Chapter One

Introduction
1.1. Introduction

“There is no substitute in the most advanced of technologies for the magic that a warm handshake can create. Good listening skills, the honesty in the grammar of your eyeballs, the ability to connect with the emotions of people and reach out to them is the only mark of a good leadership. While companies fail because of arrogant leadership, the emotional state of an organization shows through effective leadership. No leader is born with leadership skills. Leaders are made through exposure, through training and through constant practice.”. These were the words of a CEO in his address in a recent HR conclave. These words are a significant indication of the role of soft skills in managing the ‘emotional state of an organization’ and the place that soft skills training holds in the minds of the top management. Training and Development is critical to employee performance and therefore forms an integral part the performance monitoring cycle. Training and Development interventions constitute a major part of the initiatives taken by organisations and institutions to help employees and potential employees meet up with the requirements in their respective work job areas either as formal training or as informal training depending on the organizations’ economic status (Cosh, 2003). It is stated that soft skills are an essential and important requirement, along with technical skills for a person to work effectively, perform and grow on the job.

Soft Skills training has emerged as a fast-growing and specialized arena in the field of training and development. Along with training in technical skills, soft skills training is considered as equally or
sometimes quoted as more important for employee development and performance. Researchers quote soft skills training as more important and crucial for growth and development of individuals at the workplace than even technical skills and in turn for the growth and of the organisation and term them as foundational competences (Jarche, 2009).

Among the many arguments on the need to pay more attention to soft skills training as against technical training, Verstappen (2011) argued that in order to build capability among people it was important to put people through as much training in soft skills as possible. This argument is very true, as there are recurrent instances of corporate managers being unable to climb up the career ladder because of the inability to demonstrate interpersonal skills and the right behaviour at the workplace, popularly known as soft skills, despite having the domain knowledge.

The duration of the soft skills training programmes under various heads vary in content and duration and depth. People have varied perceptions about the importance, usefulness and outcome of soft skills training in terms of translation into specific behaviour and performance related impact as also the ability of trainers to be the most influential people in the organization (Adair, 2008). The relative position of soft skills over job knowledge and the right methods to impart soft skills and to enable transfer of soft skills training to the workplace.

Managers and potential managers of different age groups, educational levels and backgrounds have various perceptions about
Chapter One-Introduction

how important soft skills training programmes are, how much they help in attitude change manifesting in different ways the extent of the usefulness and effectiveness of different type of soft skills training programmes at the workplace and the effect that soft skills training programmes have in areas in which they have been trained on their performance.

Most educational institutions have also included soft skills training as an essential part of the educational programmes inorder to enhance employability potential of fresh graduates. Under the broad term of ‘soft skills’ considered necessary for young graduates (Crawford, Lang, Fink, Dalton & Fielitz, 2011) are included communication skills, behavioural skills and interpersonal skills which would help an individual to make his work effective- such as the ability to speak well (verbal communication skills), ability to communicate well through non-verbal signals and body language(non-verbal communication skills), the ability to speak well (written communication skills), the ability to be lead others (leadership skills), the ability to be aware of oneself by knowing oneself and knowing others’ feelings(self-awareness skills), the ability to solve problem (problem solving skills), the ability to manage conflicts (conflict management skills), the ability to work with people(team-working skills), the ability to behave in an appropriate way by the use of proper etiquette and social graces for business success (business etiquette skills, the ability to use available time in an effective manner(time management skills), the ability to present data effectively through presentations (presentation skills).
Chapter One-Introduction

Owing to the specialized nature of each of the skills stated above, each of the above areas has emerged into specific areas for training under the broad term of soft skills training. Owing to the felt need for soft skills and research that soft skills can be acquired through training (Crosbie, 2005) and importance, training in soft skills is introduced at all levels right from management education level to very senior rungs of management. Soft Skills training is also included as essential skills training in certain work areas where the business depends only on the use of soft skills.

The current study aims to investigate the relationship between soft skills training and the perception and actions of workers, learners and potential workers about the influence and effect of soft skills training with regard to its importance, utility and subsequent development of competence. It also aims to link particular performance indicating factors that result out of training in soft skills, with the objective of achieving maximum training effectiveness.

1.2. Background and Context of the Study

The literature studied in the current research reveals that corporate professionals and experts and researchers recommend soft skills training as an essential intervention in developing and managing performance.

Researchers recommend that there should be more emphasis on training people on soft skills than technical or hard skills training. However, researchers and training experts also advise against trying to measure the influence or impact of soft skills training in exact
Chapter One-Introduction

terms. Researchers such as Berger & Berger, (2008) discuss at length the reasons for measuring the results or effect of soft skills training.

Research shows that there is a change in the approach towards soft skills in recent years among universities and institutes. (Devan; 2010, The Hard Truth About Soft Skills, “The Strait Times”) In 2006, Cambridge and the London School of Economics discouraged students from opting for softer subjects such as communication, music and so on if they wished to get good grades. As against that, Singaporean Education Minister Ng Eng Hen's speech in Parliament referred to soft skills as '21st century skills' warning against dismissing them and stating that every student should be trained in these skills to be confident and develop the right value systems. This is an indication that the concept of soft skills has gained recognition even in the eyes of hard-core politicians in Asian countries. In 2008, it was recommended that Indian politicians should be taught speaking skills to help them avoid putting their foot in the mouth and learn to say the right things during critical events. The importance of soft skills in the political arena is also evident with Hilary Clinton making a remark about soft power (which referred to attraction and the ability to speak softly) being an essential quality of leadership. The article was hinting at the need for Obama to use soft power.

Because of the behavioural nature of soft skills training outcome, learning transfer in soft skills training has always been termed as unquantifiable and un-assessable, and was very often not termed as performance.
Chapter One-Introduction

In previous studies, the term soft skills training has been used generically to include a number of training interventions without assessing the connection between modules for their importance and usefulness, and no assessment on which training programmes are significant and specifically related to inculcate the required behaviour in the corporate sector.

