



ROLE OF TEACHER IN DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Soft skills play a vital role in professional success of the individuals. They help the person to excel in his/her workplace. Soft skills are also called human skill and people skill, complementing the hard skill. They are the interpersonal and human relation skill. It refers to the cluster of personality traits such as social graces, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism.



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1.1 Introduction

Knowledge and skills are the most democratic source of power. – Alvin Toffler.

Teacher is considered to be the architect of the nation. In other words, the future of the nation lies in the hands of teacher. This shows the importance of teacher. One can realize how important education is which makes one a teacher. Teacher education is looked after by a systematic operation of various agencies involved in it. In our country, no system is free from problems; teacher education is not an exception to it.

The citizens are the most valuable asset of the country wherein the development of the human resources otherwise called human capital is of prime importance. There are a number of approaches to develop the human capital; however the approach should be holistic in nature, holistic in this sense, emphasizes development of knowledge, skills, intellectuality and professionalism and also involves inculcation of progressive attitude and high ethical and moral values. This will result in not only in the development of hard and conceptual skills but also in infusing soft skills. The curriculum of teacher education could probably contribute to the development of a holistic human capital that can foster economic, social and personal development.

1.2 Meaning and Concept of Soft Skills

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. Soft skills are broadly applicable. Some of us might be curious to realize what exactly soft skills are. We could say that soft skills refer to personality traits, social gracefulness, fluency in language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark people to varying degrees. Soft skills complement hard skills, which are the technical requirements of a profession. It can also be an important part of the success of an organization is dealing with people face-to-face.

Soft skills are sometimes broken down into personal attributes, such as,

- Optimistic attitude,
- Common sense,
- Responsibility,
- A sense of humor,
- Integrity,
- Time management and
- Motivation,

And, interpersonal abilities, such as,

- Empathy,
- Leadership quality,
- Effective communication,
- Good mannerism,
- Sociability and
- The ability to inculcate knowledge

As the Kothari Commission (1964-66) rightly observed, of all the factors which influence Quality of Education, “the Quality Competence and Character” of the teachers are the most significant. The quality of education depends upon various factors like the teaching to which the learner is exposed, the educational facilities, the environment available in the institutions and the temperament and approach of a learner towards study. Of all the above-mentioned factors, the teacher plays a prominent role in enhancing quality in education. So it is necessary for a teacher to acquire all the skills which are essential for his or her teaching profession. Updating the teachers with soft skills is not only important for his or her career proficiency but also it helps to mould the future generations as integrated personalities.

1.3 Nature of Soft Skills

Soft skills play a vital role in professional success of the individuals. They help the person to excel in his/her workplace.

Soft skills are also called human skill and people skill, complementing the hard skill. They are the interpersonal and human relation skill. It refers to the cluster of personality traits such as social graces, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism.

A classroom situation demands an effective use of soft skills. Teaching-learning, being a process of interaction and interpretation becomes meaningful and successful only in the presence and application of soft skills. The teacher helps the students to acquire not only the right knowledge but also values, attitudes, habits and skills that are necessary to cope with the world of tomorrow. In the same way, a pupil enhances his or her personality in relation with the experienced teacher.

As the teachers are the torchbearers in creating social cohesion, national integration and a learning society, the colleges of education should provide formal professional training in soft skills to the prospective teacher-students on a continuous basis. They are necessary to become a good teacher as they cater to the development of one's personality and sharpening of communication skills and commitment to a code of ethics.

1.4 Components of Soft skills

The following are important components of soft skills.

i. Social

The social component of soft skills incorporates the group interaction and welfare of the outdoor program participants. The social component may include the understanding of group dynamics, the ability to resolve group conflict, develop and provide a supportive climate (reassurance and encouragement), being sensitive to the needs of others and establishing effective group relations.

ii. Psychological

The psychological component combines the skill necessary to relate to the participants presence of mind and behaviour. Some examples of the psychological component include building a climate of trust within a group, understanding what motivation is, and how to stimulate it. Other examples may include promoting values, understanding attitudes of others, team building, developing ethics and responding to a person's risks in a trustworthy manner.

iii. **Communication**

The communication component combines written, verbal and nonverbal transmission and exchange of information. Examples of this component range from being able to “think on your feet” and speak clearly in front of the group, to interpreting nonverbal expressions (hunching of the shoulders, furrowed brow, pursed lips). Other examples may include expressing directions in written format (or) listening attentively.

1.5 Importance of Soft Skills

Relationships play a vital role in human life and one of the keys to successful relationships is development of soft skills. A teacher/student who has interpersonal problems and another who has difficulty in taking decisions, suffer from lack of soft skills. Hence, a continuous renewal of soft skills is essential for students and teachers. This will make their dealings effective and successful.

- To handle interpersonal relations.
- To take appropriate decisions.
- To communicate effectively
- To have good impression and impact
- To gain professional development.

Soft skills can enhance the career mobility of a person and increase the chances of success in launching the job s/he can cope with different situations in the study/workplace.

1.6 Soft Skills for Prospective Teachers

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

a) Communication skill

The teacher must have excellent communication skills to succeed as a teacher. The teacher must be able to explain his/her lessons in a clear way so that it can be understood by children of different ages and abilities. S/he must be able to tactfully communicate with parents on a regular basis; s/he must be able to tactfully communicate with parents on a regular basis. S/he must also be an effective team member with colleagues and the principal. Finally, a teacher’s verbal and written language skills must be impeccable.

b) Listening communication skill.

