

THE BIG IMPACT OF SOFT SKILLS IN TODAY'S WORKPLACE

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to understand the altering demand of skills due to globalization's impact on workforces. Globalization and privatization in our economy has created lot of job opportunities for the youth. Conversely still we are unable to reap the benefits of this growth of opportunities as we lack in skilled labor. Skills which are considered to be important by our graduates are hard skills. Whereas, the employers are looking for proper blend of hard and soft skills, their wish to employ and promote those candidates who are quick-witted, ethical, and self-coordinated with good communication skills. Shortage of proper skills or soft skills in the graduates has created new lows in recruitment by organizations. Many vocational and multitude colleges have sprung up in every nook and corner to bring up skilled labor, but still they are unable to employ skilled and trained faculty or to carter the right requirement of skills which are in demand. Because of which the students are not competent enough to survive or find a job in the market.

Keywords: Soft Skills, Hard Skills, Workplace, Training, Productivity

INTRODUCTION

Education Institutes plays an important role in imparting proper soft skills training to bridge the gap between campus and workplace, In the globalization era, the employers assume employees to know how to behave at workplace and understand the importance of intrapersonal skills and know how to master them over time, as in any job the employees have to team up and get things done, more importance is being effective in meetings, delivering presentations and client visits.

The individuals with right skill set and knowledge can only benefit from the integration with globalization of economy, the other individual who lack the skills and knowledge will be left behind. Many researchers emphasize the importance of soft skills that employers value, rather than focusing heavily on intellectual skills [Dench, 1997; Hunt & Baruch, 2003; Nabi, 2003].

Employers are no more interested with individuals who have only specific skills and lack the other significant skills, particularly the soft skills, skilled full employees are considered as an Asset that are acquired and valued throughout the lifetime of the organization. The graduates must understand and use their skills and knowledge effectively in the workplace, as and when with time the knowledge and skills keep changing as per the technology, environment and market demand change, inevitably the employee is also required to adapt the changes in skills and knowledge.

The responsibility lies with the educational institution which needs to understand the importance of providing soft-skills training to students to bridge the gap between campus and industry. While imparting training, graduate must be appreciated as their have different personality types and styles, capabilities and different pace of learning. The focus of the faculty must not only be on team activities but also on an individual's ability to read, think, exercise and apply the knowledge. Finally at the end of every session it is necessary to provide proper feedback to them, which should help the graduates to know their drawback and learn how to overcome.

Different sessions such as role-plays, Case studies, debates, business games, group discussions and outward bound training shall always be apart of soft skill training as their help the graduate to convert knowledge into skills and abilities effectively and builds their confidence.

Definition of Soft Skills

In Simple language soft skills are personal characteristics or abilities that could empower anyone to interact effectively and harmoniously with others. These characteristics or qualities make up who you are including our attitudes, habits and personality which we acquire through educational, work and life experiences.

In previous times, the individuals who had excellent academic record with work experience were very much required by most of the corporate institutions.

But in today's competitive workplace, the employers are not just looking for experience and knowledge but however combined with soft skills. Soft skills are the interpersonal and life skills that help candidate to share their hard skills effectively. These skills are collection of personality traits, positive attributes, communication abilities collective with social charm and competencies that improve an employee's relationship and performance on the job. Although soft skills existed in different form. In 1972 there were used for the first time, And until early 1990s is was not much widely used.

Moss and Tilly define soft skills as: "Skills, abilities, and traits that pertain to personality, attitude and behavior rather than to formal or technical knowledge." These skills help you to pleasantly present your hard skills, these skills are very much required at every level & with each n everyone in the organization to perform and succeed.

According to Hewitt Sean (2008) soft skills are "non-technical, intangible, personality specific skills" which determines an individual's strength as "a leader, listener and negotiator, or as a conflict mediator". Soft skills are the traits and abilities of attitude and behavior rather than of knowledge or technical aptitude (Tobin, 2006).

Soft skills are the ability of a person which helps them to perform effectively at workplace, the increased growth in the service sector has outstretched the importance of these types of skills, which have consequently occurred as a crucial feature for the success of enterprises and organizations (Dale, 2008).

Hard Skills Vs Soft Skills

Every organization during interviews are looking forward for candidates with two skill sets, Hard Skills and soft skills.

Hard Skills are any skills which can be measured or defined as specific or which can be learned, these skills are core skills, technical skills and domain skills example: accounting and learning a new software. which are easily recognized by the employer or recruiter as there are mentioned on resume or CV.