Most organisations recognize soft skills training as an important performance monitoring intervention enabling demonstration of appropriate behaviour which is instrumental in bringing about optimum performance from each of its members. However, many organizations are also hesitant to allocate budgets required to impart training because of the unquantifiable nature of the learning transfer. Major parts of training budgets get used in technical training. Moreover, the allocated budgets could also get used on carelessly arranged training programmes without a scientific investigation into the specific requirements of the people in the organisation.

Change in performance related behaviour takes longer than transfer in technical skills training after a training programme. Many participants as well as functional superiors consider soft skills training as a cosmetic and ornamental activity and do not feel it has any relationship with performing on a job. Line managers are very often hesitant to send their team members for soft skills training due to ignorance of the content of the programmes and also because they feel it is a waste of time. There is also some resistance to nominating and being nominated to attend training in soft skills especially in the areas of etiquette and grooming, as it is perceived
Chapter One-Introduction

as a direct pointer as personal shortcomings of those nominated. However factors such as support of the superior (Adair, 2008), conducing work culture and intrinsic motivation also become crucial in enabling training transfer.

New developments and research in training methodology also show that pedagogy in soft skills training does not rely on the lecture method as is the case with most management training. Experiential learning methods which include exercises, activities, simulations and brainstorming are being used to bring home the learning is being used to make learning impactful.

1.3. Theoretical Frame work of the Study

1.3.1. Overview of Soft Skills Training

As defined by Purdue University, soft skills are defined by the “cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication skills, language skills, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark people and make them distinct and distinguished.”

Soft Skills are very often termed as ‘people skills’ or ‘interpersonal skills’ as they relate to people interaction and human behaviour. However, soft skills encompass much more than people or interpersonal skills. The scientific basis for these skills is very often drawn from concepts of social and applied psychology such as personality, attitude, perception, emotions motivation, group behaviour and leadership.

Every manager requires the skills to deal effectively with other people in the organisation and in order to get work done. To achieve
organizational goals and to aim at taking work to the highest level of success, sensitivity to human factors of work is a must. Qualities such as leadership, relationship building and relationship management, teamwork and team management, decision making, conflict management and problem solving, communication skills that people use to get work done and in many cases business etiquette are critical in organisational success.

Soft skills’ training also draws inferences from language studies, linguistics, phonetics and stylistics. Although Soft Skills are generally considered to be a soft domain, there is a strong case for soft skills having a hard impact on individual and organizational performance, going beyond merely developing people. The right implementation of soft skills training by the organisation can show its impact on the business revenue and profits and reflect in hard outcomes such as productivity, customer satisfaction, brand image of the organisation, work processes, employee turnover and on soft areas which are equally important to business success and individual performance. On the personal, social and community front, soft skills training should help individuals face issues related to life skills and interact positively in society, engage in community activities and aspire to meet their life’s goals and ambitions on a positive and confident note.

In India, soft skills training programmes flourished with the growth of the IT industry, especially with the growth of BPO (ITES) industry, when effective communication skills became a business requirement primary business requirement.
Chapter One-Introduction

Training Programmes in soft skills cover Communication Skills–Verbal; Communication Skills-Non-Verbal; Communication Skills–Written; Leadership Skills; Self-Awareness; Team building/Team Management; Problem Solving skills; Conflict Management; Assertive Skills; Business Etiquette; Time Management; Presentation Skills

Perceptions about soft skills training vary from its importance, usefulness and need for training in these areas.

The concept of attitudinal training, grew in the early 1960s and 70s with many motivational gurus like Dale Carnegie and Zig Ziglar advocating the importance of behaviour and attitude in organizational success. The great steel magnate, Andrew Carnegie was a strong proponent of soft skills.

The difference between Organisational Behaviour and Soft Skills is that the former is more of a systematic study of the behavior and attitudes of both individuals and groups within an organization. Organisational Behaviour is more theory based and scientific in the sense that it gives managers or management students detailed knowledge on the origin and impact on behavioural theories and how they manifest themselves in organizational and work contexts. The study of organizational behaviour is more of an objective domain study and takes its origins from social sciences such as Social Psychology, Applied Psychology, Anthropology and Sociology.

Soft Skills Development is the actual use and practice of desirable and positive behavioural outcomes in a context (work-related or
Chapter One-Introduction

life-related) to bring about a positive work outcome, a desirable end-state or effective performance.

Soft Skills Development includes in its content, aspects of language development as part of communication skills and also includes finer aspects of lifestyle development and actual life skills in the form of corporate grooming and business etiquette. Soft Skills Development aims at delivering a finished product in the form of an individual with the best proportion of desirable attributes thrown up by the study of organizational behaviour. It aims at refinement, polish, excellence, sophistication on the external front and aims at sustainable and continual change in cognitive, emotional and behavioural attributes of an individual. Training and learning of soft skills is considered a laboratory activity or exercise because it needs constant practice and drilling. Soft Skills Training Courses are therefore often referred to as Soft Skills Labs. To help professionals learn these skills, experiential methods such as role-play, simulations, outbound and inbound training programmes, team games and other activities are used.

The study of Organisational Behaviour, on the other hand, is more theoretical and informative, can be taught in a classroom through the lecture method and can even be read. Organisational Behaviour can be said to include both hard elements as well as soft elements because it requires to take a hard look at theoretical aspects from the validation angle, while the practice of soft skills requires constant practice backed with positive reinforcement. Learning soft skills requires intense concentration and goal setting and needs constant effort from the individual learning to use the skills both on
and off the job context. Soft Skills Training therefore needs to be done through separately designed courses that help an individual to test his skills in simulated settings and procure feedback on his behaviour before he uses them in a real context.

According to the results of the Workplace Profile (2007), the following 60 soft skills have been included and considered to be important for a professional to be successful at work and the most important factors to be considered for a person to be selected in any field of work.

