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SOFT SKILLS – A BUZZ WORD IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM**Ch. Radhika**Ph.D Research Scholar Department of English Acharya Nagarjuna University
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Abstract: The 21st century has been witnessing an unprecedented growth and development in terms of information, communication, technology, globalization, liberalization and privatization leading to quick socio-economic changes in the world wide. The 21st century society has been succinctly portrayed by Thomas Friedman as a 'Flat World' driven by several intangible factors which have come together to transform work and productivity in the modern world. The educational institutions must aim at turning out integrated personalities. The world we are living in today is very different from the world that was a decade ago. The challenges facing young people today have changed significantly from those affecting previous generations. The educational institutions have to gear their systems to meet such challenges. So the system has to change according to the needs of the learners.

Keyword: technology, globalization, liberalization, privatization.

INTRODUCTION:

Today, in most of the educational institutions, thrust is placed on imparting technical education, without giving any importance to all round development of the students. As a result, 'bright' young engineers armed with degrees and excellent academic record, come out of the colleges only to be disappointed, as they are unfit for the industry. The large gap between the academic world and the industry is reflected here: academics give importance to the theoretical knowledge of the students and their obedience; industry gives importance to practical knowledge and soft skills such as communication, team work etc. Globalisation has increased the pressure on companies, regarding the issues like interpersonal behavior, communication, presentation, client handling and management, business development and negotiation skills which were hitherto considered not very important, have now become essential for companies.

Now a day's graduates are under little frustration and depression because of unemployment after their education. They lack exact direction, focus and support to best plan their careers as per their expectations. There is lacuna between the industry and academy. So we, the teachers should combine both hard and soft skills to fill the gap. This can be achieved through the knowledge of soft skills. So, the term SOFT SKILLS has become a BUZZ word in the New Millennium in career contexts. Every student in a professional college needs to develop these soft skills in addition to the technical knowledge.

OBJECTIVES

To motivate the students in understanding the current scenario in the employment sector.

To instill interest among the students to take initiative and responsibility

To ensure that students become aware of themselves and

areas of improvement.

To enhance their creativity and motivating students towards skills development.

To make them employable.

DEFINING SOFT SKILLS

Soft skills are also known by many other terms such as life skills, essential skills, key skills, employability skills and so on. So it is not easy to define soft skills, since the definition of the concept differs from discipline to discipline. To be frank, soft skills are very vital in this globalization due to technological advancements and changes in the economical landscape. According to Webeetal Soft skills are defined as "the interpersonal human, people or behavioural skills needs to apply technical skills and knowledge in the workplace." So one can understand that soft skills are not inborn; they are behavioural skills and can be taught. It is a term which refers to personality traits, social graces and facility with language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism that mark people to varying degrees. These are essentially people skills – the non-technical, intangible, personality-specific ones that determine strengths as a leader, listener, negotiator, and conflict mediator.

IMPORTANCE OF SOFT SKILLS

The term soft skills have become a popular word in career context. As a matter of fact not a day passes without the use of this word which facilitates young students to be employable. It is rightly said that people rise in organizations, schools and colleges because of hard skills and fall due to lack of soft skills. By seeing the mushroom growth of soft skills training sessions one can understand the importance of soft skills. Soft skills play a significant role in one's success in life particularly in one's profession. They help one to excel in the workplace and their importance

cannot be denied in this age of information and knowledge. Soft skills in the highly competitive corporate world will make one stand out in a crowd of regular job seekers with ordinary skills and talents. Soft skills, thus involves a person's:

Ability to function harmoniously with others.
Openness to learning new ideas.
Ability to manage one's emotions
Ability to manage a situation by weighing its sensitivity and acting accordingly.
Willingness to make things work in one's personal and professional lives

NECESSITY OF SOFT SKILLS

Soft skills are necessary in one's life. It not only improves one's career but also offers personal growth. It allows one to accomplish tasks successfully. Today's world expects the Universities, colleges and institutes of higher learning to produce men and women who are not just technically skilled but also professionally competent. The recruiters also look for various soft skills in addition to the hard skills. So the teachers has to train the students with well planned training programmes which are required by the industry. Soft skills pedagogy is one such weapon that helps a student combat and overcome the hurdles of the present world. So many students are not able to project themselves properly. So it's the high time to know the necessity of soft skills in the competitive world. Through these soft skills students can able to project oneself and one's professional skills in the best possible way. So it's necessary to the students in strengthening oneself from within. These soft skills are needed for any profession, let it be a bank, government, hospital, university to survive and flourish in this age of intense global completion.

According to a recent report by the education authority, quality of graduates and diploma holders coming out of the country's private technical institutes is very poor. According to UGC report only a few companies are looking to hire graduates from the existing universities. "Not more than 40 per cent of the nearly 3, 00,000 engineering graduates are employable. Employability in today's globalised scenario is seriously affected by poor communication and soft skills of our graduates," states the UGC. R. Natarajan, former AICTE chairperson in a Telegraph India website report said that, "there is a serious gap between what we offer and what the industry wants." It clearly shows the necessity of the soft skills to fill the lacuna between the industry and academy.

