4.15	Agree		
	Responsibilities	4.22	Agree		
	Employability skills	4.23	Agree		
Exploring and development of skills	Analytical skills	4.22	Agree	4.14	Agree
	Hidden abilities	4.1	Agree		
	Proactive to situations	4	Agree		
	Problem Based learning	4.24	Agree		
Ethical development	Decision making	4.16	Agree	4.17	Agree
	Integrity	4.18	Agree		
	Effective listening	4.18	Agree		
Adapting to changes	Behavioural change	4.12	Agree	4.11	Agree
	Academic		Agree		
	Achievement	4.1			
Innovativeness	Critical thinking	4.36	Agree	4.37	Agree
	Goal setting	4.45	Agree		
	Sharing Information	4.31	Agree		
Awareness about the situations	Understanding the situations	4.13	Agree	4.13	Agree

IV. CONCLUSION

By the analysis and its results it is understood that the soft skills are essential for the students especially for their personal and skills development. The students of Tirunelveli district are more effective in their subject knowledge and the technical skills but they lack in soft skills. Students after their education they will choose an organization and will start work but

there the employers will definitely expect for the profit and for gaining the profit it is more important to work in teams, managing the time properly, act innovatively in the critical situations and to make creative solutions. So there is something to be learned beyond the technical skills which will develop the skills like time management, creativity and innovativeness, decision making, team work etc.

If both technical and soft skills are gained and trained equally it may be a path to attain the success. Once the soft skills and subject knowledge combined together the future of the students will be brighter and their development will be beyond the limit.

V. SUGGESTIONS

The educational institutions can add the soft skills as a part of syllabus in their curriculum. The institutions may change their educational policies by adopting the industrial centered approach instead of curriculum centered approach and they may give more number of soft skills training at least once in the month so that it will be helpful for the students. The students should be exposed to more practical situations by arranging the Industrial visits, problem based learning situations etc.

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