



THE ESSENCE OF SOFT SKILLS

Dr. Balaram Bora

**Associate Professor, Department of Management,
Aditya Institute of Technology and Management (AITAM), Tekkali, Srikakulam**

Abstract: *Appropriate soft skills play an important role in getting employment, to lead a successful career as well as during social interactions in the society. Soft skills are also called as - Interpersonal skills, Life skills, People skills- are the abilities and skills that help to become a complete professional especially in corporate sectors around the globe. The students aspiring to become Professionals not only need academic and technical skills but also Soft-skills to meet the goals of the organization. The professionals who want to lead successful career are not getting expected jobs or promotions because of soft skills deficit. A considerable number of people are not reaching their destinations because of not having required soft skills in social interaction. Soft skills are required to all human beings to lead the life smoothly. They are required in all professions whether it is business, employment, Politics, Administration or service.*

This paper throws light on the questions how important softskills are and which skills can be learned and acquired in educational institutes and workplaces. This paper also emphasizes the necessity of incorporating soft skills training programs in curriculum, highlighting the objectives of soft skills and various teaching methods to be applied. This paper is divided into seven parts. First part is introduction, Second part is meaning and definition, third one Review of Literature, Fourth one objectives of soft skills training program, fifth one Most important Soft skills, Sixth one personality development and soft skills and the last one is conclusion.

Keywords: *soft skills, training program, personality development, module, methods Introduction*

I INTRODUCTION:

Skills may be divided into Hard skills and Soft skills. Hard Skills are the Technical skills, comprising academic knowledge, expertise and practical exposure. Job aspirants must have proficiency in Hard skills, because they are as important as Soft-skills. Basically, soft skills refer to personalities, attributes, qualities and personal behaviour of individuals. Soft skills include certain abilities such as communication, problem-solving, self-motivation, decision-making, and time management skills.

Modern corporates look specifically for those candidates who can add value to their organization with their soft skills and the ability to develop and use soft skills which can make the difference between a job offer and enjoyment of new employment. This requirement of soft skills in a job has made the competition for job acquisition and job sustainability tougher. All those candidates who wish to get an edge over their competitor are expected to refine their soft skills. This view point is substantiated by Hewitt Sean[1] that, employers value soft skills because they are just as good as indicator of job performance as traditional job

qualifications. Most employers are likely to hire, retain and promote persons who are dependable, resourceful, ethical, having effective communication, self directed, willing to work and learn, and having positive attitude [2]. Employers usually prefer to see a fine blend of competencies in their staff and, in addition to discipline-based knowledge and skills, adequate levels of soft skills are considered desirable for moving forward in the career [3].

II MEANING AND DEFINITION:

The word soft skill is a sociological term referring EQ- the Emotional intelligence quotient of a person. Soft skills are also called as Interpersonal skills, Life skills, People skills, Employable skills, Personal habits, Friendliness, Optimism, Social graces, Personality development skills, Behavioural competencies. Soft skills are the abilities and skills that help to become a complete professional especially in corporate sectors around the globe.

Soft skills are essentially people's skills or personality specific skills. According to Hewitt Sean [4] soft skills are "non-technical, intangible, personality specific skills" which determines an individual's strength as "a leader, listener and negotiator, or as a conflict mediator". Soft skills are the traits and abilities of attitude and behaviour rather than of knowledge or technical aptitude[5]. The Center for Career Opportunities at Purdue University defines soft skills as "the cluster of personality traits, social graces, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark each of us to varying degrees." Their list of soft skills includes work ethic, courtesy, teamwork, self discipline, self - confidence, conformity to prevailing norms, and language proficiency. Soft skills are different and distinct from Hard Skills. Soft skills are those skills

that add more value to the hard skills adorned by an individual. Martin Carole[6] comments that hard skills are more "along the lines of what might appear on your resume" whereas soft skills are "cluster of personality traits, social graces, personal habits, friendliness and optimism." Soft skills are not a substitute for hard or technical skills, but they act as harmonizing skills that serve up to unlock the prospective for highly effective performance in people even with good hard skills.

III REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

There are several researchers have their opinions on this Soft skills. Audibert and James[7] emphasize the importance of soft skills for employees to retain in their positions as "Soft skills such as leadership, communication, teambuilding and entrepreneurial interest have become critical for hiring and promoting employees to keep positions". Concerning the importance of including soft skills in colleges, Thacker and Yost [8] noted that students require training to be effective team members. Employers often come across that "business graduates lack good team leadership skills".

Porter [9] reported that many business students do not put much value to developing soft skills. Probably that is why, as suggested by Rynes et al [10], the business students' attitude towards behavioural courses, with substantial coverage given to soft skills development, is usually negative together with their reluctance to register for such courses. As a result, there is an awareness gap resulting in deficiency of soft skills among business graduates entering the work force. Alshare, Lane and Miller [11] studied perceptions of students and faculty of the adequacy of soft skills in information systems curricula in different universities in the USA. It was reported that generally students were

more satisfied than faculty about the coverage of soft skills. Realizing the importance of soft skills, several studies have also emphasised the point that these skills should be embedded in the curriculum, thus making it easier for students to acquire them [12, 13].

A study by Hodges and Burchell [14] investigated the perceptions of business employers of the importance of different skills. It was reported that eight out of top ten skills were soft skills which included the ability and willingness to learn, teamwork and cooperation, interpersonal communication, energy and passion, and problem-solving skills. A study covering over 52 different professions with more than 8,000 managers in the United States identified soft skills of employees as the major competency in nearly all the professions, even in the technical environments [15]. It was found that a majority of the respondents undergraduate business management students from Singapore felt that soft skills were useful for social interaction as well as for career advancement. However, they did not think that these skills

contribute considerably to their academic performance. The top five important soft skills identified by the students were: teamwork and collaboration, decision-making, problem-solving, time management and critical thinking skills[16].

The literature providing evidence regarding the relative relevance of various soft skills is vast. However, identifying a consensus regarding the order of relevance among soft skills in order to postulate hypothesis is difficult. The reason is that no unified framework regarding terminology and definition of soft skills exists. Furthermore, there is no consensus on which soft skills need to be included. In order to summarize the existing literature providing empirical evidence regarding a broad set of soft skills, Table 1 displays papers which deem a particular soft skill to be among the most relevant soft skills. This allows to create a very crude ranking of soft skills in accordance to the number of papers which identify the soft skill as one of the most relevant soft skills.

Table 1: Identification of specific soft skills as most important competence [17]:

Soft Skill	Literature
Communication	Maes et al. (1997) , Gabric and McFadden (2001) , Naidoo et al. (2011) Freudenberg et al. (2011) , Robles (2012) , Silva and McFadden (2005) Kavanagh and Drennan (2008) , Hancock (2009) , Tempone et al. (2012) Jackson and Chapman (2012) , Ilias et al. (2012) , Klibi and Oussi (2013) Bailey (2014)
Teamwork/ Interpersonal	Gabric and McFadden (2001) , Hancock (2009) , Freudenberg et al. (2011)

competences	Naidoo et al. (2011) , Robles (2012) , Jackson and Chapman (2012) Ilias et al. (2012) , Klibi and Oussi (2013) , Bailey (2014)
Decision Making/ Problem-Solving	Maes et al. (1997) , Gabric and McFadden (2001) , Silva and McFadden (2005) Kavanagh and Drennan (2008) , Hancock (2009) , Tempone et al. (2012) Jackson and Chapman (2012) , Bailey (2014)
Ethics/Integrity/ Responsibility	Gabric and McFadden (2001) , Kesner (2008) , Naidoo et al. (2011) Robles, 2012) , Ezzo (2013) , Klibi and Oussi (2013)
Time management/ Organization	Silva and McFadden (2005) , Jackson and Chapman (2012) , Ezzo (2013)
Self-motivation	Maes et al. (1997) , Gabric and McFadden (2001) , Hancock (2009)
Willingness to learn	Kesner (2008) , Kavanagh and Drennan (2008) , Tempone et al. (2012)

IV OBJECTIVES OF SOFT SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM:

At the Soft Skills training programs training should be imparted to fine-tune the students' attitudes, values, beliefs, motivation, desires, feelings, eagerness to learn, willingness to share and embrace new ideas, goal orientation, flexibility, persuasion, futuristic thinking, diplomacy, and various skill sets of communication, manners, and etiquette so that they will be able to deal with different situations diligently and responsibly. Soft skills strengthen them from within. These skills empower them to understand "who they are" and how best they can come across as competent individuals in any given situation.