“Math; Safety; Courtesy; Honesty; Grammar; Reliability; Flexibility; Team skills; Eye contact; Cooperation; Adaptability.; Follow rules; Self-directed; Good attitude; Writing skills; Driver’s license.; Dependability; Advanced math; Self-supervising; Good reference; Being drug free; Good attendance; Personal energy.; Work experience; Ability to measure; Personal integrity; Good work history; Positive work ethic.; Interpersonal skills; Motivational skills; Valuing education; Personal chemistry; Willingness to learn; Common sense; Critical thinking skills; Knowledge of fractions; Reporting to work on time; Use of rulers and calculators; Good personal appearance; Wanting to do a good job; Basic spelling and grammar; Reading and comprehension.; Ability to follow regulations; Willingness to be accountable; Ability to fill out a job application; Ability to make production quotas; Basic manufacturing skills training; Awareness of how business works; Staying on the job until it is finished; Ability to read and follow instructions; Willingness to work second and third shift; Caring about seeing the company succeed.; Understanding what the world
Chapter One-Introduction

is all about; Ability to listen and document what you have heard; Commitment to continued training and learning; Willingness to take instruction and responsibility; Ability to relate to coworkers in a close environment; Not expecting to become a supervisor in the first six months; Willingness to be a good worker and go beyond the traditional eight-hour day; Communication skills with public, fellow employees, supervisors, and customers.”

Apart from including softer aspects, the list includes hard-core factors like Math, having a driver’s license and being drug free. The above list covers a gamut of cognitive abilities, motor skills, value systems, communication skills. Linguistic abilities, attitudinal factors, personality (external and internal) factors, emotional ingredients, altruistic tendencies as also lifestyle factors, such as being drug free, personal chemistry and good appearance which indirectly reflect on emotional stability go a long way in developing a person and helping him or her to grow in career and in life.

The origin and process of all these qualities being included under the wide banner and scope of soft skills is not known. Discussions with operations executives who managed hard-core manufacturing set-ups twenty-five ago reveal that earlier although there was a lack of terminology for what we call today as soft skills, managerial training before the 90’s was considered incomplete without a ‘soft touch’. This included aspects such as saying the right thing, dressing appropriately and maintaining work discipline. For instance, it was felt that in a manufacturing set-up which employed engineers, most of whom were men, having a few women in the department, helped to maintain decorum and work-discipline among men, because it
brought out their softer behavioural aspects. Among a few of these are smoking habits and use of better language.

1.3.2. Soft Skills Training in different sectors and its Relationship with Different Educational Faculties

In India, Soft skills training grew with the growth of the IT industry, especially with the growth of BPO (ITES) industry, especially call centres, when the need to communicate with the countries outsourcing nations became a pressing requirement.

An expert interaction with a Training Operations Head of Kingfisher Training Academy threw up insights that in the current employment market, mere possession of soft skills does not sell without the possession of a domain or technical qualification or competency. Whether it is engineering, or medicine or any other field of expertise, a professional is first an expert in his respective field, either because of a specific qualification in that field or because he has had hands on experience in the respective field. Soft Skills therefore, although a very crucial and important requirement, does not suffice to fetch a person a job or to help a person grow on his career. Training Academies therefore have made it a mission to transform people who are not qualified in any specific domain into impeccable and highly employable individuals for sector where personality matters, at the outset. The focus is on converting individuals from inside out by working on their soft skills, both internal and external, wherein their soft skills become their primary qualification and thus, a core competence. These, clubbed together with job specific technical skills (vocational training) will equip
young career aspirants to find a platform in the growing job market in aviation, retail, hospitality and other service sectors where soft skills surely matter equally or more than technical skills. The idea is to change the myth that soft skills do not sell in isolation. This is possible in sectors like the aviation, hospitality and retail sectors where certain front-end job do not require a basic qualification.

Soft Skills Training in the telecom sector such as that of the MTNL Centre for Excellence in Technology and Management which conducts technical and management development programmes cover content required to have an interface with customers.

In the Aviation Sector soft skills training is a basic, mandatory and highly essential process in the aviation industry and ancillary services in the aviation sector. Training in soft skills in this high-tech speedy and timely transport sector, deals with the niche, upper-end customer (guest) and therefore forms part of the core competencies developmental requirement. Having well groomed, extremely well-behaved and refined (polished) workforce with excellent communication skills, etiquette, assertive skills, time management and excellent presentation skills ranks high on the essential skills for the airline and aviation employees.

Training in the aviation sector therefore, is ranked at par or sometimes even higher than technical skills, especially for front-liners.

While airline companies have full – fledged and state of the art training facilities, the expansion in this sector has also mushroomed a number of Aviation Training Academies to build talent for the
Chapter One-Introduction

growing job market for airline crew, ground staff and support services. Airlines have also established their own training academies, which supply trained human resources, not only to their parent organisations but also to other companies in the same sector as well as to the hospitality industry.

The sector has also led to the emergence of specialized talent development within the flight personnel/cabin crew job profile. Institutes such as Frankfinn Institute of Air Hostess Training cater to the growing demand for airhostesses, given the continual growth/increase in the number of private airlines. The early 2000’s saw the emergence of low cost airlines, which further added to the demand.

Training programmes in airline and aviation sector focus intensely on personality development, communication skills (verbal communication, body language and non-verbal communication, assertive skills and business and social etiquette). Course content carries customised programmes in ‘appearance management’, grooming, etiquette, and language (with special focus on English speaking skills). These skills are considered most essential for moving into top-line front of the house jobs in the aviation sector. These skills help the workforce to develop a professional, human but detached association with guests and clients. As variables, maintaining decorum through soft skills is extremely crucial in passenger acceptance of the airline and continuing customership.

A typical programme in an airhostess-training course would contain curriculum that includes Image and Impression Management,
Chapter One-Introduction

Customer Care Fundamentals, Behavioural Development, In-Flight Services, Group Handling Services and Hotel Hospitality.

Of these Image and Impression Management programmes would contain - Grooming and Deportment, Etiquette and Social Norms, Body Language in Communication and Basic and Advanced English (Some academies prefer to call it Appearance Management).

Behavioural Development and Leadership Dynamics - Forming and attitude for success, Team Dynamics, Developing Emotional Maturity and understanding Quotient and Self Awareness, and Motivating oneself.

