

SOFT SKILLS IN SCHOOL: A SOLUTION FOR UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

Suman Gupta*

Abstract

In the present research paper the investigator seeks to explore the problem of unemployment rampant in India in the present times and analyze some probable reasons behind it. Among several solutions revealed during the in depth review of researches and deliberations with concerned professionals in this field, the investigator identified the development of soft skills among students in schools as a promising one. The paper is based on the insight gained by means of in-depth review of existing research literature and current educational practices at the school level.

Keywords: *Soft skills, unemployment, educational practices*

Introduction

United Nations World Report(2012) "With less experience and fewer skills than many adults, young people often encounter particular difficulty accessing work. The global youth unemployment rate, which has long exceeded that of other age groups, saw its largest annual increase on record in 2009; at its peak, 75.8 million young people were unemployed."

This is the present scenario. It is quite alarming a situation as on one hand the governments are working hard to educate young children to produce well educated skilled work force and on the other hand, they are unable to find perfect jobs for themselves. Now the question arises: Why this gap? If we delve deep into the situation it becomes clear that each and every occupation demands specific characteristic traits in accordance to its nature, whether one is a teacher who needs to be an excellent orator and well-groomed in communication in order for smooth accomplishment of the teaching and learning process, a professional the skill of being persistent and must have never give up attitude in order to face repeated rejection over and over. In addition to this certain specific characteristic traits are expected by employers from their employees. If we observe any advertisement for

job certain enlisted skills and qualities in addition to the desired educational qualifications such as 'organisational skills', 'good at communication', 'strong interpersonal skill', 'team worker' and 'creative bent of mind' 'thinking out of the box' are a few to mention.. Even for a technical requirement for a job, the job can only be procured if other than technical skills the person is good above mentioned skills.

According to (Johnston, Stephen & McGregor, Helen, 2005) "Modern professional practice requires not only recognized 'technical' skills, but also high-level generic or 'soft' professional skills. Recent professional negligence claims suggest that technically well-qualified professionals with deficiencies in these generic skills may fail to effectively identify and satisfy client requirements"

According to Kumar Padhi (2014), "Soft skills play a significant role in one's success in life particularly in one's profession. They help to excel in the workplace and their importance cannot be overlooked in this age of information and knowledge. Ever-increasing global competition and the varying nature of most technical professions have made soft skills more than simply a prerequisite. To employers, technical professionals must not only master their technical disciplines, but also chip in as full participants in accomplishing the mission of the organization."

*Research Scholar, Amity university Noida, PGT English, DPS Dwarka, New Delhi

If inspite of the efforts of the governments, the youth are unable to find good jobs, it is time to analyse the problem and find out a suitable remedy for the malaise.

Definition of Soft Skills :

Soft Skills can be defined as UNESCO IBE (2013), "A set of intangible personal qualities, traits, attributes, habits and attitudes that can be used in many different types of jobs."

Soft skills are said to incorporate all aspects of generic skills that include the cognitive elements associated with non-academic skills. Collins English dictionary defines soft skills as interpersonal skills such as the ability to communicate well with other people and to work in a team. Soft skills are therefore a synonym for 'people skills'.

They are the most critical skills in the current global job market especially in a fast moved era of technology. **Soft Skills and Indian Education System**

The National Curriculum Framework , 2005 has placed on record the importance of acquiring certain skills in the school education for the overall development of the students. Some excerpts are given below:

"...the curriculum should prepare the students and provide support for social and emotional support that will inculcate positive behavior and provide skills essential to cope with situations that they encounter in their lives, peers pressure and gender stereotype."

As per position paper on Education for Peace "Skills that are developed as part of curriculum activity such as to listening with patience and endurance, purity of mind to develop concentration, aptitude for cooperation and teamwork, to reach out to get answers (curiosity and rational inquiry), acceptance of discipline, and a positive attitude to study/work are the trademarks of a good student which in turn are also the skills of a peace-oriented person."

This concern for development of soft skills among school students is evident in the curriculum of Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), which has included 'life skills education' as a key component of school education. It states:

"Life skills include psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with managing their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Essentially, there are two kinds of skills - those related to thinking termed as "thinking skills"; and skills related to dealing with others termed as "social skills". While thinking skills relate to reflection at a personal level, social skills include interpersonal skills and do not necessarily depend on logical thinking. It is the combination of these two types of skills that are needed for achieving assertive behaviour and negotiating effectively."