Lack of competence in soft skill is marked as one of the reasons of poor rate of employability of technical graduates, so keeping in mind the present scenario soft skills training program becomes a basic need for getting entry in any sector. Though it is true that soft skill need to be inculcated at a very young age at home but the role of soft skill training in schools and colleges cannot be ignored. Irrespective of the target group or the institution where it is imparted, soft skills training programs aims to improve a whole range of skills, like communication skills, assertiveness, negotiation skills, and the skill to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships. Soft skills are perceived as those capabilities that are inherent in an individual. But if the individual who adorns these

skills is unaware of it then that individual will never be able to utilize his / her inherent skills. The aim of any soft skills training program is to remove these blocks that prevent the individual from utilizing his/ her skills. This training will make the individual aware of his / her hidden capabilities and to refine it for the overall development and success of the individual.

Aim of such programs is that the students should be able to[18]:

- i) Develop effective communication skills
- ii) Develop effective presentation skills.
- iii) Conduct effective business correspondence and prepare business reports which produce results.
- iv) Become self-confident individuals by mastering inter-personal, team management, and leadership skills.
- v) Develop all-round personality with a mature outlook to function effectively in different circumstances.
- vi) Develop broad career plans, evaluate the employment market, identify the organizations to get good placement, match the job requirements and skill sets.
- vii) Take part effectively in various selection procedures adopted by the recruiters.

[V] MOST IMPORTANT SOFT SKILLS:

It's hard to judge which soft skills are most important, but this list is broadly what employers mean when they talk about good soft skills and the skills which are most likely to enable one to build

constructive working relationships with others, or to be a constructive and helpful employee[19].

1. COMMUNICATION SKILLS:

Communication skills are always top of the 'essential skills' list in any job advertisement. People with strong communication skills can build relationships (from the initial building rapport through to a longer-term relationship), listen well, and vary their communication to suit the circumstances. Being able to communicate effectively is the most important of all life skills.

Communication is simply the act of transferring information from one place to another, whether this be vocally (using voice), written (using printed or digital media such as books, magazines, websites or emails), visually (using logos, maps, charts or graphs) or non-verbally (using body language, gestures and the tone and pitch of voice). How well this information can be transmitted and received is a measure of how good our communication skills are. The ability to communicate information accurately, clearly and as intended, is a vital life skill and something that should not be overlooked.

Professionally, if you are applying for jobs or looking for a promotion with your current employer, you will almost certainly need to demonstrate good communication skills. For example, the ability to speak appropriately with a wide variety of people whilst maintaining good eye contact, demonstrate a varied vocabulary and tailor your language to your audience, listen effectively, present your ideas appropriately, write clearly and concisely and work well in a group all require good communication skills. Many of these are essential skills that employers seek. As the career progresses, the importance of communication skills increases; the ability to speak, listen, question and write with

clarity and conciseness are essential for most managers and leaders.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

SKILLS: are used while engaging in face-to-face communication with one or more other people. Active listening is a vital interpersonal communication skill. Good interpersonal communication skills enable one to work more effectively in groups/ teams, developing other key life skills, solving problems that inevitably occur both in one's private and professional life..

COMMON BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION:

- (i) The use of jargon: Over-complicated, unfamiliar and/or technical terms.
- (ii) Emotional barriers and taboos: Some people may find it difficult to express their emotions and some topics may be completely 'off-limits' or taboo.
- (iii) Lack of attention, interest, distractions, or irrelevance to the receiver.
- (iv) Differences in perception and viewpoint.
- (v) Physical disabilities such as hearing problems or speech difficulties.
- (vi) Physical barriers to non-verbal communication: Not being able to see the non-verbal cues, gestures, posture and general body language can make communication less effective.
- (vii) Language differences and the difficulty in understanding unfamiliar accents.
- (viii) Expectations and prejudices which may lead to false assumptions or

stereotyping: People often hear what they expect to hear rather than what is actually said and jump to incorrect conclusions.

- (ix) Cultural differences.: The norms of social interaction vary greatly in different cultures, as do the way in which emotions are expressed.

