
YOUTH REQUIRE SOFT SKILLS TODAY

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Abstract: There is a need to make the youth specially at the tertiary level aware of their emotional/social/multiple intelligences, as many of them join jobs on completion of their degree. It is mandatory to look at how this could be ingrained into their lessons so that they have a wonderful learning experience. Soft skills is a compulsory subject in many universities and so this paper delve into this topic to highlight their importance in today's world. It suggests practical activities that can make the teaching of soft skills more interesting and meaningful for the youth. This paper also focuses on the integrated model of teaching soft skills, wherein soft skills could be integrated with literary texts and used in the classroom. A sample lesson plan on enhancing soft skills through the poem, *Tyger* by Blake(1981) forms a part of this paper.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, multiple intelligences, portfolio, social intelligellence traits.

Introduction: Globalization and internet explosion has enabled many people work from any corner of the world provided they have the expertise and the needed soft skills. Earlier, the need for soft skills was not much felt by the industries and corporates as not all trading and services go beyond the borders of their individual countries. But soft skills are necessary today for a sustained career. Further, soft skills enable one to sail smoothly through life as one knows how to manage oneself and others. This paper looks into how soft skills could be made more interesting to the student community at the tertiary level.

Soft Skills:

An Insight: Soft skills are defined in different ways by the media and eminent people. Soft skills is a combination of personality traits, elegance, language skills, and good attitude that make people different from the others.

- According to Belzer,2004, soft skills is described as an art in the corporate sector as it is to do with managing oneself and the people at work so as to ultimately attain maximum customer satisfaction at the end of the day.
- According to Verma(2012), effective soft skills reduce stress and conflict, improve relation building ability, enhance intimacy, increase understanding, and promote joy. These skills consist of communication skills, assertive skills, conflict resolution and anger management. By this we could estimate how important soft skills are for better living.
- Verma(2012) also equates soft skills as a combination of IQ (Intelligent Quotient) plus EQ(Emotional Quotient). One needs to work today using both the mind and heart.
- According to Goleman (1996), EQ matters more than IQ. This makes it clear that even though a balance needs to be drawn between hard and soft skills, soft skills need to take a upper hand as

it deals with how one says and does things than what one know, does or says.

- Soft skills have lot to do with non-verbal behaviour. According to Latha(2009), body language is an essential soft skills that speaks louder than words. It occupies 73% of the communication and only 7% is taken up by actual words. So grooming students to focus on non-verbal behaviour is an important prerequisite for success.
- According to Shipurkar(2009), soft skills can be integrated into the college curriculum by way of the add-on model, integrated model or composite model. So a novel way of integrating soft skills with their subjects so that it can help them imbibe soft skills.
- Soft skills is doing what other do in a different manner in order to get result. This requires perseverance, self knowledge and the knowledge about how others behave and act.

All these show the importance of soft skills and the need for respondents to imbibe them at the early stage itself. Soft skills have a lot to do with interpersonal skills (one's skills while dealing with others) and intrapersonal skills(one's skills while dealing with oneself). So if students are fine tuned to these skills at the college level they could manage life and their jobs in a better manner.

Tasks that Enable Youth to Imbibe Soft Skills: As students need to imbibe soft skills during the course of their study, a variety of activities need to be used right from the beginning of the academic year. Some of them are suggested below.

- a. **Attending National and International Seminars on Soft Skills:** This can bring great experts in soft skills to the portals of the colleges. Their valuable talks, interactions and workshops could be an inspiration to many respondents who do not have much knowledge about soft skills.

