

INCORPORATING SOFT SKILLS IN CURRICULUM TO ENHANCE MOTIVATION OF EMPLOYEES

The possession of a college diploma or technical degree does not guarantee that an individual is equipped with the competencies that are essential for being successful in the work environment. It also- does not assure an individual's success in getting and securing a job. Nowadays, employers value not only degrees, but the comprehensive skills that are required by the job market. They seek individuals who not only bring technical skills but also exhibit soft skills.

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Soft skills encompass various attributes ranging from the leadership to the teamwork. Their cruciality in professional success cannot be ignored in 21st century because in today's dynamic business environment, effectiveness in communication, strength in leadership and positivity in work attitude are of high value. Unlike technical skills, soft skills contribute to enabling individuals to navigate complex interpersonal relationships and adapt to changing work dynamics. With the continuous evolution of the workplace with emphasis on collaboration and innovations, the demands for individuals with well-developed soft skills have gradually been increasing in view of the need for making a meaningful contribution to the growth of the organisations. Henceforth, acknowledging and nurturing soft skills has become an important facet of achieving success in the contemporary

professional landscape.

Essential Soft Skills Required in the Industry

Soft skills what are considered critical to success in industries. Ramesh (2010) listed out three important soft skills that are needed to be developed for attaining success in career. They are i) *attitude*, ii) *communication* and iii) *etiquette*. Positive attitude is cultivated through expertise in teamwork, heightened diversity awareness, effective time management and commitment to lifelong learning. Efficiency in communication can be improved through effective listening skills, positive body language and presentation skills. Etiquette is demonstrated not just in face-to-face discussions but also in telephone conversations and email communications. Verma (2009) on the other hand, defined soft skills from sociological point of view with the cluster of personality traits and personal habits being considered. Soft skills are essential

for roles where job specific criteria are determined on the basis of anticipated results, notwithstanding the considerable variations in the methods employed for the attainment of those outcomes. She inferred that soft skills encompass i) *the capacity to collaborate with others*, ii) *openness to learning new ideas*, iii) *adeptness in managing emotions*, iv) *readiness to embrace people from different cultures etc.* Furthermore, she noted these skills impact an individual's intellectual abilities determined by their *IQs* (*Intelligent Quotient*), as well as their interpersonal skills manifested by their *EQ* (*Emotional Quotient*) or *EI* (*Emotional Intelligence*). In consideration of this relationship, it can be stated that soft skills are as the outcome of combining intellectual intelligence and emotional intelligence. This relationship is

expressed as the equation $EQ+IQ=Soft\ Skills$. Soft skills, as Verma (2009) observed based on the analysis of the trends in the BPO sector, are people-specific, attitude centric and informally imbibed. Problem solving and customer service are other soft skills that people associated with BPO industry need to cultivate for achieving success in professional career.

Integration of Soft Skills into Educational Curriculum

The integration of above-specified soft skills into the educational curriculum has become increasingly a matter of paramount importance in the preparation of pupils for success in the modern workforce. Nowadays, a few educational institutions have been giving serious thought to the realization of this particular aspect of industry-academia collaboration. The integration of soft skills into the curriculum in *CM 460: Capstone in Construction* is the example of this effort. It is the final course for seniors in the construction management curriculum of the *Ball State University*, Indiana. In this course, pupils collaborate teams throughout the semester to focus on the project management facets of real and recent construction projects in Indiana. While teamwork is a fundamental

facet of all CM 460 course assignments, the mock bid assignment is specifically crafted for the enhancement of pupils' abilities of working in a team. Pupils are encouraged to participate in the mock bid exercise. In a report, Hanover Research (2014) emphasised on the integration of various soft skills into specific subjects and courses, such as *critical thinking skills, decision-making skills, self-monitoring, time awareness and teamwork*. This suggestion was specifically made for elementary or secondary public, private or religious schools that are specifically referred as *K-12 institutions*. During a webinar held in partnership between Times Higher Education and Cambridge University Press & Assessment, integration of soft skills into curricula of Indian universities was the prime area of discourse considering its utilities in terms of maximising and optimising graduate employability (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2023). *Sushant University* has given a serious thought to the idea of embedding soft skills training within academic curriculum considering the necessity of facilitating the process of the removal of the skill gaps and creation of market ready professionals. In 2021, Sushant

