Understanding the development of Soft Skills in professional students of Engineering colleges of rural area of Guntur district

Dr. Ponnuru Mahesh, Assistant Professor & Soft Skills Trainer,Vignan's Foundation for Science, Technology and Research,(A Deemed to be University) Vadlamudi,E- Mail: mahesh.softskills@gmail.com

Abstract: Nowadays, having rich knowledge in core subjects is not only a focal point, but other aspects like Soft Skills also play a vital role in students' success in campus interviews. The ability to interact with others and solve general issues effectively is known as emotional intelligence or Soft Skills. Soft Skills will have an influence on students' attitudes, desires, beliefs, feelings, etc. The rural background students are on par with the urban ones in knowledge, but many of them were found to have a dearth of communication and Soft Skills. Rural students who are studying engineering education must be provided enough soft skills training in order to prepare them to perform well at the time of the interview and attain their dream job. There is a great need to abolish the inhibitions in rural students.

Introduction:

Soft Skill is a broad term that includes various skills like interactive skills, teamwork skills, problem-solving, decision-making, etc. They are very essential for professional students in today's world. It has become the demand of multinational companies that whoever they recruit for any job position, the candidate must have basic soft skills such as interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. "Hard skills" can be learnable and measurable skills that help individuals accomplish job-specific tasks.

In many positions and occupations, job performance is dependent on soft skills. Every professional student should strive hard to acquire good communication skills and soft skills, which are the most important prerequisites for securing a job and excelling in one's career.

Urban students are exposed to various training programs with ample facilities and with special training in schools to improve their basic language skills and communication skills, whereas rural students have only limited exposure to learning English and communication skills and other requisite Soft Skills. Even these rural students are less aware of the importance of soft skills, which is the major reason that they get set back unhappily most of the time when they attend campus recruitment drives. So, there is a need to put additional effort into developing the Soft Skills of professional students who join engineering colleges from rural areas.

In recent years, many engineering colleges have been established in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. There are more than 50 Engineering colleges in Guntur district. Earlier, there were only four colleges in the district. There are many reasons for the increase in the number of these colleges. They might be globalization, the fee reimbursement scheme provided by the government to not only SC, ST, and BC students but also to the EBC (Economically backward) students, etc. Many rural students utilize the government's scheme by joining professional courses (B.Tech and MBA) and trying to fulfill their aspirations. The majority of these rural have good academic percentages, but most of them are not skilled beyond academics to secure a job.

"The mushrooming of technical and professional institutions in India has resulted in the millions of professionals and technocrats' contribution to the Indian labor market. But employability among these passed out professionals is commonly discussed topic in almost every HR forum" (Divya Shukla, 2012:6). The mushrooming of engineering colleges in the Guntur district since 2001 also gave opportunity to the students to do professional courses (B.Tech and MBA) to make their dream come true. Year by year, the number of colleges and their intake have increased. "One of the challenges in engineering education in India today is to improve the soft skills of the engineers and prepare them for the workplace" (Dr. et al., 2012:54). But, without having any vision about the employment of students, the management of many colleges give admissions to students in hundreds every year. "It has been a long-standing complaint of employers as well as the managers, that the newcomers, i.e., students fresh out of college/ universities, lack soft skills and are unemployable" (Dharmarajan. P.V, 2012:1). According to a survey, thousands of students are unemployable even after successful completion of their professional degree in the two Telugu states (AP and Telangana). In spite of the recession, there are some jobs for technical and management graduates in corporate companies (MNCs). These vacancies are waiting to be filled with skilled and knowledgeable people. It is being observed that students who have a good academic percentage are not able to get recruited for these vacancies. This situation is the reason for the initiation of this research work. The presumed reasons are that, though most professional students are experts in their core subject, some of them lack some important personal skills that are crucial for attaining a job in these MNCs. The so-called soft skills or employability skills (personal skills) have become essential for every professional student these days. Many graduates are unemployable due to their insufficient soft skills.

This unemployment of many graduates causes this research to proceed for estimating the levels of soft skills in the professional students of Guntur district. Alarmingly, the major unemployment graduates belong to private institutions.

Research Objective:

To know the reason why many rural students look unhappy after attending the campus interview for not securing a job, in spite of having a good academic record.

- To know whether the management of the colleges is bridging the Soft Skills gap of rural students from education to employment by making them involved in skills training programs.
- To understand the development of Soft Skills in students before and after completion of the sufficient training program.