A Categorisation of Barriers to Communication:

- (i) Language Barriers: Language and linguistic ability may act as a barrier to communication.
- (ii) Psychological Barriers: The psychological state of the communicators will influence how the message is sent, received and perceived. This problem will arise when stress, anger, low self-esteem, shyness is there.
- (iii) Physiological Barriers: Physiological barriers may result from the receiver's physical state like conversation when background noise is there.
- (iv) Physical Barriers: like geographic distance between the sender and receiver(s).
- (v) Systematic Barriers : arise because of inappropriate information systems and communication channels , lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities for communication.
- (vi) Attitudinal Barriers: are behaviours or perceptions that prevent people from communicating effectively.

2. MAKING DECISIONS:

Valued by employers for many reasons, being able to make decisions is key to getting on in life. Sometimes the actual decision doesn't even matter; what matters is that you have made one and moved on.

DECISION MAKING is the act of choosing between two or more courses of action. Decisions can be made through either an intuitive or reasoned process or a combination of the two. Intuition is using your 'gut feeling' about possible courses of action and is a combination of past experience and your personal values. Reasoning is using the facts and figures in front of you to make decisions but it ignores emotional aspects to the decision.

EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING: Decisions need to be capable of being implemented, whether on a personal or organisational level. An effective decision-making process, therefore, needs to ensure that you are able to do so. There are a number of problems that can prevent effective decision-making. These include: 1. Not Enough Information or making a decision without any basis, 2. Too Much Information, 3. Too Many People, 4. Vested Interests, 5. Emotional Attachments, 6. No Emotional Attachment.

Many of these issues can be overcome by using a structured decision-making process. This will help to: Reduce more complicated decisions down to simpler steps, See how any decisions are arrived at; and Plan decision making to meet deadlines. Many different techniques of decision making have been developed, ranging from simple rules of thumb, to extremely complex procedures. The method used depends on the nature of the decision to be made and how complex it is.

The decision making process steps are : 1. Listing Possible Solutions/Options, 2. Setting a Time Scale and Deciding Who is Responsible for the Decision,

3. Information Gathering, 4. Weighing up the Risks Involved, 5. Deciding on Values, 6. Weighing up the Pros and Cons, 7. Making the Decision.

3. SELF MOTIVATION :

People who are self-motivated get on by themselves. They don't need close supervision and they are good to work with because they are generally positive about life and can be counted upon to keep going. It also helps to work on your personal resilience and adaptability to change.

Motivation is what pushes us to achieve our goals, feel more fulfilled and improve overall quality of life. Daniel Goleman, the author of several seminal books on Emotional Intelligence, identified four elements that make up motivation: (i) Personal drive to achieve, the desire to improve or to meet certain standards; (ii) Commitment to personal or organisational goals; (iii) Initiative, which he defined as 'readiness to act on opportunities'; and (iv) Optimism, the ability to keep going and pursue goals in the face of setbacks.

There are many advantages to self-motivation. People who are self-motivated, for example, tend to be more organised, have good time management skills and more self-esteem and confidence.

There are two main types of motivation: '*intrinsic*' and '*extrinsic*' motivation. Intrinsic: To perform an action or task based on the expected or perceived satisfaction of performing the action or task. Intrinsic motivators include having fun, being interested and personal challenge. Extrinsic: To perform an action or task in order to attain some sort of reward, including money, power and good marks or grades.

We all have a tendency to work better when we love what we are doing. It's easier to get out of bed

in the morning, we are happier in our work, and happier in general. Research shows that this is particularly important when we're under stress. It's much easier to cope with stress and long hours if we generally enjoy the work. When thinking about what motivates you to perform a certain task, think about both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators – if you have trouble getting motivated to perform specific tasks it may be useful to write them down and list the motivators for each.

Skills Involved in Self-Motivation: There are a number of skills involved in self-motivation. These include: Setting high but realistic goals, Taking the right level of risk, Seeking constant feedback to work out how to improve, Being committed to personal or organisational goals and going the 'extra mile' to achieve them, Actively seeking out opportunities and seizing them when they occur, Being able to deal with setbacks and continue to pursue goals despite obstacles, Keep Motivated.