The investigator developed valuable insights based on the review of available research literature and deliberations with concerned professionals in the field.

Perceived Challenges

The wide gap between the skills acquired by students in schools and skills sought by prospective employer is indeed alarming. It has been often observed that academic institutions that give emphasis on development of Soft skills , do so more in letter than in spirit. As a result most of the educated unemployed youths are found lacking in these skills. "Government of India, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET) has taken initiative in this direction and has designed Course Curricula under Skill Development Initiative Scheme (SDIS) based on Modular Employable Skills (MES) designed in 2008 'Soft skills for Employability'. According to it service sector contributes 53% in GDP, it is becoming crucial that government of India along with other nodal agencies play an important role in providing employable skills, with special emphasis on Soft skills. New framework for soft skill development has been evolved by the DGET to address the employability issues. Realizing the need of Soft skills in service sector NASSCOM is designing the development programme to facilitate manpower development for the short and long term. It is aiming to build a base manpower which will be certified, in tune with

the needs of the industry and geared up for the future requirements of the sector.”

There is a lot that has been done , and yet a lot needs to be done , as there is a paucity of concrete outcomes revealing improvement in the situation of unemployment significantly. There are so many challenges that impede the realization of this objective of our school education system. Some of these are discussed below:

- There appears to be a huge gap between the employers’ expectations of the employees with regard to the skills required pertaining to their fields and the training they receive during their education and qualifications they have.
- There are innumerable career opportunities that one can choose from and excel in. However, the Indians are more inclined towards typical traditional academic streams and careers in the field of engineering, medicine, accounts, MBA etc. Hence they focus on memorizing more facts and practice enough to establish their career in these fields but they do not give due importance to the skills like communication, problem solving, critical thinking etc. required to excel and sustain themselves in the field.
- Teachers are not aware of the importance of teaching soft skills. Most of them do not even know that these skills can be developed with practice in the class itself without deviating from the curriculum to be taught. They are not trained to incorporate teaching of soft skills in the class rooms.
- Teachers find that the classrooms are not adequately equipped with necessary technological infrastructure. Hence, teachers feel handicapped in more than one way.
- The students also realize the problem only when they face the job market. They may have excelled academically but to attain a successful career, soft skills are extremely essential. They lack adequate motivation, and attitude in acquisition of soft skills in schools.

- Parents , at time , fail to realize the significance of acquisition of soft skills in schools. They are more focused on content delivery ,thus converting their child’s mind into a repository of facts and figures.

In view of the above mentioned problems , the investigator after sufficient deliberations arrived at some solutions which are presented below:

Possible Solutions

On the occasion of World Youth Skill Day on July, 15, 2015, a campaign of skill India was launched aiming to train the people all across the nation in various skills by 2022. “The mission was aimed for creating consensus across different sectors and States in the area of skill training. The objective is thus not only to consolidate the efforts of skill, but also to expedite decision making across sectors to achieve skilling at a scale with speed and standards. Although making people eminently employable and creating a vision that vocational and hard skills are important soft skills have not been given that significant an impetus as it deserves.”

The experts in this area, however, are of the view that the focus of the programme is skewed as it focuses only on vocational education, thus missing out 'soft skills' training.

- Unlike vocational skills, that signify an individual’s ability to accomplish specific technical tasks, soft skills are required in almost every nick and span of life.
 - There is a psychological basis for believing that for skill acquisition, the earlier one starts the better results it yields. If the school age is tapped for skill acquisition efficiently the results will be tremendous.
 - Introducing skill training at a young age will go a long way in directing the students who are not academically inclined or are physically incapable to get opportunities and will lead them how to add to the workforce in this country
- Apart from these, “Introducing students to some of the employable skills will also help them prepare and adapt to real work situations without much effort. It will ease

the transition phase from being a student to being a professional in real life.”

- Due recognition of the soft skills in the field of education early in life is important. Hence, teachers should be trained to teach soft skills in their classes. Also, students and parents should understand the importance of gaining soft skills as it helps in ultimately gaining a job and sustaining it successfully.

CONCLUSION

While the technical skills help in making a person 'qualified' for a certain job, it is the soft skills that actually open the door of success. Work ethic, attitude, communication skills, problem solving ability and many of the other personal attributes and soft skills actually help in leading awarding success in career.

Hence, it has become imperative to impart Soft Skills to all at a very early stage so that the young ones are able to make a successful living when they reach out to fetch for their livelihood.

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