Review of Literature

In this globalized environment, professional graduates' roles have been changed (B.Tech and MBA). Educational approaches and programs are subjective to the necessities of the moving external atmosphere both in the universal and local context. There are ongoing discussions that professional organizations should adapt to the fast-changing external demands and requirements of different stakeholders. While some opined that it is the responsibility of universities to provide skilled graduates into the workforce, others accept that academia has to play a crucial role in broader society. Therefore, the a need to ensure students graduate with adaptability and a mix of soft skills and technical skills that allow them to adapt to changes and pursue various career paths rather than being trained as experts in a niche that may become obsolete as the external environment changes Unfortunately, many professional students of various engineering colleges are aware of what Soft skills are and its significant role during the interview process. They must know that soft skills create opportunities for themselves to showcase their technical abilities. They should use soft skills to grab opportunities with both hands to avoid unemployment.

Unemployment is a state where individuals have educational eligibility, capability, and suitability but a dearth of employment opportunities (Maran. K, Chandra Sekhar. V, 2015:2). In India, the present situation is more of unavailability skilled persons, in spite of having more job opportunities. It is time for fresh, professional students and the management of professional engineering colleges to recognize the massive barrier that exists between fresh graduates and the expectations and needs of corporate companies. However, sound skills in technology, along with required people skills, are two major components that every professional student should focus on. The lack of awareness in professional students on the employability skills that are required to get employed, added to the casual approach by the engineering institutes in administering these life skills, has only compounded the problem and perceptions of engineering students towards understanding the need for employability skills. Perception on any issue is largely based on belief and experience. The fact is that the institutes/universities have largely designed the engineering or management studies curriculum, addressing only the technical subjects. Young professional students ignorantly believe and perceive that employability skills are all about technical subjects without understanding the hard reality of employability skills. The academia has a greater role in changing the perception of engineering students towards their employability skills.

Dr. Vijaya Lakshmi. 's' (2016) research paper entitled "Soft- The Need of the Hour for Professional Competence: A Review on Interpersonal Skills and Intrapersonal Skills Theories"

revealed that acquiring both intra and interpersonal skills are essential for graduates for professional capability. She said that soft skills or behavioral skills, which are a cluster of personal qualities like friendliness, optimism, communication skills, teamwork, and goal setting, play a significant role in a person's success, and they help one in adapting to novel circumstances.

Dr. Sukhwinder Singh Jolly's (2012) research article titled "Developing Soft Skills for Enhancing Employability of Engineering Graduates." In this article, he opined that professional students are expected to be employable when they complete their studies. According to him, employers expect professional students not only to be proficient technically but also to be well equipped with the appropriate soft skills essential at the workplace. This balance creates a competitive environment among students. Normally, engineering students are often sound enough technically, but a lack of soft skills leaves them not prepared for the contemporary requirements of the workplace. He found that the major challenge in higher education in India today is to improve the soft skills of young engineers and prepare them for the work environment. The competent engineers must This new age world expects, along with hard skills and the latest knowledge in emerging India, cool and competent engineers who can acquit themselves well in the workplace. He felt the actual situation is that in the increasingly globalized world and internationalized nature of the workplace, only 25% of engineering graduates are employable. They need to improve greatly in the areas of communication, presentation, language skills, leadership qualities, teamwork, and learning new subjects.

Dr.Shika Seetha (2013) remarked in her research paper titled "Necessity of Soft Skills training for Students and Professionals" that India is one of the developing countries with a lot of manpower resources, but it is not being properly utilized. Employers prefer to hire and promote those persons who are self-directed, have soft skills, and are ethical and resourceful. She felt that though soft skills have such great significance, many institutions are reluctant to include soft skills training in the curriculum. The issue of the employability of graduates has become a very serious problem. "Soft skills such as leadership qualities, communication, team building, etc., have become crucial for hiring and promoting employees to keep positions" (Audibert and James). She opined that effective communication and interpersonal skills are crucial to increase job opportunities and to compete in the business environment. The real key to the effectiveness of professionals is their ability to put their domain knowledge into effective practice. In this situation, soft skills play an active role. She emphasizes that to enhance or to hone soft skills traits among students, some training modules have to be included at the college level. Therefore, this published paper sheds light on the need for soft skills training programs in colleges and workplaces, and there is a great need to reduce the lacunae that exist among students by introducing such training programs.