The end of education is to equip the learner with what it takes to meet the challenges, life might throw up with equanimity. According to some people education is what remains when all that we have learnt in the classroom is forgotten.

SKILLS REQUIRED BY THE INDUSTRY

The basic and necessary skills like Communication, Interaction, Team work, Attitude, Decision making, Responsibility, Problem solving, Negotiating, Flexibility and Integrity that employers consider very important when

hiring the candidates and promoting them to key positions. The emphasis on the evaluation of students' achievement, knowledge and skills has increased throughout the world. Soft skills are concerned with persuasion and motivation in a team work. The emergence of internet and information Technology has completely transformed the landscape of skills needed in India in the twenty-first century. Students have little knowledge of understanding of how their degrees will benefit their careers. Teachers must help the students learn how to apply academic content to workplace problems. Employers emphasize that success at workplace requires more than technical capabilities. They need skills like communication and persuasion and the ability to lead and work effectively as a team member.

TRAINING IN SOFT SKILLS

Technical skills and knowledge account for about 15% for an individual to secure a job, while 85% of the job success is based on the individuals' soft skills. 80% of the job holders who fail at work place are due to their inability to relate well with others. The teacher has to play a crucial role in translating student's academic achievement into a successful career.

So Training sessions can be centered around Role plays, Class Debate, Group Discussion and Case Studies. Critical thinking and problem solving skills, leadership skills and the skill of Team work must be taught which gives students the practical experience. Programmes and activities must be created, developed and used to support soft skills. Participating in these activities gave the learner invaluable lessons in how to accept success and defeat, and to take competition in one's stride. It fostered a spirit of caring and sharing – a spirit of mate ship. This type of activities gave scope for artistic expression and aesthetic satisfaction.

Participating in debates, elocution, extempore, essay writing etc. developed speaking and writing skills, presentation skills and public speaking skills. Along with these skills students can develop their body language also. Communication skills are also an integral part of any education system either in higher education or in primary level. People learn to read books, write letters and develop skills necessary to fulfill their expected roles in their households and community. At this level, emphasis has been given to develop the communicative skills of individual so that by the time they leave college, they are able to participate in public and community activities and decision making. This skill includes the ability to think critically, creatively, innovatively and analytically. It also involves the ability to apply knowledge and understanding to new and different problems as well.

It's the high time to improve skills of the students not only in schools but also in the colleges and universities in the present day scenario. Yes, the time has come to revamp the education system to cater to the needs of the hour. So institutions of higher learning can adopt some of the soft skills which help the people to perform the tasks. It includes:

1. Interpersonal skills
2. Team working
3. Negotiating skills

4. Communication skills
5. Time management
6. Stress management
7. Thinking skills and problem solving skills
8. Life-long learning and information management
9. Entrepreneur skills
10. Ethics, moral and professionalism
11. Leadership skills
12. Decision making skills

If we give training in these areas of soft skills students will come out of the fear and actively participate in public and community activities. These skills help to learn:

Knowledge about their suitability for relevant jobs
Having a clear plan and a process in place
Executing a plan to get selected in expected jobs
Gearing up to meet Industry Needs
To get self confidence
Helps them to develop and improve leadership skills
Developing professional body language and expressions
Application in work areas
Self motivation
Prioritize to-do list
Accept and learn from criticism

Creative thinking is also one of the vital parts in soft skills that all companies look for. Students' interactions in team activities enrich their experiences in engaging and sharing their personal perspectives. It develops required skills to work with others in a global workforce, listening skills new challenges. Speech is the most powerful way to communicate.

CONCLUSION

Our present education system should be focused on all round development of the students. It should be revamped with stringent rectifications so that, every youth would resolve the conflicts and provocations of the dominant cultural and political practices, to get employed in the present day global world. It is the responsibility of the universities and teachers to ensure that graduates have these soft skills not only to gain employment but to sustain it as well. In order to improve and upgrade the quality of the students, institutions of higher learning must consider a better training. Training sessions must be framed in such way that where we can incorporate skills and knowledge students need to succeed at work. As we all know that the strength of a nation strongly depends on the ability of highly intellectual and skillful citizen's. Youth become empower by acquiring soft skills which are considered essential in today's world, particularly in the corporate world. Quality comes from quality education. Hence, institutions of higher learning play an important role to provide knowledge and skills to future graduates. This paper is an attempt to emphasize the necessity of training sessions is inevitable. It is the pivot on which the modern globe revolves, recognized by both academia and industry alike. Since professional and result oriented companies always seek for the employees who can communicate and present himself effectively. The word Soft

skill becomes a Buzz word in the New Millennium in career contexts.

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