

Integration of Soft Skills in Teacher Education Programme

Abstract

In the era of globalization and high technological developments, the strength of any nation is entirely dependent upon the abilities of its workforce which needs to be highly intellectual and should possess adequate skills for growth and development. An efficient and quality human resource is the outcome of efficient education system. Teachers proficient in soft skills can help students to develop the same by being role model for them. Soft skills at the same time are also important for their professional growth. This paper deals with both MUST HAVE SOFT SKILLS and GOOD TO HAVE SOFT SKILLS and evaluates their importance in teacher education programme. It also critically evaluates the models and support programme to be included in teacher education curriculum.

Keywords: Soft Skills, Must have Skills and Good to have Skills.

Introduction

In the era of globalization and high technological developments, the strength of any nation is entirely dependent upon the abilities of its workforce which needs to be highly intellectual and should possess adequate skills for growth and development. The development of human resource is necessary since it reflects the country's vision and mission. A nation will stand weak if its workforce is not capable enough to take new ventures and initiatives. An efficient and quality human resource is the outcome of efficient education system. A carefully planned and developed education system is required to develop such effective work force. Ramsden (2003) argued that education plays an important role in developing and shaping the economic and social aspects for nations in a competitive and dynamic world. The role of teacher and educational institutes who are responsible for the production of highly knowledgeable and skilled workforce to meet the demands of the nation cannot be undermined.

Mascarenhas (2010) stated the importance of Teachers in shaping future and also highlighted the importance of incorporating the right skills in them for professional efficiency. The teaching and learning process in teacher education institutes should provide knowledge and skills to future teachers. Krneta et al (2007) stated that teacher education includes theoretical knowledge as well as incorporating professional skills in addition to teaching skills. Teaching skills would help prospective teachers to use various approaches, strategies and techniques in planning, developing and carrying out effective teaching and assessments. It also includes emphasis on skills to manage classrooms and use teaching aids effectively. Theory of pedagogy encompasses the various aspects of sociological, psychological and philosophical nature which provides for strong base to practice skills while teaching in classroom. Professional skills help teachers to plan their career and future growth. It encompasses counseling skills, soft skills, computer skills, information retrieving and management skills and lifelong learning skills. Combining pedagogical knowledge, teaching skills and professional skills would help to generate right attitude, skills and knowledge in teachers to develop holistic development (Gibbs and Coffey, 2004). In order to develop a flourishing career in teaching teachers are expected to have not only hard skills but also soft skills. In present system of education, teachers who use soft skills would be role model for all in many ways (Fulton, 2006).

Aim of the Study

Aim of the study is to critically evaluate seven soft skills and its importance in the teacher education programme.

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Soft Skills

Soft skills are all those generic attributes that increases an individual's interactions at both personal and professional fronts. Soft skills are said to include all aspects of generic skills that include cognitive elements associated with non academic skills. We can also say that it refers to traits related to personality, social etiquettes, language fluency, personal habits, friendly behavior and positive attitude. Soft skills complement hard skills which are basic requirements of any professional. They are also called as critical skills in current scenario of rapid change in technological developments. Soft skills help to achieve sustainability in education at larger level (Pachauri and Yadav, 2014).

Seven Soft Skills identified are as below:-

1. Communication skills
2. Problem solving skills
3. Entrepreneurial skills
4. Leadership skills
5. Professional, ethics and moral skills
6. Team building skills

7. Lifelong learning and information management

All these skills have further sub skills. These sub skills are further divided into two sets for effective and successful implementation. These sub skills have certain important and prominent contents which can help an individual to grow and lead a triumphant life.

These two sub sets are:-

1. Must Have Skills.
2. Good To Have Skills.

Despite the importance being put on soft skills that must be present i.e MUST HAVE, it is also suggested to encourage soft skills which are GOOD TO HAVE. All elements of soft skills acquired by each individual student are evaluated effectively and comprehensively. The MUST HAVE skills must be acquired by the teacher education institution which make them effective and competent. The GOOD TO HAVE skills are regarded as generic skills which serve as bonus to teacher students.

Following table shows description of different sets of implementation for each sub skills for the seven soft skills.

S. No.	Soft Skills	Must Have Soft Skills	Good to have Soft Skills
1.	Communi-cative Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to deliver ideas in clear and effective manner. 2. Effective presentation of ideas and thoughts. 3. Active listening and response system. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of technology in presentation. 2. Ability to use discussion and arriving at consensus. 3. Empathetic attitude. 4. Use of multi level communication skills.
2.	Problem Solving Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification and analysis of the problem. 2. Evaluating the problem from various angles. 3. Ability to use critical thinking in finding new ideas. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to think out of box. 2. Ability to validate facts. 3. Ability to adjust with varying environments. 4. Ability to work in groups.
3.	Entrepreneur-ial Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to explore opportunities in environment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to take risk and develop new business opportunities. 2. Exploring Self employment opportunities.
4.	Leader -ship Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to lead a group 2. Knowledge about various theories as propagated in various periods about leadership. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to implement leadership skills in various conditions. 2. Ability to be in follower's group as and when required.
5.	Professi-onal , Ethics and Moral Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to understand crisis at professional level. 2. Ability to analyze problems to find their solutions with critical analysis of the situation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to solve problems by keeping in mind ethics and moral values at both personal and professional front.
6.	Team Building Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to interact and work with others. 2. Ability to swap roles between leader and follower. 3. Ability to show respect towards other's beliefs and behavior. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to actively plan and coordinate various group activities. 2. Take responsibility as leader of group decisions.
7.	Lifelog Learnig and Information Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to locate various sources of information which are relevant. 2. Ability to explore new and innovative ideas. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ability to develop critical thinking. 2. Ability to generate and use learning for life.