According to Dr. Arvind Agrawal's (2013) research titled "Study of Developments and Challenges Involved in Soft Skills Training in Professional Colleges," the last two decades, in particular, influenced the way business has 'transitioned' due to the impact of information technology. Opening of global markets, multicultural business practices, and strange competition compared to that being described only as "cut-throat" traditionally. This influenced the workplace culture and expectations of employers from employees. He thought that job

opportunities for the graduates and post-graduates passing out from professional colleges had been an area of concern (with India having a huge population in the economically productive age group of 18-50. With the rapid expansion of the professional education system in India, there is a need to diagnose the pattern of skill development and personal development initiatives. He found in his research that only 2.6% of engineering passed outs are really employable. He believes that a greater purpose would be to provide graduate students encouragement, support, and confidence to develop and realize their valuable, employable skills. We can better guide graduate students and prepare them for the current job market by using the soft skills training program. It is stated that graduate students should use their competencies and skills for good placements.

Methodology:

For this study, one of the informal experimental research designs, i.e., "Before-and-after without control design," was used. In this design, a single test group or area is selected, and the dependent variable is measured before the treatment is introduced. The treatment is then introduced, and the dependent variable is measured again after the treatment has been introduced. The effect of the treatment would be equal to the phenomenon after the treatment minus the level of the phenomenon before the treatment. The design is represented thus:

Test areas: Level of phenomenon   Treatment   level of phenomenon
               Before treatment (X)   Introduced   after treatment (Y)

Population and Sample

The data is collected from total of eighty (80) professional students of rural college of St. Mary's Group of Institutions Guntur. These students were selected based on their highest attendance percentage to their regular classes and based on their good academic percentage.

Data Analysis:

Table indicating the students' pre-test and post-test marks analysis.

S.No	Marks in the pre-test(20M) (x_1)	Marks in the post-test(20M) (x_2)	Variation in the marks $(x_1 - x_2)$	$(x_1 - \overline{x}_1)$	$(x_1 - \overline{x}_1)^2$	$(x_2 - \overline{x}_2)$	$(x_2 - \overline{x}_2)^2$
1	7	18	-11	0.325	0.105625	0.8	0.64
2	8	17	-9	1.325	1.755625	-0.2	0.04
3	5	17	-12	-1.675	2.805625	-0.2	0.04
4	9	18	-9	2.325	5.405625	0.8	0.64
5	7	19	-12	0.325	0.105625	1.8	3.24
6	7	18	-11	0.325	0.105625	0.8	0.64

7	9	19	-10	2.325	5.405625	1.8	3.24
8	3	15	-12	-3.675	13.50563	-2.2	4.84
9	6	17	-11	-0.675	0.455625	-0.2	0.04
10	6	19	-13	-0.675	0.455625	1.8	3.24
11	8	18	-10	1.325	1.755625	0.8	0.64
12	6	16	-10	-0.675	0.455625	-1.2	1.44
13	7	16	-9	0.325	0.105625	-1.2	1.44
14	7	17	-10	0.325	0.105625	-0.2	0.04
15	6	19	-13	-0.675	0.455625	1.8	3.24
16	8	18	-10	1.325	1.755625	0.8	0.64
17	5	17	-12	-1.675	2.805625	-0.2	0.04
18	5	18	-13	-1.675	2.805625	0.8	0.64
19	6	17	-11	-0.675	0.455625	-0.2	0.04
20	5	15	-10	-1.675	2.805625	-2.2	4.84
21	4	17	-13	-2.675	7.155625	-0.2	0.04
22	4	17	-13	-2.675	7.155625	-0.2	0.04
23	8	16	-8	1.325	1.755625	-1.2	1.44
24	3	18	-15	-3.675	13.50563	0.8	0.64
25	3	18	-15	-3.675	13.50563	0.8	0.64
26	5	18	-13	-1.675	2.805625	0.8	0.64
27	2	17	-15	-4.675	21.85563	-0.2	0.04
28	2	16	-14	-4.675	21.85563	-1.2	1.44
29	3	18	-15	-3.675	13.50563	0.8	0.64
30	1	17	-16	-5.675	32.20563	-0.2	0.04

