



## **EMPOWERING PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS WITH SOFT SKILLS**

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### **Empowering Prospective Teachers With Soft Skills**

#### **Introduction:**

Education plays a significant role in developing and shaping the economic and social development for nations in a competitive world. In knowledge-based economics, government would view universities as a platform for change in the society and expanding prosperity. In the modern world the stock of knowledge is far greater and the pace of growth is very quick thus, the Indian society is experiencing social, cultural and economic change. In this context the Teacher's academic and social responsibilities have taken a new dimension and made the task of the teacher quiet difficult and challenging. The main responsibility of shaping the behaviour of students is in the hands of teacher. Teachers in fact, are the designers of the future of their Students. Hence, Prospective teachers should not only be intellectually competent and technically skilled but also civilized in their emotions and refined in their state. Teacher Education institutions should now look towards the Skill- Development of the prospective teachers.

#### **Importance of Teacher Education Program:**

Teacher Education = Teaching Skills + Pedagogical theory + Professional skills. It includes effective classroom management skills, preparation and use of instructional materials and communication skills. Pedagogical theory includes the philosophical, sociological and psychological considerations that would enable the teachers to have a sound basis for practicing the teaching skills in the classroom. The theory is stage specific and is based on the needs and requirements that are characteristic of that stage. Professional skills include the techniques, strategies and approaches that would help teachers to grow in the profession and also work towards the growth of the profession. It includes soft skills, counseling skills,

interpersonal skills, computer skills, information retrieving and management skills and above all lifelong learning skills. An amalgamation of teaching skills, pedagogical theory and professional skills would serve to create the right knowledge, attitude and skills in teachers, thus promoting holistic development. Infusing the soft skills in the curriculum of teacher education is the need of the profession for it to be successful. Soft skills complement hard skills which are the technical requirements of a profession.

### **What does Soft Skill really mean?**

Soft skills play a vital role in professional success of individuals. Soft skills are also called human skill and people skill, complementing the hard skill. Soft skills are personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance and career prospects and hard skills which tend to be specific to a certain type of task or activity. We could say that soft skills refer to personality traits, social gracefulness, and fluency in language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism that mark to varying degrees. According to World Health Organization (WHO), "Soft Skills are nothing but Psychological Skills, which insists upon accepting the behavior of others along with their culture". Fundamental Soft Skills put forth by WHO are: Self- Awareness-Self Esteem; Critical thinking Skills; Decision Making skills; Problem Solving skills; Interpersonal Skills; Communication Skills; Empathy; Coping with emotions; Handling peer pressure and Negotiation Skills.

Soft Skill differs from culture to culture, place to place and hierarchy to hierarchy. In countries like India, where a variety of cultures exist, a mechanical engineer need not have the knowledge of cultural awareness whereas for a human resource manager or a public relations manager, it is a 'must-know'.

If we analyze the list of soft skills, we can clearly narrow down on two categories of implementation of skills – namely: i) must have ii) good to have

The **(must have)** soft skills must be acquired by each and every individual in the institutions of teacher education without which; the student is regarded as incompetent in the skill. The **(good to have)** soft skills can be regarded as the additional generic skills and a bonus to the student if these skills are acquired by the students together with the must have soft skills.

### **Why are soft skills important?**

After having elaborated so much on soft skills, the answer to why they are considered as being so important is still open. There are numerous reasons for having a critical look at a person's soft skills. One straightforward reason is today's job-market, which in many fields is becoming ever increasingly competitive job market. To be successful in this tough

environment, candidates for jobs have to bring along a “competitive edge” that distinguishes them from other candidates with similar qualifications and comparable evaluation results. And where do they find this competitive advantage? In bringing along additional knowledge and skills, added up by convincing personal traits and habits. Simple fact, which can be verified in daily business life, is that employers prefer to promote staff members with superior soft skills. Good hard skills alone are not necessarily enough anymore to be a first choice when it comes to promotion.

### **Which Soft skills are important for prospective teachers?**

There are various soft skills essential to succeed in any job environment. Some of them are briefed below:

1. Communication skill:

The teacher must have excellent communication skill to succeed as a teacher. The teacher must be able to explain his lessons in a clear way so that it can be understood by students of different ages and abilities. He must be able to tactfully communicate with parents on regular basis. He must have ability to deliver idea clearly, effectively and with confidence either orally or in writing. Communication skills are the back bone for teacher’s personality and career development. Only through practice teachers would become effective and excellent.

