

The Role of Soft skills in Empowering Fresh Engineering Graduates in India

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Abstract— Soft Skills are personal attributes that enables one to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people. During campus recruitment process students with high grades fail to get a job due to poor soft skills. NASSCOM-McKinsey report (2005), states that only 25% of technical students and 10-15% of the general graduates in India are employable. In the recent past the awareness regarding soft skill has increased but the student’s attitude and efforts to imbibe these qualities hasn’t.

Considering the above facts it is high time that the present generation should change their attitude towards imbibing soft skills in their daily life. The growing population, increasing number of engineering colleges across the country, shrinking number of job opportunities and volatile market conditions will only add further burden to our younger generation.

Index Terms— graduates, industry, trends, soft skills.

I. INTRODUCTION

IT companies in India expend more than \$1billion training fresh engineers on soft skills when they join the IT industry. Aspiring Minds a consulting firm has stated that only 4.22% of the graduates were found to be fit to join IT product companies and 17% for IT enabled service companies. Annually 500,000 engineers graduate and this is said to be more than the number of students who graduate from the entire North American continent.

Gearing up Skilled Youth for Workplace			
Domain	Brief Description	No of lessons	No of hours
IT Skills	Typing, computer basics, using office, productivity tools, Internet and e-mail for beginners using social media	218	327
Health, Environment and Safety	How to handle emergencies. How to practise fire safety and best practices for a safe environment	40	60
Functional English	Using English in daily interaction, reading, following instructions & writing in English for basic documentation, feeling comfortable using domain-specific terms	44	66
Life Skills	Managing self-Interaction with others, looking for right job, skills for work Starting a business	47	71
Total		349 lessons	524 hours

Adding to these woes is another shocking revelation by the labour bureau in India. They released a data in early 2016 stating that India created only 1.35 lakh jobs in 2015 in comparison to 4.19 lakh in 2013 and 9 lakh in 2016. It clearly

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indicates the shrinking job market in comparison to the growing population. The analysis states that as many as 550 jobs are lost in India every day in last four year as per Labour Bureau data. It means that by 2050, jobs in India will reduce by 7 million, while population would have grown by 600 million.

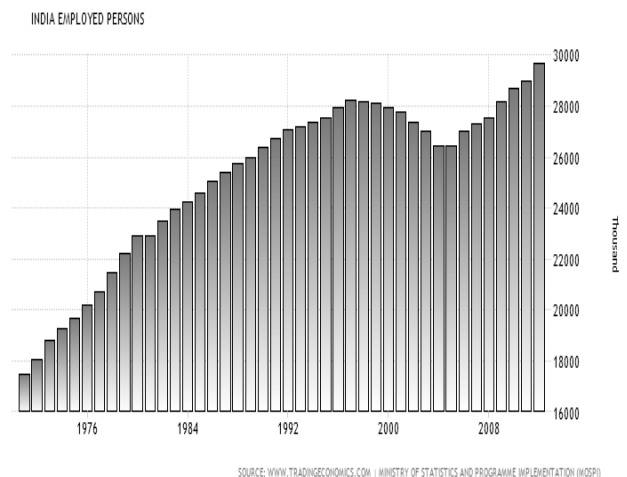
With technology advancement today’s self-employed youth are left with no choice but to learn soft skills and apply in their routine life. Poor attitude towards soft skills has left us with fear in using computers, mobile application and simple tools reflecting in lower levels of confidence.

The economic times newspaper reports that IT Industry would have invested at least 50% of their funds on building training facilities to train their new joiners as they see the potential to leverage on the \$20 billion ITES industry. Teaching fundamental skills of operating a computer and speaking flawless English every youth in our country will be employed. 52% of our population is believed to be dependent on agriculture which is already strained and facing huge losses. Lack of awareness, poor attitude and fear amidst our younger generation will only worsen things. Hence, learning soft skills will open up a world of opportunities in the decades to com

II. EMPLOYMENT TRENDS IN INDIA

The number of employed persons in India increased to 29650 Thousand in 2012 from 28999 Thousand in 2011. Employed Persons in India averaged 25169.51 Thousand from 1971 until 2012, reaching an all-time high of 29650 Thousand in 2012 and a record low of 17491 Thousand in 1971. Employed Persons in India is reported by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI).

Another statistics that the International Labour Organization had released clearly indicates the declining number of opportunities in India during the last 12 years relating to the market volatility, recession and lack of suitable skill that further adds oil to the burning problem.



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Source for Table 1 & 2: ILO - Trends Econometric Models, October 2013.