31	4	19	-15	-2.675	7.155625	1.8	3.24
32	7	18	-11	0.325	0.105625	0.8	0.64
33	5	17	-12	-1.675	2.805625	-0.2	0.04
34	5	19	-14	-1.675	2.805625	1.8	3.24
35	3	17	-14	-3.675	13.50563	-0.2	0.04
36	4	16	-12	-2.675	7.155625	-1.2	1.44
37	5	17	-12	-1.675	2.805625	-0.2	0.04
38	4	19	-15	-2.675	7.155625	1.8	3.24
39	2	19	-17	-4.675	21.85563	1.8	3.24
40	4	18	-14	-2.675	7.155625	0.8	0.64
41	5	16	-11	-1.675	2.805625	-1.2	1.44
42	6	15	-9	-0.675	0.455625	-2.2	4.84
43	4	14	-10	-2.675	7.155625	-3.2	10.24
44	8	19	-11	1.325	1.755625	1.8	3.24
45	9	18	-9	2.325	5.405625	0.8	0.64
46	6	19	-13	-0.675	0.455625	1.8	3.24
47	5	17	-12	-1.675	2.805625	-0.2	0.04
48	7	15	-8	0.325	0.105625	-2.2	4.84
49	5	16	-11	-1.675	2.805625	-1.2	1.44
50	6	17	-11	-0.675	0.455625	-0.2	0.04
51	8	18	-10	1.325	1.755625	0.8	0.64
52	7	14	-7	0.325	0.105625	-3.2	10.24
53	9	15	-6	2.325	5.405625	-2.2	4.84
54	4	16	-12	-2.675	7.155625	-1.2	1.44

55	5	17	-12	-1.675	2.805625	-0.2	0.04
56	68	16	52	61.325	3760.756	-1.2	1.44
57	7	15	-8	0.325	0.105625	-2.2	4.84
58	9	15	-6	2.325	5.405625	-2.2	4.84
59	9	18	-9	2.325	5.405625	0.8	0.64
60	5	19	-14	-1.675	2.805625	1.8	3.24
61	8	17	-9	1.325	1.755625	-0.2	0.04
62	7	16	-9	0.325	0.105625	-1.2	1.44
63	4	15	-11	-2.675	7.155625	-2.2	4.84
64	8	18	-10	1.325	1.755625	0.8	0.64
65	6	19	-13	-0.675	0.455625	1.8	3.24
66	5	17	-12	-1.675	2.805625	-0.2	0.04
67	5	16	-11	-1.675	2.805625	-1.2	1.44
68	9	18	-9	2.325	5.405625	0.8	0.64
69	8	19	-11	1.325	1.755625	1.8	3.24
70	7	17	-10	0.325	0.105625	-0.2	0.04
71	5	18	-13	-1.675	2.805625	0.8	0.64
72	9	17	-8	2.325	5.405625	-0.2	0.04
73	8	19	-11	1.325	1.755625	1.8	3.24
74	5	15	-10	-1.675	2.805625	-2.2	4.84
75	7	16	-9	0.325	0.105625	-1.2	1.44
76	6	18	-12	-0.675	0.455625	0.8	0.64
77	5	19	-14	-1.675	2.805625	1.8	3.24
78	8	17	-9	1.325	1.755625	-0.2	0.04

79	9	18	-9	2.325	5.405625	0.8	0.64
80	5	19	-14	-1.675	2.805625	1.8	3.24
	$\overline{x}_1 = 6.675$	$\overline{x}_2 = 17.2$			$\sum (x_1 - \overline{x}_1)^2 = 4117.55$		$\sum (x_2 - \overline{x}_2)^2 = 146.8$

S.NO	SAMPLE SIZE(N)	MEAN	S.D
Marks in Pre-test	$n_1 = 80$	$\overline{x}_1 = 6.675$	$s.d_1 = 52.12089$
Marks in Post-test	$n_2 = 80$	$\overline{x}_2 = 17.2$	$s.d_2 = 1.85823$

$$Z = \sqrt{\frac{S.D_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{S.D_2^2}{n_2}}$$

$$Z = \sqrt{\frac{52.12089^2}{80} + \frac{1.85823^2}{80}}$$

$$Z = \sqrt{\frac{2716.587}{80} + \frac{3.45302}{80}}$$

$$Z = \sqrt{33.95734 + 0.04316}$$

$$Z = \sqrt{34.0005}$$

$$Z = 5.83$$

Step-6: Standard Test Statistics Value

The standard table value of X_α^2 at $\alpha = 0.05$ or $\alpha = 95\%$ and degrees of freedom N = 79 is $Z_{\alpha/2} = 1.96$

Step-7: Critical Region

$$Z = 5.83, \quad Z_{\alpha/2} = 1.96$$

The calculated value is greater than the table value. We can reject the null hypothesis H0. There is a significant difference between Marks in pre-test and post-test.