University established a *Centre for Soft Skills* in January 2021 in consideration of the striking need for soft skills in near future. This Centre is allocated with the responsibility of designing and delivering training programs with elevated thrust on providing effective learning solutions (Sushant University, 2024). The *Odisha State Open University* introduced a 6 months-programme under the name of *Certificate in Soft Skill and IT Skill* with the objective of inculcating non-technical (soft) and technical skills in the learners so that they can be prepared for dealing with the external world collaboratively and communicating effectively with focus on problem solving and positive attitude. *Emotional Intelligence skills, life skills, time management skills, communication skills, presentation skills, body language and etiquettes* are what embedded with the concerned course (Osou.ac.in, 2024). The emphasis on fostering soft skills in students is clearly reflected in the *CBSE's (Central Board of Secondary Education)* curriculum where "Life Skills Education" has been integrated as a fundamental component of the school education system. In consideration of the

advantageous aspects of developing soft skills, various premier institutes like *IIT Bombay, IIT Kanpur, IIM Tiruchirappalli, IIM Ranchi, IIM Bangalore and University of Delhi* have introduced *Soft Skill Certification Courses* (Careers360, 2024). *Swayam* is one of the online courses on soft skills which was introduced for developing growth mindsets and understanding of perceptions of time amongst pupils. Organisations like *Edstellar* introduced corporate training courses on soft skills development tailored for professionals in consideration of its strategic implications on the industrial workforce. Through this course, emphasis is developed on the development of different soft skills, such as *handling challenging customers, negotiation skills, accent neutralization etc.*

Impact of Soft Skills on Workforce Motivation in Industries

In regards to the rationale of the above-specified endeavours, it can be said equipping workforce with soft skills is necessary for the creation of a highly motivated workforce in the industries. When team members are equipped with soft skills like communication, leadership, problem solving and adaptability, their levels of

motivation are significantly increased. In other word, soft skills are integral to laying the foundation of a workplace where positive work culture is prevalent and communication is effective. As a result, workforce remains highly motivated. The research evidence fetched by Muchran, Muchriana and Muchriad (2017) confirmed that communication abilities' development makes impact on employee motivation and performance in the tourism industry. Magnano, Craparo and Paolillo (2016) explored that there is a direct link between emotional intelligence, which is a soft skill and motivation. In consideration of the research Suomi's (2014) research findings which indicate the workforce motivation affects customer service quality, providing employees with customer service training has become a necessity because employees with expertise in customer service are found to be motivated to go extra miles for making customers satisfied thereby resulting in meeting the business objectives. In the context of Pakistan's airline industry, it has been found that employee motivation impacts on customer satisfaction and the former variable is directly linked with the career growth which is an important of Kowske's RESPECT

model (Wiley & Kowske, 2011). In this regard, it is also important to understand that the growth in career is not only linked to the development of technical or hard skills, but also to the development of non-technical or soft skills. In short, workers feel motivated in such an environment where they avail opportunities of accelerating career growth through inculcating skills and updating themselves through life-long learning.

Challenges

In view of the above-illustrated discourse in light of real-life case examples and academic findings, it can be suggested for the educational institutions to place more focus on the incorporation of soft skills into academic curriculum in consideration of the industrial requirements. However, from the point of view of Gupta (2017), this fact cannot be denied that there are some challenges that are prevalent, such as lack of teachers' awareness about the importance of soft skills and lack of adequate motivation and attitude amongst pupils regarding the acquisition of soft skills in educational settings. In order to overcome these challenges, it is important to conduct public awareness campaigns for highlighting the

importance of soft skills in professional success.

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