- b. **Interaction with the Human Resource Department** : Students can be taken to standard companies so that they get a feel of an office atmosphere. In groups they could have a discussion with people in the HR department to know what employers look for in employees. This hands-on experience could help respondents mould themselves to the needs of the company.
- c. **Group Discussions(GD)**: GD must be a constant activity in the classes where in respondents discuss a case study and cull out the soft skills from the case study. With constant discussions of this sort, students shun their shyness and be confident speakers.
- d. **Project Work**: Projects must go hand in hand with classroom teaching of soft skills. Project work would get a better insight of the soft skills , as students go beyond the texts to understand a particular soft skill.
- e. **Soft Skills and Daily Living**: Soft skills must be made a part and parcel of one's daily living. Lecturers need to be role models and insist that respondents practice soft skills at home and in college. For instance: Time management must be followed from the time he/she wakes up till he/she retires to bed. Similarly, stress management. Students must be made to identify the causes of stress, how to handle it and make it a learning experience.
- f. **Marinating a Portfolio of their SWOT** : Students must be made to write the strength, weakness, opportunities and threats they face every day and how they would be able to turn their threats and weakness in their favour. This exercise would help them become better individuals.
- g. **Improving Communication**: It has been observed that students at the tertiary level have very little scope to speak English. Few colleges have language labs without the necessary infrastructure. Therefore, presentations should be a part and parcel of the teaching-learning process.
- h. **Reading Newspapers and Good Magazines**: Lot of soft skills and communication can be imbibed by reading the daily newspapers and magazines. Students must be made to cull out soft skills from these authentic materials. They must be made to think creatively and critically on an issues rather than reading the paper for the sake of reading.
- i. **Integrating Soft Skills into the Lessons**: Soft skills and multiple Intelligence(Gardner,1983) modules can be taught through the lessons. In this way, respondents can imbibe soft skills very easily.
- j. **Dress Code and Etiquette**: Viewing the way the youth dress today, all colleges must adhere to a strict dress code. This will make them focus on

dress codes and etiquettes that are very much required in the job front.

Teaching Soft Skills through Literary Text : A Study

A lesson plan on integrating soft skills through a poem is a part of a research study.

Poem: *Tyger* by William Blake

Objectives: To create a teaching module from the poem *Tyger* that can effectively enable respondents imbibe soft skills.

Procedure:

The respondents were made to read the poem. Then they took a pre-test so as to understand the outcome of the first reading. Then they were given the teaching modules that had the LSRW tasks, besides soft skills task ingrained in them. After the second reading and comprehension of the poem, they were asked to look into the inventory of soft skills (Alex 2009) and tick the soft skills they were able to imbibe through this poem. They then discussed the the figures of speech, lexical skills and vocabulary in the poem. They also did the tasks on listening, speaking, reading and writing. There was also a soft skills task on adaptability. After the completion of the modules, they took a post-test.

Findings:

- Respondents enjoyed the poem, the rhyme scheme and the words that have the mute 'r' such as heart, art, burn etc.
- The listening task enabled them to be focused listeners as they filled up the required columns on tigers in captive.
- The speaking task made them shed their fear and come out and speak on the picture of a lion hugging the woman who had left him in a natural setting some years ago. It recognized her and made this gesture. Respondents came out and spoke about emotional intelligences in animals as well.
- They individually did a theme based task in the modules on tigers. This exhibited their multiple intelligence. For instance, some respondents made sketches of tigers which showed their kinesthetic skills, some wrote about them that showed their linguistic skills. Some sang songs based on the theme which showed their musical intelligence.

Feedback Forms: The purpose of giving feedback forms to respondents was to know the effectiveness of this technique and see what improvisation could be done to enhance soft skills in the youth in a better way. It also aimed to know what respondents felt about enhancement of soft skills through literary texts. It was seen in the forms that respondents wanted more lessons to be taught in this novel way.

Observation /Suggestions: The researcher observed

that respondents were active and interacted with the researcher without any inhibition. They also shared their thought about this strategy. They said that they were able to communicate better and express their views freely about the poem. The researcher feels that the teaching modules was well taken and the objective was achieved to a large extent. She opines that efforts in the direction of enhancing soft skills and language skills needs to be taken up seriously for the benefit of the students at the tertiary level.

Conclusion: The researcher strongly feels that youth need to be empowered with soft skills(which according to her is a cluster of emotional/ social

/multiple intelligences) before they leave the portals of the colleges. For this, lecturers and academic heads must think creatively beyond the lecture method. It has been observed by the researcher that enhancement of soft skills are still at the theoretical level in most colleges. There should be a paradigm shift in training students in soft skills, so that they value themselves and the people they serve. Finally, it is rightly stated by Murthy (2008) that soft skills is the DNA for success and it is becoming more and more ubiquitous not only in the context of organizational excellence, but also for individuals to lead a successful life.

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