According to the results, it is obvious from the pre-test that all the rural students do not have the requisite soft skills to secure a job. Very few students have performed in it in a better way. The treatment (training) was started for the students based on the results of the pre-test. After completion of the one-week training program, a post-test was conducted. There was a lot of variation in the post-test marks when compared to the pre-test. The post-test results were far better than the pre-test results, and the rural students scored well. Irrespective of their pre-test marks, all the students performed well in the post-test. `

It might be concluded that there is significant variation between the two tests. Every student definitely has a certain level of inbuilt skills within himself. These skills can be

strengthened and enhanced with a sort of training. This means that if rural students can continually undergo a number of training sessions, they can improve their level of soft skills, which everyone wants to possess. Moreover, based on the results, it was clear that students are very positive and interested in Soft Skills training. Generally, a person's soft skills are assessed through personal interaction with him/her. In spite of that, this test also helps in certain ways to understand their levels of skills. Therefore, there is a need to conduct Soft Skills sessions for rural students and assess their skills frequently with various types of evaluation tests.

Analysis of Post-test Performance of Students Based on their Medium Background (at School Level)

Analysis:

The above table indicates that English medium background students (91.76%) perform better in the post-test than the vernacular medium background students (84.19%). There are certain factors that caused this result. In English medium schools, extra-curricular activities are undertaken alongside curricular activities. These extracurricular activities take place outside the classroom. They give the students an opportunity to develop particular skills and exhibit their non-academic abilities. The management of the English medium schools made it mandatory for every student to participate in at least one activity. The activities include music, Art, drama, dance, sports, etc. They actually complement the curricular activities and groom the students in the "Art of living and working together. That experience might aid the English medium background students in performing better than students with vernacular background in the post-test.

Analysis of the Post-test Performance of the Students Based on their Regional Background

S.No	Regional Background	No. of Students	Marks Obtained	Total Marks	Percentage
1	Rural Students	38	614	760	80.78%
2	Semi-Urban Students	13	228	260	87.69%
3	Urban Students	29	538	580	92.75%

S. No	Name of the College	Medium At the School Level	No. of Student	Marks Obtained	Total Marks	Percentage
1	St. Mary's Group of Institutions Guntur	English	37	679	740	91.76%
		Vernacular	43	724	860	84.19%

Analysis: The above table and the figure show that the urban students performed better (92.75%) in the post-test when compared to the other students of semi-urban (87.69%) and rural (80.78%), irrespective of their pre-test performance. In rural areas, family is one of the factors that determine their child's performance and improve their skills. Rural students felt no pressure to attain good performance when their parents' expectations of education were low. Parental encouragement has a positive influence on their child's performance, and in rural areas, the majority of parents do not care about their child's academic performance and skills development. These factors are almost the same in the case of semi-urban students. It is a common belief that students from rural backgrounds receive less encouragement towards education and skills development, which is inferior to the students who live in urban areas. These factors cause the rural areas students to have low skill sets when compared with the students that live in urban areas.

Analysis of Students' Post-test Performance Based on Gender (Male/Female)
Total No. of Students: 80

S. No	Name Of The College	Gender	Individual Marks					Marks Obtained	Total Marks	%
			15	16	17	18	19			
1	St. Mary's Group of Institutions Guntur	Female	5	9	11	11	7	737	860	86%
		Male	8	10	7	9	3	618	740	83%

Analysis: The above table and the figure indicate that female students (86%) performed better than male students (83%). There are various reasons for this difference. Especially the comparison of the concentration level of students, i.e., how well each engaged in the classroom, how often the student externalized or internalized the problems, how often the student lost control, and how well the student focused on developing interpersonal skills, has influenced the performance. According to the researcher's observation, female students concentrated and participated well during the training sessions when compared to male students. This helped the female students to perform better than male students in the post-test.