Whereas soft skills are qualities or personal attributes that makes anyone a great professional or a good employee or team member, Also known as "people skills" or "interpersonal skills," soft skills relate to the way you relate to and interact with other people.

INTEGRATE SOFT SKILLS TRAINING INTO EVERY ELEMENT OF CURRICULUM

Unemployment is a major issue in many countries including Saudi Arabia and Ministry of Higher education which was established in 1975 has been facing this issue as a biggest challenge to develop occupational skills, improve knowledge and make local graduates more eye-catching for the employers. Skills and knowledge acquired should be transformed into successful workplace performance is the key demand in International and local market. Many Researches and surveys have recommended that employers are more worried about soft skills rather than technical knowledge or experiences.

A study done by Evers, Rush, and Berdow (1998) indicated that the competencies students need to develop in order to enhance their employability are self-management; communications; managing people and tasks; and mobilizing innovation and change. In a survey of 400 employers on their perception of workplace basic skills and competencies required for current and potential employees, the employers said that they want entry-level workers to possess employability skills rather than technology competencies, and the most important to these employers (rating over 92.6%) were basic skills, thinking skills, personal quality skills, and interpersonal competencies (Richens and McClain 2000).

At the same time traditional classrooms and traditional instruction models are changed as an effect of globalization, as we are preparing next generation, which demands employees to have skills for a competitive, global and technology based environment. The classroom demographics are completely changed now, which demands the instructors as well to change or transform as there are preparing the next generation.

The students are more mature now who tend to be more focused, needs new learning and dynamic environment and more motivation with exceptional role models to follow. . The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) Management Education Task Force identified a need for business programs to blur the boundaries between educational disciplines and offer innovative programs. Business programs are encouraged to use effective pedagogies and to include action learning and technology (AACSB, 2002). This reasoning is supported by previous literature that asserts a variety of instructional strategies should be used to develop and achieve different learning objectives and attainable learner's outcomes.

It's very important to develop a framework, While integrating soft skills training in their curriculums, the university, college and institution should use the framework as a guide and follow these few steps to ensure constancy and development.