To keep your motivation levels up try to: Learn and Acquire Knowledge, Keep the Company of Enthusiastic People, Keep Positive, Know Your Strengths and Weaknesses, Do It, Get Help and Help Others.

4. LEADERSHIP SKILLS:

These are the set of soft skills that we least expect someone to develop by themselves. The ability to lead effectively is based on a number of key skills. These skills are highly sought after by employers as they involve dealing with people in such a way as to motivate, enthuse and build respect. Leadership roles are all around us, not just in a work environment. They can be applied to any situation where you are required to take the lead, professionally, socially and at home in family settings. Ideally, leaders become leaders because

they have credibility, and because people *want* to follow them.

Many people also wonder if leadership can really be taught. People with vested interests (academics and those offering leadership training or literature of some sort) are convinced that it can. Many successful leaders, however, have never had any formal training. For them leadership is a state of mind, and it is their personalities and traits that make them successful leaders.

One of the most important aspects of leadership is that not every leader is the same. There are many different styles of leadership-Autocratic, Democratic, Free-rein and etc.

Perhaps the most important skill a leader needs is to be able to think strategically. Leadership is all about having a vision of where you want to be and working to achieve that vision. Different leadership styles are appropriate for different people and different circumstances, and the best leaders learn to use them all.

Alongside strategic thinking go organising and action planning, both essential for delivery of your vision and strategy, and risk management to help you avoid things going wrong, and manage when they do. Leaders also need to be able to make good decisions in support of their strategy delivery. Along the way to achieving their vision a leader will come upon many problems.

Effective problem solving is therefore another key leadership skill. With a positive attitude, problems can become opportunities and learning experiences, and a leader can gain much information from a problem addressed. Leaders also need to be very organised on a personal level, and able to manage themselves and their time, so that they can spend

time doing what they need to do, and not on other tasks.

As well as organising their time and their teams, leaders need to spend a bit of time on themselves, and particularly on their self-motivation. A leader who lacks self-motivation will struggle to motivate others, as people are quick to detect a lack of sincerity. The ability to lead effectively is based on a number of key skills. These skills are highly sought after by employers as they involve dealing with people in such a way as to motivate, enthuse and build respect.

DEVELOPING PEOPLE SKILLS: Another area which is crucial for leaders is skills in leading people. After all, without followers, there are no leaders. Leaders need skills in working with others on a one-to-one and group basis, and a range of tools in their armoury to deal with a wide range of situations.

One of the first skills that new leaders need to master is how to delegate. This is a difficult skill for many people but, done well, delegation can give team members responsibility and a taste of leadership themselves, and help them to remain motivated.

Leaders also need to know how to give others their views on personal performance in a way that will be constructive rather than destructive, and also hear others' opinions of them. Leaders then need tools to help them understand the way that others behave, and create positive interactions. Finally, leaders have to be able to work well in group situation. However, leaders spend much of their time in one particular group situation, meetings, so they need to have particular skill in chairing and managing meetings.

EFFECTIVE PERSONAL QUALITIES: There are a number of personal qualities which leaders tend to display. However, they can be developed and improved over time.

These qualities include charisma, that quality of 'brightness' which makes people want to follow a leader, assertiveness, which enables that person to make their point without aggression, but firmly, and empathy, understanding of how others feel. One way to understand leadership qualities is in terms of Emotional Intelligence, an umbrella term that describes how well we relate to others and to our own feelings.

Leaders also need Excellent Communication skills. These skills are general interpersonal skills, not specific to leadership, but successful leaders tend to show high levels of skill when communicating.

Good leaders tend to be extremely good listeners, able to listen actively and elicit information by good questioning. They know how to build rapport quickly and effectively, to develop good, strong relationships with others, whether peers or subordinates. They are usually very good at public speaking, equally skilled at getting their point across in a formal presentation or Board meeting, or in an informal meeting or casual corridor conversation. They have strong negotiation skills, in the broadest sense, in terms of reaching win-win situations and making sure that they know their 'bottom line'. They have also honed their ability to communicate in difficult situations, usually by practice over time.

5. TEAM-WORKING SKILLS:

Like leadership skills, there are many training courses to teach you how to work well in a team. However, there is also plenty of thinking to suggest that good communication skills,

particularly good listening skills, together with an ability to build rapport will go a long way to support your ability to work well in a team.