Year	Total employment ('000)	Youth employment ('000)
2006	4,44,948	89,872
2007	4,47,768	87,681
2008	4,47,670	84,272
2009	4,48,189	81,198
2010	4,50,228	77,659
2011	4,53,082	75,502
2012	4,55,340	73,024
2013p	4,63,193	73,168
2014p	4,71,101	73,309
2015p	4,79,122	73,501
2016p	4,87,198	73,719
2017p	4,95,186	73,904

Table 2

Year	Youth-to-adult ratio of unemployment rate In India
2006	3.6
2007	3.8
2008	3.8
2009	3.8
2010	5.0
2011	5.0
2012	5.1
2013p	4.8
2014p	4.6
2015p	4.4
2016p	4.3
2017p	4.3

The above statistics sourced from International Labour Organization indicates that the unemployment rate pertaining to youth to adult ratio is higher in 2016 than what it was before ten years indicating stiff competition and lack of sustainability among graduates which may be attributed to the fact that education without soft skills may become troublesome in the long run.

Soft Skills

Soft skills are used often in hiring context. It is the most misunderstood or misinterpreted terminology but helps one to define his or her leadership and creativity. It's difficult to determine who is best at soft skills similar to that of innovation or diplomacy.

Soft skills are about projecting one self and one's professional skills in the best possible way and taking a holistic view of things (Shalini Varma, 2009)

Soft skills are those skills over and above the technical knowledge and expertise in the chosen field required for an individual to relate to and survive and succeed in his or her own environment. (Ramesh Mahadevan & Gopaldasamy Mahadevan, 2010)

Soft Skills involve:

Ability to function harmoniously with others Being open to learning new ideas Tolerating different views, unpleasant situations and diverse culture Ability to manage our emotions Controlling a situation weighing its sensitivities and fine tuning our actions to match them.

Soft Skills Initiative

To bridge the gap between skills imparted by engineering schools and the abilities, industry looks for in potential employees; the Government of India is rolling out an ambitious plan to top-up the existing technical syllabus across industrial training institutes with modules aimed at making them ready for the modern workplace. Over 500 hours of training content on soft skills like inter-personal communication and functional English to be used for daily workplace chores, practical know-how on dealing with emergencies in work domains and most importantly, IT skills necessary to browse the iNet and social media, and operate office productivity tools". The Government of India has come forward taking initiatives in skill development activities and job creation programmes. In order to make such initiatives a successful one, we need to motivate graduates to learn soft skill. By doing so graduates can leverage on such opportunities with confidence as they would be able to understand and materialize their dreams.

Need for Soft Skills

India is considered as one of the fastest growing economy with the GDP growing at 7-8% as stated by IMF in its recent reports. Being one of the most competitive workforces in the global market and comparatively cost effective, Indian markets see a brighter opportunity in future investments. With 250 million people to join the working community in the next decade only 5% of people aged 20-24 are being equipped with soft skills through their formal training mechanism. This is not sufficient and may turn out to be a potential threat to our children and the nation at large in creating the ability to attract, convert future investment into a livelihood.

With globalization, innovation and digitalization driving global competition and growing consumer expectations, goods and services will have to constantly evolve to remain relevant, as will the skills required to deliver them. It is estimated that 6 out of 10 young people entering the workforce by 2025 will be in professions that do not exist today.

Even though big number of students graduate every year they lack creative thinking and problem solving skills which will be a major problem to succeed in their career. Hence the need to invest in soft skill has become a basic necessity in our daily lives. Graduates need to consider these facts and imbibe soft skills to thrive in today's globalized market.

The Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI), a study published annually by INSEAD, Human Capital Leadership Institute (HCLI) and Adecco Group, has ranked 109 countries on their ability to grow, attract and retain talent. India is placed at the 90th position in labour vocational skills. Keeping these facts in our mind the need to encourage our graduates to imbibe soft skills into their daily life is not only the need of the hour, but the only tool to survive in this job market. An exhaustive list of skills that needs to be imparted to our next generation is shown below.

Communication Skills

Verbal Communication, Body Language, Writing, Listening , Presentation Skills, Public Speaking , Interviewing

Leadership

Team Building, Strategic Planning, Coaching, Mentoring, Delegation, Dispute Resolution Diplomacy, Giving Feedback, Decision Making, Performance Management, Supervising, Talent Management, Crisis Management

Influencing

Inspiring, Persuasion, Negotiation, Motivating

Interpersonal Skills

Networking, Interpersonal Relationships, Personal Branding

Personal Skills

Emotional-Intelligence, Self-Awareness, Stress Management, Tolerance to Change, Taking Criticism, Self-Confidence, Adaptability, Assertiveness, Competitiveness, Self-Assessment, Work-Life Balance, Empathy

Creativity

Innovation

Professional Skills

Organization, Planning, Scheduling, Business and Technology Trend Awareness, Research, Business Etiquette, Diversity Awareness, Intercultural Competence, Training, Customer Service, Entrepreneurial Thinking.

Considering these facts, the present scenario seems to worsen in the coming days. The need to equip our children to cope with these difficult times is the need of the hour. Soft Skills is also referred to as life skills because it is not a tool preparing a graduate to acquire a job but it prepares a person for his career and life at large.

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