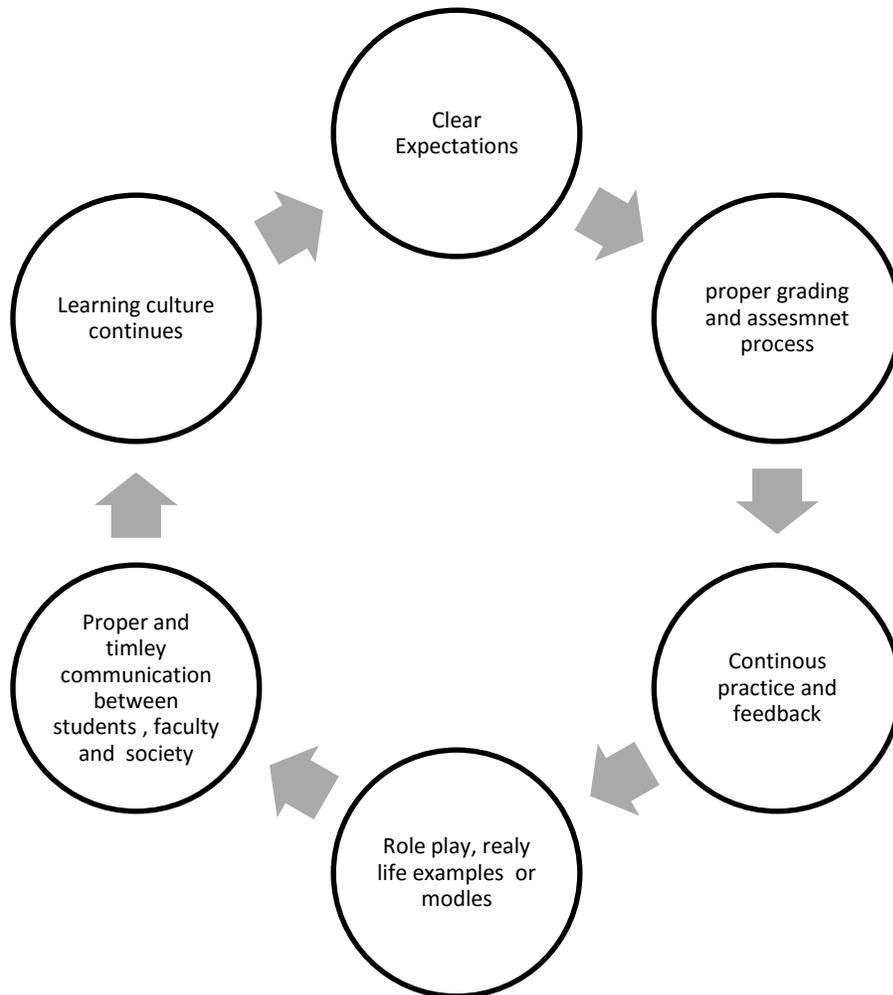


Figure reference: The Importance of Soft Skills in Entry-Level Employment and Postsecondary Success: Perspectives from Employers and Community Colleges, Author: Jennifer Pritchard, Editor: David Kaz, Page # 37 Summary of soft skills development best practices and assessments

BUILDING ROAD FOR DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION

As many other countries Saudi Arabia, wants to provide meaningful jobs to their citizens, the kingdom has taken many initiates to address the issue of employment and create more and more jobs for the citizens and to have a developed workforce which is desired by the employers in the country.

The biggest government organization which has been given the task to develop the youth is Technical and Vocational Training Corporation, established in 1980, which gets all technical and vocational training institutions in the Kingdom together, At present, TVTC oversees 150 institutes including the Colleges of Technology, Girl's Higher Technical Institutes and the Standard Technical Training Institute, concentrating on building relationships with

employers and developing the job seekers have the required qualifications and skills to match up with opportunities in the markets.

We are entering into a digital era where things are changing drastically and we getting dependent more and more on technology. Students are been encouraged towards e learning, blended learning and other e platforms which could help them secure employment skills. Its very important to have a knowledge based economy, which can be very well explained by a report published in world's largest multinational publishing and Education Company headquartered in London, Pearson PLC, Have found that schools which are viewed as best worldwide are those influence dynamic learning, which consolidates four key components essential for any understudy to set out on moving into the work showcase and to wind up the most in keep with the future's posts.

The report, by Charlie Leadbeater, determined that the application of the four factors of 'dynamic learning' will drive the Middle East towards further development.

As per leadbeater, education in any world best school is a dynamic action, giving a proper mix of four elements, firstly knowledge, basic literacy and number skills, which leads us to core content and higher concepts and thinking skills.

Personal growth being the second element, which helps the students to understand ambition, goal and purpose which shapes their resilience and persistence; the third element is social skills, to teach students how to develop associations with others, to make exchange and coordinated effort, and move together to make and get things done for and with other individuals; and the fourth element being 'agency', where students learn how to be innovative or creative with turning knowledge and ideas into action, to get a sense of accomplishment in them that their can bring a change in the world.

Talking about the outcomes of his paper, Charlie Leadbeater says: 'Learning becomes more powerful when it becomes more dynamic. This happens when the elements overlap, when learning becomes a social, dialogic and collaborative activity; when knowledge is tested and put to use in the cause of making something; when learning becomes a personal journey requiring resilience and determination. Great places to learn are places where these four aspects of learning overlap, interact and gain momentum from one another.'

In Today's contest, Education should make graduates to prosper in a social deficient with the help of smart technology move into the job market well designed by new technological advancement, still there are many more basic difficulties on the planet that require human arrangements from future pioneers.

CONCLUSION: HOW TO CLOSE THE SKILL GAP.

In today's very competitive market its getting difficult for the industry to acquire the right skill candidate, here are few important things which need to look upon or could act as help in closing the gap between the job market and graduates.

The problem can be solved at the bottom rather than coming up with new demands from the top, the only way to respond the challenge is to let the faculty members, universities or training and vocational college and the market know exactly what the employers are looking for in the candidate.

Second, An learning environment has to be created and this can happen only with the help of government or the state authorities that can develop the campuses in various ways like allocation of financial resource, setting priorities, mandating standards, reviewing and approving the program and conducting proper research on timely bases to let know the Training institute or community college regarding the new market demand or to state clear what cognitive skills and soft skills the industry is looking for and what technologies will make it easier for students to gain access in acquiring those skills, and how is that the colleges and institutions need to ensure in their remedial education system which can help the candidate to transform from student to ready workforce.

Final, Significant responsibility lies with the students and graduates in trying to understand and transform as per the demand and this can be effectively done only with University Cooperative Training Program, on job training programs and internship, Industry must be involved in each step and business partnership with university, training institutes and community colleges is must to create and improve proper workforce for future.

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