Soft Skills Training in B-Schools focuses is on equipping potential managers to move into entry-level managerial positions and after getting in, to sustain the jobs by performing in the jobs. Courses in soft skills in management Institutes primarily focus on Business Communication and Presentations Skills, while some B-Schools train their students in-depth in all soft skills, realizing that corporate growth comes not with technical skills but with the required behavioural attributes necessary for effective performance.

Shipping/Maritime Training Industry also gives importance to Learning Soft Skills and training is provided by maritime training institutes both in the public and private sector. As shipping involves high degree of hands on team management skills, leadership, conflict management and communication skills.
1.3.3. Investment & Cost Implication of Soft Skills Training Programmes

As mentioned in the Skills Development Brochure of Deloitte International, which specializes in providing quality soft skills training to fill the skills gap of employees.

“The real cost of training lies in the time employees spend not being productive and our system ensures only training that is required, takes place.”

This statement speaks a lot about how important it is to deliver training that really matters and that proves worthy of the amount spent on training.

Not only the quantum, but the cost of conducting training programmes in soft skills is very high. A normal two-day programme in soft skills would cost an executive around Rs.5000/- to Rs. 10000/-. As for training programmes conducted for teams by organisations, Trainers are paid a minimum of Rs.35000/- for two days for a team of 10 participants.

In the UGC Guidelines For Development Grant To Colleges which includes 14 Merged Schemes in The Eleventh Plan Period (2007-2012), the development of soft skills has been recommended as a necessary intervention and initiative. The guidelines discuss the need for building special competence among staff and students. One among these initiatives is the promotion of skills such as soft skills. The objective is to develop, along with academic and administrative processes in an educational Institute, which is also interested in
Chapter One-Introduction

supporting its students in developing soft skills, communication ability, healthy interpersonal skills, social values and independent social responsibility. As per the guidelines, the Faculty Members should support the students in enhancing confidence, leadership skills and interview skills. THE UGC has allocated a budget slab of Rs.2. Lac for the plan period to build these competencies. The amount includes expenses for travelling as well as for Faculty Honorarium.

This shows that centralised bodies are recognising the need to allocate a budget for the development of soft skills. It is felt in recent times that the development of soft skills should happen in the early stages (formative stage) of an employment aspirant. Colleges therefore should be equipped to send out readymade graduates to the industry who are already trained in the necessary skills to manage themselves. There are two school of thought here-one which feels that soft skills should be developed early during the education of the employee, two- that an employee should come ready with the required soft skills. The other school of thought, as studied by the OECD, states that it is always better to impart these skills on the job, as it is more cost effective and exposes the learner employee to various real life situations with will facilitate experiential learning.

While researchers say that it is not worthwhile to measure the impact of training in terms of the return-on-investment of money, it is very important to gauge the impact of these training programmes on the performance of the professionals who undergo the training by linking it to various aspects/indicators of performance such as
productivity, retention of people, etc. Professionals have Key Results Areas identified for them by their respective job descriptions and role profiles. Successful meeting of their KRAs and completion of their assignments would naturally reflect in the end performance. These aspects therefore can be considered as crucial to the performance and can be taken as indicators of performance.

As soft skills training programmes are primarily imparted to employees and (potential) managers so that they may use it at the workplace, it is very important to check whether, if an employee has performed well in a job and has been able to meet his KRAs well and has completed his assignments successfully, how much of a role has the training in soft skills played in helping the manager to perform.

Leadership and growth is management is attributed greatly to the acquisition and use of soft skills in the corporate world. While technical skills are deemed important to make a career, the focus in recent days has tilted strongly in favour of the possession of soft skills.

Soft Skills Training has also gained prominence through the concept of Cross Cultural training.

With the increase in global competition, worldwide marketing activities, new market access opportunities and a number of international mergers and acquisitions, organization are assigning more and more executives with international assignments and projects. Traveling or being posted in a new country requires
managers with develop competencies to work effectively with people of a different or many different cultures. This growth is cross-cultural interactions and expatriate assignments have led to a new challenge for organisations who desire to remain internationally competitive. International and Global Managers face global various challenges of cultural and climactic adjustment, communication problems (written verbal and non-verbal), language and accent barriers, personality factors, lifestyle issues and cross – cultural leadership challenges, sometimes leading to expatriate failure. As these issues rate very high in the scheme of international competitiveness and business performance for organisations, the last decade has seen a surge in the growth of cross-cultural training programmes in India and in other countries. Cross cultural training modules focus on imparting those soft skills to expatriates that help them to become more sensitive to the nuances of different culture by equipping them with information on critical cultural differences, heath quality, safety and environmental issues related to foreign cultures and teaching normal reactions and emotions as well as coping mechanisms to face culture shock.

Cross Cultural Training focuses on development of cultural sensitivity, language proficiency and adaptability.

Language training in the international business scenario has taken on new dimensions in the form of Voice and Accent Training has taken on a new growth with Business Process Outsourcing Companies, also referred to as call centres taking shape in all sectors of business including banking, utilities manufacturing sales, credit collections and the hospitality sector.
Chapter One - Introduction

With rising job opportunities at a very early age, this area has also provided avenues for training. Many multinational companies offer training programmes on voice and accent, but such courses are generally given to in-house employees for communicating with foreign nationals.

With new job opportunities emerging out of the outsourcing and the retail sector, and the food industry, the need to get people proficient in the English language at the basic conversation level has led to various business opportunities in the area of language training, especially the English language. The focus of the current trend in Voice and Accent Training is on accent development and voice modulation.

1.3.4. Learning and Development of Soft Skills

As against popular assumption, learning soft skills and using them in the right context is not easy and simple. Similar to music and literature, where scoring high marks is not a very common phenomenon, development of soft skills takes time and needs strategic planning like any other organizational move. Organisations therefore invest in imparting soft skills to organisations through various methods such as induction training, developmental programmes on the job coaching, focused mentoring, counseling and management development programmes. Of these, training and management development programmes are the most common and frequently used.