Qualitative Analysis

Initially, eighty students were selected for the college on the basis of their highest attendance percentage. The internal trainer helped in every aspect till the completion of the training sessions. The students were made to sit in a room. The researcher and the students were introduced to each other, and the researcher explained the objective of the study. A sort of mixed feeling was found on their faces; some of the students were made to sit by force (especially boys), and some had the feeling they were going to listen to a separate subject that was not part of their academics. After that, every student was given a questionnaire (to fulfill the first objective of the research study) and requested to fill it by using their knowledge. The questions in the questionnaire are related to getting the overall views of the students regarding soft skills training and its progress in their college. The majority of the participants filled out the questionnaire enthusiastically as if it was the first time they had answered such questions, trying to get the help of somebody, and a few reluctantly did it. Two students raised doubts

while answering some questions. All the students took 15-20 minutes to return the filled questionnaire.

Analysis of Pre-test, during the Treatment and Post-test

After completing the questionnaire, the rural students in the sample conducted a pre-test on soft skills, which was 20 marks, and the duration was 30 minutes. The participants were not expected to take such type of test. The questions in the pre-test and post-test are almost the same, and only one question was different in the post-test. The questions are given based on only four Soft Skills (employability) topics. They are Communication Skills, Presentation Skills, Group Discussion, and Telephonic Communication. Most of the questions are application-oriented. In the pre-test, some students put blank faces while answering some questions. They left some questions blank without answering. It was clear that it was their maiden attempt at such a test.

The eighty rural students (80) were divided into two batches, and a week-long training program was conducted for them each session daily. They were given training on the four Soft Skills topics on which the pre-test was conducted. The first and second-day sessions were completely focused on topics related to communication skills. Initially, they were asked some questions related to Soft Skills. Some are able to answer accurately, some answer vaguely, and some sit silently without answering. All students accepted that Soft Skills are essential for getting a job. They were given a broad idea about Soft Skills. This session is completely on communication skills. In the beginning, they made to realize that they lacked communication skills **through the** 'paper tearing' activity. The session continued with a discussion on various points related to communication skills. The 3 V's of communication (Verbal, Vocal, and Visual), 7 C's of Communication (Clear et al., Courtesy, Correct, Coherence, and Concrete). Students have actively participated in the activities and realized the importance of communication.

The third and fourth days of the sessions were completely focused on Group Discussion. The participants were given a broad view of the implications involved in group discussion, i.e., its Do's and Don'ts. After that, practical sessions were conducted with them on GD, and an immediate feed was given to the group after the discussion. Half of the students participated actively and looked as if they had some experience in participating in such discussions. Some students who have assumed it is a debate and tried to violate the rules of the GD have been instructed again and again. The students who are not active in the discussion are motivated by the remaining members. After every discussion, a sort of satisfaction was found in the majority of students' faces since they were given the opportunity to speak for a long time in English.

The fifth and sixth days were completely focused on Presentation Skills. After discussing the guidelines to be followed for effective presentation, students were asked to come prepare any general or current topics for presentation the next day. But some students, nearly ten to fifteen members, did not turn up the next day as they were anxious about making presentations. The majority of the students presented their topics, and immediate feedback was given after each presentation. Additional time was given to the participants have not come prepared. The majority of the students felt that it was a good experience to prepare and make

the presentation in front of many students. On the seventh day, it focused completely on telephone skills. The tips in telephonic conversation and telephonic interviews were discussed elaborately. Role plays were conducted as activities that enlightened them practically. All the students participated actively in the role plays. The researcher could find the influence of movies on students' performance.

After completion of the training program, a post-test was conducted for the students, and the same questions were given in the pre-test, with one change. They looked into the question paper as if the questions were familiar to them and started writing them actively. It was clear that the training had an impact on their writing, and they returned the filled papers on time. **Trainer's Views Regarding the Levels of Soft Skills in Students**

The trainer opined that the majority of the students are not aware of the significance of soft skills in the job market. As management allotted the training periods at the last hours of the table, students did not concentrate on these sessions. The majority of the students lacked even major soft skills like communication skills, presentation skills, interview skills, etc., which play a major role in getting employment. Students have the mother tongue influence most in their pronunciation and are also not perfect in using correct vocabulary and grammar for better communication. They also lacked certain important soft skills, which made the interviewer hire them satisfactorily. Irrespective of their regional, academic medium background, they should be trained extensively to get them ready for the job market. He strongly felt that companies are hiring people who are technically sound and who have good interpersonal skills. Doors are open for such people in any company. For students who can acquire good communication skills and develop positive thinking, there are ample opportunities for them to be placed in a small or a big company. The other important soft skills they can acquire at the workplace are training, practicing, and observation.