Working in Groups and Teams: Being in groups is part of everyday life and many of us will belong to a wide range of groups, for example: family groups, social groups, sports groups, committees, etc. A team is generally more specific. The distinction is that a team is working together for a common cause. A group of schoolchildren may be in the same class, whereas a team of schoolchildren may be working together on a specific project within the class. When we talk about groups and teams we use the terms interchangeably.

A group is a collection of people with some common characteristics or purpose. They are (i) A group can consist of any number of people, (ii) People in groups interact, engage and identify with each other, often at regular or pre-determined times and places, (iii) The group members share beliefs, principles, and standards about areas of common interest and they come together to work on common tasks for agreed purposes and outcomes, (iv) People in groups are defined by themselves and by others as group members, in other words individuals are aware that they are part of a group.

Important Defining Features of Groups: (i) People who can identify with each other. Sharing ideas, beliefs and/or experience of common areas, (ii) People who frequently and regularly engage with each other, agreeing on a purpose and working together on shared tasks, (iii) People who recognise themselves and are recognised by others as part of a group.

Types of Groups: Groups may be formal, brought together for a particular purpose, or they may be informal such as family groups, groups of friends or colleagues. You may come into contact or work

with a range of different groups. These types of group may include:

- i. Work Groups: Either formal, such as teams, committees or training groups, or informal maybe setup to tackle an ad-hoc problem.
- ii. Neighbourhood Groups: An example of a neighbourhood group would be one established to develop local amenities.
- iii. Social Groups /Special Interest groups: These are groups established to meet the needs of a particular sector (e.g. age group, gender) or interests (e.g. music or sports). Examples include Women's Institute and Scouts.
- iv. Self-Help Groups: Such groups are often established to work through particular emotions or to provide support for people with a certain illness, e.g. helping to overcome an addiction such as Alcoholics Anonymous.
- v. Inter-Agency Groups: These are developed between agencies/organisations that work in related fields to improve product and/or client services. In addition, they aid communication and establish joint ventures to prevent duplication and confusion.
- vi. Pressure Groups: The function of pressure groups is to challenge the status quo, often by using high profile tactics to gain media attention to achieve their aims.

TASK-BASED AND EXPERIENCE-BASED GROUPS:

Groups can also be sub-divided in two ways: Groups established to carry out specific tasks are known as task-based groups, such as a pressure groups. Groups which are based on the experiences of their members are known as experience-based groups, such as a self-help group. The distinction between task-based groups and experience-based groups is important because it affects how the group is formed, organised, led and what roles the individual group members play.

Task-Based or Content Groups: These types of group focus on the achievement of specific goals and the individual members of the group work towards completing these goals like design of a new product.

Experience-Based or Process Groups: These types of group focus on the individual group members and how they interact, support and grow together, an example would be a group established to support people suffering from stress.

Group Communication: When people are part of a group they interact and communicate in different ways to how they would on a one-to-one basis.

THESE DIFFERENCES INCLUDE:

The Individual Member within a Group: Through networking within a group people come to a greater understanding about other group members and the wider environment – seeing things from other people's point of view. Also, within a group situation, people often learn about who they are and their strengths and weaknesses through comparison with other group members.

Groups are important to personal development as they can provide support and encouragement to help individuals to make changes in behaviour and attitude. Some groups also provide a setting to

explore and discuss personal issues. A group setting can allow people to become more confident and learn new interpersonal, social and practical skills through observation as well as practice. These skills can be developed within a group setting and then effectively used in individual situations. As group membership can improve self-esteem and confidence so it can also improve self-motivation and the desire to learn and develop.

The Group as a Whole: From the experience of belonging to different groups, it quickly becomes obvious that groups are often made up of individuals with very different personalities, attitudes and ideas. For a group to function well a bond needs to be developed so that individual differences can be used for the wider interests of the group. 'Cohesiveness' is the term used to describe this mutual bonding between members, with each having a strong sense of belonging to the group.