Soft Skills Development has also become an integral of management education in many institutions, which believe that
attitude, behaviour and personality can be sculpted at an early age and training management students in soft skills would help them to grow faster as executives. Soft Training Programmes are also conducted by to help individuals develop social skills by foreign language institutes and by independent training professionals in the open market for children and youngsters.

There is also an increase in the scope of soft skills training at outbound locations (outside of the working environment) for managers to develop team working skills and overcome interpersonal conflict for effective execution of work. Team trainings are being conducted through outbound training programmes sometimes conducted as adventure sports and learning to survive and escape through critical situations. Such trainings help in patching differences and also in identifying leadership skills in the most unexpected people.

Training Modules in Soft Skills

Owing to the high level of importance attributed to use of the right soft skills for performance by industry and academia, there is a considerable rise in the market for soft skills training programmes. Simultaneously, there is considerable debate on the utility and impact of the training programmes. Soft Skills, it is argued, can be learned in school, through family upbringing, cultural milieu or could be just genetic. Yet, utility of these training cannot be overruled and organisations must do their bit to help their employees imbibe these skills if they have not had an opportunity to learn these earlier.
Chapter One - Introduction

Organisations may also have to customise soft skills training programmes to include specific skills of people in particular and crucial roles. While communication skills could be important to front-line sales executives, decision-making skills could be very important for an operations manager on the shop floor.

The current trend in Soft Skills Training for corporate include programmes on

- Communication skills Training – Verbal
- Communication Skills Training – Non-Verbal
- Communication Skills Training – Written
- Leadership Skills Training
- Self Awareness Training (Emotional Intelligence/Maturity)
- Assertive Skills Training
- Conflict Management Training
- Team Building, Team Work and Team Management Skills Training
- Problem Solving Skills
- Business Etiquette Training
- Time Management Training
- Presentation Skills Training

For the sake of the current study the above 12 training programmes have been selected and will be the focus of the research.
While concepts like communication skills and conflict management have always been in demand over the years, in the new global market and with the growth in the retail sector, there are new developments in the training arena. These are in the form of cross cultural training, cross cultural communication training, voice and accent training in BPOs, listening skills for call centre executives, diversity training and gender sensitivity training, and business etiquette.

Training methods have gone beyond the role-play and class room training methods to include new platforms like Outbound Training, Online Training, Virtual Team Training, Business Games (Simulations).

1.3.5. Communication Skills (Scope and Training Interventions)

Training on Written Communication includes business-writing skills such as letter writing, report writing and email etiquette.

Oral Communication focuses on Verbal Communication, Presentation Skills and Non-Verbal Communication and Distance Zones.

Oral Communication Training focuses on face-to-face communication, emotional contagion – passing on emotions in face-to-face communication and choosing the best language for every situation through training on conversation skills.

Oral Communication Skills focuses particularly on Listening Skills, which ranks top in the list in Oral Communication in current times.
Chapter One-Introduction

As per research, listening constitutes 45% of oral communication.

There is an increased focus on body language, especially with leadership training since a lot of communication happens through gestures, actions, posture and simple silence. While there is a lot of study on body language, communication training at work focuses on helping trainees to maintain distance zones, understand the nuances of communication concepts like kinesics, proxemics, artifactics etc which symbolize human behaviour. Sen, Leena (2007) in the book Communications Skills mentions that communication is successful only when it transmits values, attitudes and feelings through properly chosen words. Only then can it be made into a management tool. While speaking of non-verbal communication, she mentions that our body has multiple channels through which we can successfully communicate. One needs to be able to understand our gestures and interpret others’ gestures.

1.3.6. Soft Skills Training in B- Schools and Other Educational Institutions

Soft Skills Training is finding a permanent place in curricula in most management schools and even in other post-graduate and under-graduate courses to enable development of leadership and communication skills at an early age before they plunge headlong into their career.

Interaction with students of management have thrown up training needs such as Training in Cultural Sensitivity and Adaptation, Managing Role Transition from student life to working life, Diversity Training, Respecting targets (adherence to corporate
Chapter One-Introduction

deadlines), Conflict Management, Humility, Corporate Etiquette, Dining Etiquette and Dress Code, Gender Sensitivity, Work-life Balance, Motivation, Energising and preparing for a fresh beginning.

The need for training in cultural sensitivity is felt acutely when students prepare to enter a new work environment. The objective is to enable appreciation and adherence to organisational ‘culture’.

Managing Role Transition helps them to adopt a professional attitude and to move from the student ego state to the adult ego state and learn to accept hard facts, uncertainties, acceptance and rejections.

Corporate Etiquette Training aims at enabling a social and formal presence and developing sensitivity to organisational dynamics and understand the implications of casual behaviour at work. It aims at awareness of the implications of discussing personal or family issues at the workplace, impact and impression of the informal groups formed at work, relationship and behaviour with superiors maintaining a distance zones and hierarchical formalities), gender sensitivity, choice of words and implication of negative and loose talk at the workplace.

Training on Presentation Skills is an inbuilt factor in all management education and is deeply linked with their domain studies with a view to prepare them to deliver high impact business presentations. This aspect of soft skills training receives top priority in student development. Validations of these trainings show positive development at all the levels of evaluation. Students acknowledge
Chapter One-Introduction

the usefulness of the training by recounting its value in enabling them to deliver business presentations at very short notice.

Training on presentation skills includes audience analysis, preparation and delivery. This includes speaking skills, body language, voice training, technique of presenting oneself and question handling.

1.4. Definitions of The Terms Used in the Study

(The definitions and concepts for this chapter have been obtained from existing literature as per the connotations relevant for study)

1.4.1. Soft skills is a sociological term, and is commonly defined and understood as the “set of behavioural and personality traits, social graces, communication skills and styles, linguistic competence, personal habits, amicability and optimism that mark us. Soft skills complement hard skills which are the technical requirements of a job.”

Examples of soft skills are interpersonal skills, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, participation in a team, conflict management, ability to teach, service orientation, leading a team, negotiation, decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, time management, and presentation skills. Emotional maturity and etiquette.