2. Decision Making Skill:

This will help teachers able to think in creative, critical, analytical and innovative manners that encompass the ability for applying knowledge.

3. Leadership skill:

It is the ability and readiness to inspire guide direct or manage others. A leader is defined as one who has followers. An effective leadership skill, enables teachers to work together with peers, and involves teachers in the opportunity of areas to create and activities to undertake. It was observed that any programme for teacher education is to provide them needed knowledge, to develop pedagogical and leadership skills and so on.

4. Interpersonal skill:

Teaching can be considered as fifty percent knowledge and fifty percent interpersonal skills. That means while teaching, a teacher should not just maintain the quantity of his lecture but also quality of lecture. This quality of lecture can be provided with the help of interpersonal skills. Interpersonal communication is the manner in which information is shared or exchanged between a small numbers of people whether they are same or different from each

other. This can be healthy as well as harsh. Healthy interpersonal skills lead to creative and effective approaches to solve problems and get work done.

5. Time management skill:

It is important to prioritize your task as per the institutional needs and execute them in the descending order of priority. Life gets busy, both in and out of the workplace. You need to be able to balance your workload and prioritize what gets done.

6. Team work skill:

Team work is to develop a stringent sense of commitment and responsibilities, it also develop qualities like respecting the thoughts and opinions of others in the group.

7. Problem solving skill:

It is a planned attack upon a difficulty for the purpose of finding a solution. The teacher has to define the problem clearly and the success of problem solving technique needs skillful teacher.

### **Need of Soft Skills for teaching community:**

The teachers should approve their soft skills for effective teaching-Learning process for the following reasons:

- Certification is not an end in itself: technical skills do matter: In order to succeed in teaching teachers definitely need to have technical skills with a good grasp of the fundamentals. The institution requires a teacher to fortify himself on a continuous basis with up to date tech knowledge and concepts. A teacher needs soft skills to create opportunity for himself.
- Enhancing teacher career: To bring value to institution and students, teachers are getting more involved in non- technical activities to carry out their teaching tasks.
- Empowerment of teachers in creating opportunities: Soft skills are useful for creating and taking advantage of opportunities –jobs, careers.
- Improvement of teachers' personal growth: The acquisition of soft skills also empowers teacher to build flexibility into future teaching career plans. Most soft skills are regarded as transferrable skills, example communication, administration and team work, which are needed in nearly all aspects of life.
- Development of professional ethics: Soft skills are useful for creating positive conduct.

- Helpful in facing challenges: A soft skill provides a must-have foundation for career growth. They give teachers' ability to take advantage of challenges and opportunity that will come in a teachers' way.
- Helpful in employment: In the present scenario recruiters prefer to appoint and endorse those persons who are resourceful, ethical and self directed with good soft skills. Soft skills are necessary for achieving employability.

### **Development of soft skills through support programs:**

This involves programs and activities that are created, developed and used to support soft skills either directly or indirectly. In general, the program and activity can be divided into two: (i) Academic Support Program and (ii) Non-Academic Support Program.

The **academic support program** is to help students acquire the soft skills that are associated with academic matters. As for the **non-academic support program**, it assists students to acquire the soft skills that are not related to academic matters but more of personality and professional development of the students. Most of the programs and activities are co-curricular and extra co-curricular. The fundamental courses are most important for teacher trainees to inculcate the soft skills. The hard skills are most visible and tangible and relatively easy to teach capable of being measured and therefore evaluated. Soft skills are interpersonal and human relations skills in other words "people skills" which include social, psychological and communicational skills. The institutions of the teacher education should be motivated to produce quality teachers who are equally intelligent, possess excellent attitude, high ethical and moral values. Hence, reorientation of teacher education curriculum should concentrate on infusing soft skills related aspects to meet the needs of society. So, teacher education programmes have to make a conscious effort in designing courses that generate deeper understanding of three skills viz., hard skills, soft skills and conceptual skills.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, we can say that Soft Skills occupy supreme importance and individuals who do not have them will be at receiving end. One has to take the trouble to acquire Soft Skills beyond academic or technical knowledge. Soft Skills are gaining importance in all areas of the work industry. Faculties have a major role to play here by imparting their respective courses by using Soft Skills and at the same time making sure that their students practice Soft Skills during their University time. It is high time for the faculties to change their methodology in imparting education. This holds true for schools, colleges, Universities as well as parents. It is everybody's responsibility to make sure that proper grooming, etiquette and Soft Skills are practiced at all

times. If each individual contributes his / her bit, the society, at large, would improve dramatically, and become better place to live in.

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