The trainer also opined that the management of the college is nominally providing soft skills training to their students. They allow one and rarely two sessions in the timetable. They stress much on developing the hard skills of the students for good pass percentage. They do not provide the requisite accompaniments to the trainers for the training. He also opined that the faculty of English can partly take the role of soft skills trainer; they can help mostly in developing the language skills of the students. They cannot do justice in dealing with the other topics of soft skills. On behalf of the management of the college, he urges the universities to make soft skills training part of the academic curriculum.

The Opinion of the Management on Soft Skills Training

The management intended to provide a number of sessions on soft skills training to the students. Due to time constraints and hectic academic schedules, they are not able to allot requisite hours in a week in the two semesters of an academic year. They opined that even though the duration of the semester is generally considered a six-month period on paper, they could run classwork only for four months. Remaining two months, students spend most of their time appearing for different exams (Mid, Theory, Lab, etc.). As the syllabus of the academic subjects is vast, the teaching staff is busy completing the syllabus and the timetable filled with their classes. As shown in Table no 13(sample), the management is conducting different activities under the 'finishing school' program and making the students involved in them.

Whenever time permits, they try to go beyond academics and widen the knowledge of the students.

Important Points to Students

Participating in various activities such as forums, clubs, field research, study project help to understand different behavior and also improves your communication as they mix with the group. The University course is effective for gaining hard skills; soft skills can be acquired by you only by doing 'real work.' A presentation on certain assignments helps you to gain communication skills and improves confidence levels.

➢ Acquiring the soft skills partly depends on trainers and mainly depends on how much the students are able to hold in the process of learning.

➢ Unless you practice and sit back silently in the soft skills training sessions, it does not help you to improve further.

➢ Lectures, tutorials alone could not equip you with abilities, knowledge and skills you consider vital. Some of these are acquired through hard work and efforts.

➢ Some parts of soft skills could be self-learning by self-introspection of every student. The self-learning motivates you to employ the knowledge in practice.

➢ Sometimes, soft skills cannot be learned in classrooms, and these must be acquired through experience.

➢ Lecturers might be busy completing their syllabus, and they may not focus on the character-building of the students.

➢ Meeting and socializing with people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds helps people develop different interpersonal skills.

➢ Lectures and courses only give you knowledge about the subject matter, but you can acquire experience and moral values only. In a hectic student life, you should learn many things of your own.

➢ If you learn some psychology, you learn not only about human beings but also about your weaknesses.

➢ Habituate reading personality development books written by famous people.

Conclusion:

In many countries, the discussion on soft or generic skills has become a burning topic. Jobless graduates are generally ascribed as low 'product quality.' It has been asserted that the new graduates lack "expertise and skills," especially soft skills required by employers and competitive job markets. The success of any education system depends on how well it helps the students to develop their multi-skills and could build confidence in them to go for multi-sectors. Our education system needs to lay greater stress on the application of concepts and discourage habit learning. For this, there should be good understanding, accurate interpretation, and concerted action at every level, including on the ground classroom level. There should be a policy that promotes soft skills at the territory level. Generally, university students place emphasis on developing disciplinary knowledge and tend to ignore the importance of soft skills. The educators should take responsibility for reminding them to develop people skills. All institutions should recommend that universities incorporate soft skills training into their curricula.

Rural students face difficulties acquiring soft skills because of a lack of sufficient training and guidance, especially in rural engineering colleges in Andhra Pradesh. Hence, it can be a great test and challenge for rural engineering students to get into the adequate processes of skill acquisition, and all with the lack of a communicative environment in both places, school or colleges, and at home. Ultimately, rural students face problems when they present something in front of an audience due to this extreme situation. The rural students fail to get recruited in campus drives.

From this research, it is obvious that training is an unending process, and so it is not a destination. If rural students are trained with certain soft skills, they can succeed not only professionally but also personally. Training is required at every stage of the student's life. The next station of this journey is success in their life. The role of Soft Skills training is shifting from transactional to transformational. Soft Skills training is a transformational role that aids graduates in growing and meeting the changing requirements of the job. Hence, every professional college must focus on developing the skills of the students, which makes them become a good and promising citizen of our country to carry their fame to the global.

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