Cohesiveness is, in part, the measure of the success of the group. A group with more cohesiveness is more likely to keep its members than that of a group with little cohesiveness. Members of a high-cohesive group are likely to talk in group terms, using 'we' instead of 'I' when talking about group activities. The more cohesive a group the greater the sense of team spirit and the more individual members will cooperate with each other. A low-cohesive group may find that members frequently miss meetings; sub-groups or cliques may form within the original group and there is likely to be an underlying sense of frustration as the goals of the group are less likely to be attained.

6. CREATIVITY AND PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS:

Creativity and problem-solving skills are highly valued because they are hard to develop. There are many people who believe that creative thinkers are born, not made, and there are certainly some people who find these skills much easier.

CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS: Regardless of whether you view yourself as a creative type or not, you can learn some useful skills and techniques which will enable you to tap into that creative 'right brain' thinking and bring a new perspective to innovation, problem-solving and managing change. Although at first glance, creative thinking techniques may sometimes look a bit ridiculous, there are good principles behind most of them. However sceptical you may be about their potential, it's a good idea to approach them with an open mind. You may be surprised by the results. The techniques of some of the creative thinking skills are Brainstorming , Engaging your Right Brain, A Take-Home Message, A Take-Home Message etc.

PROBLEM SOLVING: It would be wonderful to have the ability to solve all problems efficiently and in a timely fashion without difficulty, unfortunately there is no one way in which all problems can be solved. Interpersonal relationships fail and businesses fail because of poor problem solving.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1995) defines a problem as: "A doubtful or difficult matter requiring a solution" and "Something hard to understand or accomplish or deal with." All problems have two features in common: goals and barriers.

Stages of Problem Solving: Effective problem solving usually involves working through a number of steps or stages, such as those outlined below.

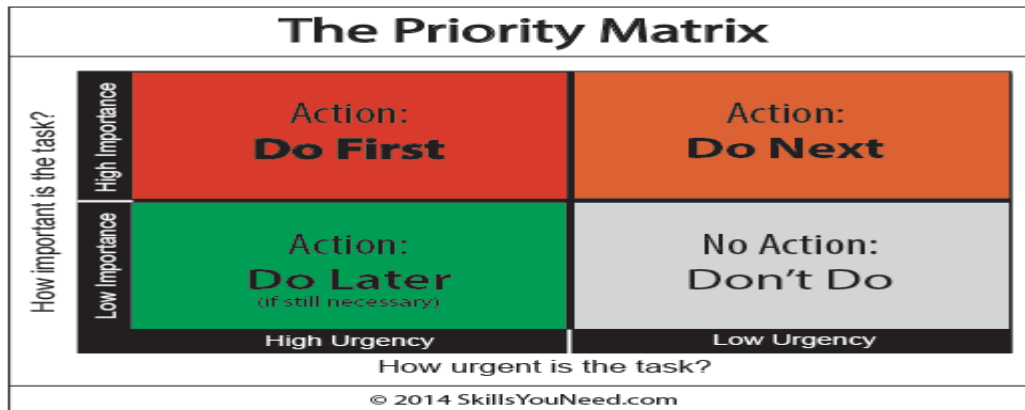
- (i) **Problem Identification:** This stage involves detecting and recognising that there is a problem; identifying the nature of the problem; defining the problem.
- (ii) **Structuring the Problem:** This stage involves a period of observation, careful inspection, fact-finding and developing a clear picture of the problem.
- (iii) **Looking for Possible Solutions:** During this stage you will generate a range of possible courses of action, but with little attempt to evaluate them at this stage.
- (iv) **Making a Decision:** This stage involves careful analysis of the different possible courses of action and then selecting the best solution for implementation.
- (v) **Implementation:** This stage involves accepting and carrying out the chosen course of action.
- (vi) **Monitoring/Seeking Feedback:** The last stage is about reviewing the outcomes of problem solving over a period of time, including seeking feedback as to the success of the outcomes of the chosen solution.