Origin of the term “Soft Skills”: While there is a record of the coinage of terminologies such as EQ (Emotional Quotient) (Mayor and Salovey), Workforce Development (Robert Greenleaf)
‘Strategic leadership’ (John Adair), the origin of the phrase is traced to the US, there is no record of who coined the term ‘soft skills’.

Soft Skills are also sometimes referred to as life skills. Daniel Goleman coined the terms Emotional Intelligence and Social Intelligence, which are often used as parallels for the term soft skills. But the term soft skill encompasses much more than Emotional Intelligence and Social Intelligence. These terms instead form part of the scope of soft skills.

1.4.2. Job Performance is defined as a branch of psychology that deals work done effectively at the workplace. It commonly refers to whether a person performs his job well. Although, there is ambiguity over its definition, performance is considered an extremely important criterion that relates to organizational outcomes and success. The most widely accepted theories of job performance come from the work of John P. Campbell and colleagues. From a psychological perspective, Campbell describes “job performance as an individual level variable. He says that performance is something a single person does. This differentiates it from more encompassing paradigms such as organizational performance or national performance which are higher level variables.” Campbell defines performance as “behavior”. It is something done by the employee. This concept differentiates performance from outcomes.

1.4.3. Communication is a process of sending information is an encode form and sent by a sender to a receiver through a channel/medium. The receiver then decodes the message and gives the sender his feedback. Communication functions through
Chapter One - Introduction

different channels such as speaking, tone of voice, nonverbal signals, body language, signs, paralanguage, touch, eye contact, by using writing. It is a process by which we convey meaning to create shared understanding. Communication, verbal or nonverbal, is the process of sending a message through different media, so long as it transmits a thought provoking idea, gesture, action, etc. Communication skills can be acquired through exercises in speaking, listening, and through our ability to absorb and understand verbal and nonverbal meanings that are manifested around us in various ways.

There are three major parts in human face to face communication which are body language, voice tonality, and words. According to the research

- 55% of impact is determined by body language--postures, gestures, and eye contact,
- 38% by the tone of voice, and
- 7% by the content or the words used in the communication process.

This percentage of influence may vary between variables. Communication includes systems of signals, such as voice sounds, intonations or pitch, gestures or written symbols which communicate thoughts or feelings.

**Verbal Communication** is the process of verbally sending verbal information and ideas from one individual or group to another. It is
Chapter One-Introduction

also known as Oral Communication. Oral/Verbal Communication can be either formal or informal. Informal oral communication would include face-to-face conversations, telephone conversations, and business conference discussions. Verbal communication or a dialogue is a reciprocal conversation between two or more entities and thereby distinguishes itself from presentations. In recent times, verbal communication has increased to include video-conferencing, and conversation made through high-tech gadgets and applications.

Training content in verbal communication skills includes development of language competency, choice of words, grammar, pronunciation and voice modulation. Since voice and inflection are associated with non-verbal communication, these aspects could form part of both verbal communications and non-verbal communication training modules.

1.4.4. Nonverbal communication is the process of communicating through sending and receiving messages through channels which do not use words. Non-verbal messages are communicated through gestures, posture, facial expressions, eye contact, object communication such as clothing, hairstyles or even architecture and symbols. Studies in nonverbal communication cover aspects in every person’s day to day life, from employment to romantic engagements. The term non-verbal communication is very often used interchangeably for body language, although body language is just one part of non-verbal communication.

Aspects of Nonverbal communication training are also found in speech training in the form of nonverbal elements such as
Chapter One-Introduction

paralanguage, including voice quality, emoting feelings and speaking style, as well as features such as rhythm, intonation and stress. Similarly, written texts contain nonverbal elements such as handwriting style, spatial patterns of words, use of symbols and emoticons or the type of writing material or medium used to send the written communication.

However, much of the study of nonverbal communication has focused on face-to-face interaction, where it can be classified into three principal areas: environmental conditions where communication takes place, the physical characteristics of the communicators, and behaviors of communicators during interaction.

1.4.5. Communication Skills- Written, also known as Business Writing Skills is the ability to communicate effectively and accurately in writing with a range of audiences. In order to convey a clear and unambiguous message to the reader and in order to get work done with goodwill to the reader, every writer who writes for work must write clearly, coherently, concisely, correctly, with courtesy and confidence. One of the biggest skill requirements of employers from entry-level and junior management executives is writing skills. Good writing skills are required for writing business letters, emails, and report, in addition to the ability to support what they have written orally. Writing for business differs from academic writing and requires simple and clear language with denotes facts and figures.

Written communication skills training cover Principles of Business Writing, how to write Business Letters, Memoranda, Claim Letters,
Chapter One-Introduction

Business and Research Proposals, Report Writing, Note Making, Writing Minutes and Agenda, Developing Reading Skills, Employment Communication and Notices. With the advent of technology, the scope of written communication skills training has expanded to include the etiquette of writing effective e-mails, etiquette of sending short messages and communicating through social networking sites.

Although writing styles evolve over time and tend to get informal with the advent of technology and social networking sites, training methods in business writing focus on following a formal foundation to convey understanding of forms of writing and training methods include conceptual understanding and rigorous practice through written exercises.

1.4.6. Leadership Skills and Leadership Skills Training

Leadership has been defined as a process by which a person influences others to achieve an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent.

Leadership Skills Training forms a separate discipline in soft skills and training for leadership is mostly conducted for senior executives benchmarked for growth in corporate through structured management programmes. Leadership training includes leadership theories and models, important qualities and behaviour of effective leaders, styles and patterns, communication skills for leadership, mentoring and counseling techniques, motivation and social responsibility training and strategies to help aspiring leaders
develop a personal mission and vision statement and personal leadership style.

1.4.7. **Self-awareness** is the awareness of one’s emotions, feelings, private thoughts and individual rights. It also involves understanding of other’s emotions and thoughts. It helps people to be sensitive of their own behaviour and how it affects others.

The concept of **self-awareness** is derived as a part of framework of competencies defined in **Emotional Intelligence**.