To achieve sustainability which is need of an hour, education is required at forefront. Current economic developments are not sustainable and only

through public awareness, education and training we can achieve sustainability. Quality human resource of any country can only contribute towards development

of nation without compromising the needs and requirements of future generations. Therefore it is important to include soft skills in students to help develop efficient future human capital and also to incorporate values and skills in them (Pachauri and Yadav, 2014). For this we need high quality institutes which play an important role in incorporating values of self reliance and sustainable developments.

Teachers are considered to be the pillars of progressive society. They apart from parents bear the responsibility of teaching values, ethics, skills and knowledge to students. But still the debatable question is knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills that teachers should possess. Therefore there is much strong need to implement soft skills in all teacher education programs through various models. An approach is needed to plan and develop soft skills among students of teacher education program. This approach should be based on the combination of several activities which can be formal or in formal in nature.

In order to incorporate soft skills among students via formal teaching and learning activities following models can be used:-

1. Stand Alone Model.
2. Embedded model
3. Collaborative Approach.

Stand Alone Model

This model uses the approach of training and creating opportunities to develop soft skills through specially designed courses which are intended for this purpose only. Generally these courses are offered in colleges and universities as foundation courses (English language, communication skills, etc) or elective courses (public speaking, critical thinking, etc). These courses are part of overall conditions that make up a program. The number of credits in particular category generally depends on the curriculum design and course requirements. The stand alone subject model can be initiated by encouraging students to take up several add on courses which can be accumulated to be minor course which are different from initial signed up plan.

Embedded Model

This model uses an approach of inculcating soft skills in the teaching learning process as curriculum. It does not allow student to take special courses as in stand alone subject model. Students are trained in soft skills using various formal teaching methods where specialized strategies are designed to make them master in their skills. In this way, the substance and learning outcome are achieved and soft skills are made integral part of learning process. This model needs to be applied for various courses using the concept of specifying learning outcomes of soft skills and converting them into instructions to be taught. This needs to be followed by using several methods of teachings like questioning, class discussion, brain storming, team work, presentation, role play, simulation, project work, field work and site visits. For this model to be fully functional the expertise on the part of lecturer is required to use various strategies and methods of teaching which are entirely student centered. It also involves active

student participation. Some suggestive strategies that are to be used are [1] Learning by questioning, [2] Co-operative learning, [3] Problem based learning, [4] e-learning.

Collaborative approach

Both above mentioned models have their respective strengths and weaknesses. From the point of view of planning and implementation, stand alone model is at advantage. It is because subject is developed in such a manner as to help students to acquire required soft skills. But this model suffers from a major limitation of students not acquiring and developing soft skills as in collaboration with other knowledge and skills of other disciplines. On the contrary note, the framework for planning and implementation of embedded model is more demanding than stand alone model. This model requires teachers to acquire and develop specific teaching learning skills to an efficient level for particular program. When carefully planned and developed and used in collaboration with specific teaching learning strategies, this model results in developing soft skills as an integration with other skills in the program. Moreover this model does not require any add on courses to the existing ones.

Based on strengths and weaknesses of both the models, the teacher education institute should use embedded model as compared to stand alone. The reason behind this is that embedded model focus on student centric learning modes like experiential learning, problem based learning etc as compared to stand alone model.

Development of Soft Skills through Support Program

Support programs are designed to support programs and activities to inculcate soft skills either directly or indirectly.

Support program can be further divided into two types:-

Academic Support Program

This program is entirely associated with the incorporation of soft skills with are related directly to the academic matters.

Non Academic Support Program

This program involves assistance to students in incorporating soft skills which not directly related to academic matters rather related to personality and professional developments. Most of the activities undertaken are in the form of co curricular activities oriented towards all round personality development.

Conclusion

Critical analysis of teacher education institutes in several research studies has identified some weaknesses in relation to soft skills development. Teachers have all the requisite skills in them but as per the changing trends and modernization of education, teachers are required to have all kinds of additional abilities which will help them in shaping our society in proficient manner. Focus on teacher education program should be towards developing and producing teachers with excellent attitude, high moral and ethical standards. This can only be done by reorienting the curriculum of

teacher education by focusing on the importance of soft skills development.

The hard skills developed and inculcated using various transactional approaches of teacher education program are visible and tangible and are relatively easier to explain, teach, develop, measure and evaluate as compared to soft skills which are more human in nature and also referred to as 'human skills' or 'interpersonal skills' because it involves various parameters from sociology, psychology and philosophy. Fundamental courses are very important for teacher trainees as it includes 'MUST HAVE SOFT SKILLS' but the need of the modern day education system is to successfully incorporate the suggestions made by several educationists and philosophers in enhancing the abilities of an individual by giving freedom to develop as an developed individual by placing importance to 'GOOD TO HAVE SKILLS'.

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