7. TIME MANAGEMENT AND ABILITY TO WORK UNDER PRESSURE:

The Key to Good Time Management to Understanding The Difference Between Urgent and Important. 'Urgent' tasks demand your immediate attention, but whether you actually give them that

attention may or may not matter. 'Important' tasks matter, and not doing them may have serious consequences for you or others. This distinction between urgent and important is the key to

prioritising your time and your workload, whether at work or at home. Try using a grid, like the priority matrix, to organise your tasks into their appropriate categories:



Further Principles of Good Time Management:

- (i) **Keep tidy:** For some of us, clutter can be both a real distraction and genuinely depressing. Tidying up can improve both self-esteem and motivation. You will also find it easier to stay on top of things if your workspace is tidy.
- (ii) **Pick Your Moment:** All of us have times of day that we work better. It's best to schedule the difficult tasks for those times.
- (iii) **Don't Procrastinate, but Do Ask Why You're Tempted:** If a task is genuinely urgent and important, get on with it.
- (iv) **Don't Try To Multi-task:** Generally, people aren't very good at multi-tasking, because it takes our brains time to refocus. It's much better to finish off one job before moving onto another.

- (v) **Stay Calm and Keep Things In Perspective:** Feeling overwhelmed by too many tasks can be very stressful. Remember that the world will probably not end if you fail to achieve your last task of the day, or leave it until tomorrow, especially if you have prioritised sensibly.

Going home or getting an early night, so that you are fit for tomorrow, may be a much better option than meeting a self-imposed or external deadline that may not even matter that much. Take a moment to pause and get your life and priorities into perspective, and you may find that the view changes quite substantially!

VI PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT AND SOFT SKILLS:

Personality Development through Soft Skills Training should be conducted in three modules[20]:

- 1) Business communication, 2) Behavioural Skills, and 3) Training in Group Discussion and Personal Interview.

I . Business Communication : covers the following areas: Communications skills, current English usage, debates, language games, situational dialogues, précis writing, essay writing, presentations.(Preparing for effective presentations, presentation for small groups and large groups, marketing and business presentations.)Business Correspondence(Principles of clear writing, often misused words, applications and requests, routine messages, memos, report writing, organizing meetings, preparation of agenda and minutes, business etiquette, telephone etiquette, e-mail etiquette).

As a result the students will soon realize that fluency and command over speaking and writing gives them an edge while interacting with people at all levels.

II. Behavioral skills: An array of skills related to personal growth for efficient functioning constitutes the training. Students are made to realize their strengths and weaknesses so that they are able to grasp the true essence of development. This module covers the following areas:

Psychological Tests: Aptitude and personality assessment, suggestions for improvement.

Team Skills: Team building and leadership, evolution of groups into teams, group dynamics, emergence of leadership, intra-group dynamics, inter-group dynamics, conflict management, inter dependency, assessment of team-based projects.

Time Management: Pareto's Principle, Parkinson's Laws, Murphy's Laws, Law of Clutter, prioritization, goal setting, effective time management.

Interpersonal Skills: Negotiations, listening skills, social skills, assertive skills, cross-cultural communications.

Leadership Skills: Concepts of leadership, leadership styles, insights from great leaders.

As a result student realize that punctuality, goal management, collaborative team skills, and listening skills, are important facets of a well-rounded personality. Self-awareness programs enhance the students' personality. These soft skills are enormously valued in business organizations. As employment conditions become tougher, potential recruiters look for personal attributes like attitude and values.

III . Training in Group Discussion (GD) and Personal Interview (PI) :

Before the students go through real job interviews, they are made to go through a series of practice sessions on GD and PI.. Feedback is given to the students later for a realistic understanding of industry expectations.

It covers the following areas:

Selection Process: Overview of selection process, practice of psychological tests, effective resume writing, dealing with placement consultants and head hunters, references – how to get effective references from past and current employers.

Group Discussions: Concepts and Practice.

Interview Techniques: Effective interview techniques, mock interviews, stress interviews, review and feedback.

As a result Students aspire to obtain fulfilling and rewarding campus placements. How the students fare in the campus placement interviews depends

on how well they are able to internalize the personality development techniques. If they internalize the techniques thoroughly, they have a good chance of getting great placements.

VII CONCLUSION:

From the above reviews of literature and analysis , we can observe that soft skills are very much essential to all people. Although these soft skills can be learnt from society and work environment, a student should concentrate to get employment first. There is a need of the hour to incorporate them in curriculum and also should taught in terms of training programmes to improve the personality development. All the stakeholders of the society should realise the essence of Soft Skills . It is welcoming note that our Governments both central and state are putting their best efforts to improve these skills among the public.

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