**Emotional Intelligence** as defined by experts in the field “as a form of intelligence relating to the emotional side of life, such as the ability to recognize and manage one's own and others' emotions, to motivate oneself and restrain impulses, and to handle interpersonal relationships effectively.” The concept was originated by Mayer And Salovey and validated by Daniel Goleman, psychologist to denoting the cluster of traits/abilities relating to the emotional side of life.

Daniel Goleman defines emotional competence as a “learned capability based on emotional Intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work”. Based on the five elements of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, motivation, self-regulation, empathy, and adeptness in relationships. Our emotional competence shows how much of that potential can be translated into on-the-job capabilities.” As a result of Daniel Goleman’s research (Emotional Intelligence Framework defined by Daniel Goleman) on social intelligence and his collaborations with spiritual leaders like the Dalai Lama, which took form in the way of publications like
Chapter One-Introduction

“Social Intelligence” and “Destructive Emotions”, emotional intelligence training has led to the inclusion of sharing the most current research on the brain, emotions, behavior, and learning.

Major components of emotional intelligence include knowing our own emotions, managing our own emotions, motivating ourselves, recognizing the emotions of others and handling relationships, which can be referred under the single term of self-awareness (emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment and self-confidence)

Self-Awareness Training is increasingly being applied to organisational level initiatives such as workforce planning, performance management, strategic and cultural change as well as the recruitment process. According to Jim Hunter, CEO at Genos, issues of employee retention and employer of choice are front of mind in many corporations. “EI is being seen as an excellent medium to enhance the environment, culture, leadership and team dynamic within an organisation.” Prominent Heads of Organisations agree that issues of employee retention and employer of choice are front of mind in many corporations. Emotional Intelligence is therefore being seen as an excellent medium to enhance the environment, culture, leadership and team dynamic within an organisation.

Training Programmes in Self-Awareness attempt to equip participants with skills to develop their self-awareness quotient through validated EQ instruments, helping participants to brainstorm and share their own learning experiences in emotional
Chapter One - Introduction

quotient. They help participants understand their own behavioural patterns based on their emotional states and responses to underlying emotions. This understanding is usually attempted in the name of self-awareness. The modules also help in applying the generated awareness to work situations, teaching and learning.

1.4.8. **Assertiveness** is a trait taught by many personal development experts and psychotherapists and the subject of many popular self-help books. It is linked to self-esteem and considered an important behavioural skill. Being assertive helps people to feel good about themselves and others feel understand how to deal with the person who is assertive. Assertive people express their feelings, thoughts, and desires freely, assert their rights and are able to exercise control over their anger. This does mean that they hide this feeling but that they are able to control it for the required moment.

Training programmes in assertiveness includes communicatively assertively (verbal and non-verbal), handling sensitive criticism, self-expression and amicable handling of conflict situations requiring assertive behaviour and decision making skills.

1.4.9. **Time management** is the skill of organising and arranging one’s work in an effective manner, to get things done as quickly as possible with the least amount of time, energy, money, and people. As time is considered a highly perishable abstract in today’s day and time. Time once lost cannot be retrieved hence the importance on training in the area. Concepts included in the content on time management training include identification of time wasters,
goal-setting, priority setting, getting organized, use of organizers and other gadgets to help manage time. Time management training is closely associated with stress management techniques and problem solving training.

1.4.10. Presentation Skills refer to the skill of making effective presentations in small or large groups through a process which consists of explaining and showing the content of either a topic to an audience. Public speaking involves “speaking to or addressing a group of people in a structured, smart and deliberate manner with the purpose of informing, influencing, or entertaining a listening audience” The difference between making presentations and public speaking is that the former is usually for a commercial outcome with the a deliberate objective of getting the audience to do something for the speaker, and respond or react in a particular way through the influence of the speaker.

1.4.11. The origin of presentation skills can be traced to the art of public speaking in Greece and later copied by the Romans who took the art of oratory and rhetoric seriously. Early training in public speaking started in ancient Egypt.

Training in presentation skills in current times includes oratory, non-verbal communication aspects such as gestures, expressions, voice control, intonation, vocabulary, posture, the three stages of preparation and audience analysis, delivery and question handling. Presentation Skills training takes as its base verbal communication skills and non-verbal communication skills.
1.4.12. **Problem Solving Skills** Social problem solving is defined as “the self-directed cognitive behavioural process by which a person attempts to identify or discover effective or adaptive ways of coping with problematic situations encountered in everyday living.” (*D’Zuritla, 1986; D’Zuritla & Goldfried, 1971; D’Zuritla & Nezu, 1982*). Social problem solving training aims to achieve a functional analysis of coping and by looking problem-solving as a conscious, rational, effortful and purposeful activity instead of getting stuck by problems. Decision Making is understood as an outcome of a mental process (cognitive process) which leads to the ability to choose an appropriate and quick course of action within the available alternatives.

Training content in problem solving includes analyzing information to clearly describe problems, identifying appropriate solutions, thinking creatively and be a contributing member of a problem solving team, selection of the best possible approach to arrive at a decision, preparing a SWOT analysis, arriving at decisions, planning and organizing and final implementation and solution.

Among the most popular models built around the concept of problem solving based on management books and research models is one- *Six Thinking Hats*, based on Edward de Bono’s book ‘Six Thinking Hats’, which propounds the theory of Lateral Thinking. Creative Problem-Solving, Understand right brain vs. left-brain thinking and how to use them to arrive at creative and simple solutions to problems. Another problem-solving training module is the disaster-simulation exercise which is used by different names.
such as the desert survival exercise, etc, which challenges participants to rise out of critical emergencies through innovative thinking and optimal use of resources available in the disaster situation.

1.4.13. Team Building Team Work Team Management

A Team is defined as a set of people with complementary and corresponding skills required to complete a task, job, or project. Team members work at a high level of interdependence, share authority and responsibility for self-management within the team. Team members are accountable for the collective performance, and they are expected to work towards a common goal and share team rewards. A team is supposed to be effective when it has a strong sense of mutual commitment, when it creates synergy, thereby resulting in performance that is greater than the sum of individual performance.