To become a good teacher, s/he must have excellent listening skills. S/he will face a lot of questions from students on a daily basis, and s/he must be able to understand what the students are trying to convey when they speak.

c) Presentation

It is vitally important to be able to communicate teacher's thoughts and ideas effectively, using a variety of tools and medium. The teacher will need to develop and use this skill throughout his/her career.

d) Delegation

Delegation skill is the ability of the teacher to effectively assign tasks, responsibility and authority to students and colleagues. Delegation skill is a teacher's ability to get things done by using work and time of other people.

e) Leadership Skills

"Leadership is the ability and readiness to inspire, guide, direct or manage others" (Murnane & Levy-1996). A leader is defined as one who has followers. Teachers are not considered official leaders; yet they perform superbly once they are asked. Teachers have been expected to have the necessary skills on entry into leadership positions, or to develop them on the job.

- A teacher should have the ability to engage with people-to persuade, influence and be very versatile in doing that.
- A teacher requires a whole set of skills for leading and managing pupils, setting objectives, giving feedback, sometimes saying hard things, budgeting the available resources.
- Teacher must have the vision of his/her educational institution and know how to do the strategic and tactical planning to achieve it.

f) Interpersonal Skills

Teaching can be considered as fifty percent Knowledge and fifty percent Interpersonal Skills (Sharma, 2004). That means, while teaching, a teacher should not just maintain the quantity of his lecture but also the 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. These can be healthy as well as harsh. Healthy Interpersonal Skills lead to creative and effective approaches to solve problems and getting work done.

A teacher should be

- Able to support and encourage others
- Able to give and receive constructive criticism as well as able to negotiate.
- Able to listen to and value others opinions.
- Able to convey his/her point clearly to a student group.

1.7 Soft Skills: A Need for Teaching Community

The teachers should improve their soft skills for effective teaching-learning process, for the following reasons.

1. Certification is not an end in itself. Technical skills do matter.
2. Soft skills help advance teacher career.
3. Soft skills empower teacher in creating opportunities.
4. Soft skills not only improve teachers' career, but also offer personal growth.
5. Do teachers have more tech. skills than sense? Work on communication and leadership.
6. Soft skills help teacher grow beyond money motivation.
7. Developing professional ethics is vital to teacher career.
- 8 Control co-worker's perception of teacher as a professional and an expert in teacher field.

1.8 21st Century Skills need to be developed by Teacher Educators

The educational system must understand and embrace the 21st Century skills within the context of rigorous academic standards. Schools, just like businesses, industries and families, must adapt to these changes and “bridge the gap between how students live and how they learn”. Acceleration of technological change, rapidly accumulating knowledge, increasing global competition and rising workforce capabilities around the world make 21st Century skills essential.

The following is a list of 21st Century skills, which allows students to prepare for careers, requiring them to acquire new knowledge, learn new technologies, rapidly process information, make decisions and communicate in a global and diverse society.

- **Information and media literacy skills:** Analyzing, accessing, managing, integrating, evaluating and creating information in a variety of forms and media. Understanding the role of media in society.

- **Communication skills:** Under-standing, managing and creating effective oral, written and multimedia communication in a variety of forms and contexts.
- **Critical thinking and systems thinking:** Exercising sound reasoning in understanding and making complex choices, understanding the interconnections among systems.
- **Problem identification, formulation and solution:** Ability to frame, analyze and solve problems.
- **Creativity and intellectual curiosity:** Developing, implementing and communicating; new ideas to others, staying open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives.
- **Interpersonal and collaborative skills:** Demonstrating teamwork and leadership; adapting to varied roles and responsibilities; working productively with others; exercising empathy; respecting diverse perspectives.
- **Self –direction:** Monitoring one’s own understanding and learning needs, locating appropriate resources, transferring learning from one domain to another.
- **Accountability and adaptability:** Exercising personal responsibility and flexibility in personal workplace and community contexts: setting and meeting high standards and goals for one and others; tolerating.
- **Social responsibility:** Acting responsibility with the interests of the larger community in mind, demonstrating ethical behavior in personal, workplace and community contexts. There is a need for students to develop learning skills that enable them to think critically, analyze information, communicate, collaborate, and problem-solve, and the realize the essential role that technology plays in acquiring these learning skills in today’ knowledge-based society. Representative of the ICT literacy skills are the following six arenas critical to student’s success in the workplace.
- **Communicate effectively:** Students must have a range of skills to express themselves not only through paper and pencil, but also through audio, video, animation, design software as well as a host of new environments. (e.g. E-mail, websites, message boards, blogs, streaming media, etc.)

- **Analyze and interpret data:** Students must have the ability to crunch, compare, and choose among the glut of data now available in web-based and other electronic formats.
- **Understand computational modeling:** Students must possess an understanding of the power, limitations and underlying assumptions of various data representation of various data representation systems, such as computational which are increasingly driving a wide-range of disciplines.
- **Manage and prioritize tasks:** Students must be able to manage the multi- tasking, selection, and prioritization across technology applications that allow them to move fluidly among teams, assignments and communities of practice.
- **Engage in problem solving:** Students must have an understanding of how to apply what they know and can do to new situations.
- **Ensure security and safety:** Students must know and use strategies to acknowledge, identity, and negotiate 21st Century risks.

Looking into the role and importance of 21st Century skills in the present world, it becomes vital for colleges of education to incorporate 21st Century skills in their curriculum so that future teachers are equipped with skills and strategies to promote 21st Century skills among students. Interoperating various methodologies like activity-based learning, problem-based learning and effective technology integration in everyday classroom practices will lead to promote 21st Century skills among students.

1.9 Conclusion

Prospective teachers have a great responsibility in developing the society with values and good culture. They are the transmitters of culture. To transmit the culture to the society, soft skills are needed at different levels. The prospective teachers who are able to acquire these skills not only find work but also experience stronger and happier relationship in their personal lives.

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