Team working ability is considered highly important in an organization set-up and team workers are preferred over those who tend to work alone. The philosophy of working in teams and also learning to build and manage teams effectively helps to bring out the best performance through a convergence of ideas and positive effort from all members of a team.

Content in team working training programmes covers areas such as how teams get formed, inter-team cooperation, intra-team cooperation, diversity, productivity, goal setting and team performance management. The objective of training interventions in team building include increase every employee’s understanding of
team dynamics, increase accountability in team-working, increases flexibility of individuals by learning how to work in teams, help people to focus on group goals than to accomplish organizational performance and productivity and increase creativity. At a higher level team management training focusses on enabling participants to tap and develop their leadership potential and explore their strengths and weaknesses as team leaders. Outcome of team working training should participants establish clear team-goals, maintain a results oriented and collaborative team working environment, put together competent team members and apply valued based team leadership.

Training Methods in team working skills include a variety of team building exercises ranging from simple social activities which involves learning soft interpersonal skills including communication, negotiation, leadership and motivation. Team building exercises are also conducted as outbound training exercises such as rafting exercise, mountain climbing or rope climbing, disaster simulations etc. Training effectiveness in team working would focus on assessing participants’ ability to work in teams and form better working relationships within their functional teams.

1.4.14. **Conflict Management** may be defined as the ability and process to recognize and deal with conflict and disputes rationally and effectively to get work done. In a business environment it usually involves solving problems, communicating and negotiating effectively to achieve organisational goals. The conflict management process includes understanding the different styles of handling and managing workplace conflict, such as Collaborating – where conflicting parties jointly identify the problem, weigh and
choose a solution, accommodating where they – play down their differences and explore commonalties, Competing by showing high concern for self-interest and less concern for the other’s interest,

Conflict Management Training includes within its content learning of other skills such as communication skills- verbal and non-verbal, written communication to some extent, assertive skills, problem solving skills, negotiation skills, self-awareness, business etiquette and team-working skills.

Methods in conflict management training include lecture-cum-discussion, Brainstorming, Role-playing, Simulation game.

Effectiveness of a conflict management training programme can be assessed by the reduction in the number of conflicts at the workplace, more collaborative work atmosphere, evidence of harmonious and productive workplace association (inter-team and intra-team)

1.4.15. Business Etiquette comprises of guidelines on how to demonstrate good manners while in the company of other people. Josy Roberts states that etiquettes sensitivity to the needs and feelings of the person/people you are Learning about business etiquette covers all forms of social interaction related to business, including self-presentation, communication, courtesy, hospitality and in particular covers norms of expectation in interaction between co-workers, between employees and clients. The outcome of business etiquette training is expected to reflect in better personal branding, better care of customers, a smarter and presentable workforce in the actual sense of the term and a smarter workplace.
Chapter One-Introduction

As regards workplace performance, better etiquette is expected to help people, through formal training, to be more productive in work situations which require meeting people and engaging in face to face interactions.

Business Etiquette decides the norms of conduct that make smooth social interactions. Office etiquette includes interaction, excluding interactions with colleagues, with external contacts such as vendors, customers and suppliers. The scope of business etiquette training has expanded in recent times to include the concept of image management which focusses on image creation through strategic and systematic of self-presentation at the workplace, at business and social gatherings and on social networking platforms including online platforms. The means advocated for image management are used of formal and informal attire, use of accessories and personal grooming.

Training content in business etiquette cover aspects of verbal and non-verbal communication styles, workplace etiquette, working with diverse groups, the etiquette of fine dining and wine etiquette, social skills for business related socializing, diversity training, cross-cultural communication, personal grooming, business dressing and gender sensitivity.

1.4.16. Role play is a training technique in which people are made to act or interact in a real or an artificial environment to learn how to behave in a situation. Role-play is used as a training method on the experiential learning philosophy of learning by doing, through imitation, through observation and feedback, and analyzing their
own and other’s behaviour. “By doing role-play, a training participant understand his job better, learns how to handle a particular situation by practicing it in a role-play, learns to anticipate other party’s reactions, and learns to communication well and develop leadership qualities, build relationships and develop an insight into other people’s behavioural patterns” (Chaturvedi, Vijit, 2008).

1.4.17. Simulation is a based on learning through an approximation of a real life situation or experience, This method is based on assigning definite roles to each participant and having them act out their part in a situation.

“The simulation technique tries to evoke or replicate substantial aspects of the real world in a fully interactive fashion. As a technique, simulation allows the learner to control the learning at his own place; it makes the participant very active and helps the participant to learn at the awareness level. It is a difficult method and requires an experienced and skilled trainer to create a simulated atmosphere. It can get sensitive and delicate if there are strong feelings generated during the process.” (Latheef, Fathima 2010)

The lecture method is understood as an elucidation or speech of information on a given subject presented before an audience or a class, for the purpose of teaching a particular subject.

The lecture method of training originated from the art of rhetoric from the time of Aristotle. The lecture method is used to convey important information whereby the person who delivers the lecture stands in front the students or audience and narrates information.
1.4.18. **Brainstorming** is "a conference technique by which a group attempts to find a solution for a specific problem by amassing all the ideas spontaneously by its members" (Alex Osborn)

1.4.19. **An Experiential learning** exercise has been defined as a task or activity which expects participants to learn through experiences designed to generate “live” data that can later be used to understand concepts, ideas or get behavioural insights. Participants derive meaning from the exercise during the debriefing, which form a critical aspect of the training methodology which advocates self-learning.

1.5. **Purpose and Rationale of the Study**

The current study aims to find which these training programmes are considered as important in the industry and in academia under the umbrella of soft skills, whether there is a difference in the perceptions of various segments based on age-groups, educational background and technical streams on the importance of each of the training programmes, on the extent to which they help in changing attitude in different ways and about the role of soft skills training in helping to perform at the workplace.

This research intends to determine the perceptions of respondents on whether there is a relationship between factors such as age, educational background and educational faculty on the importance and usefulness of soft skills training programs and whether there is a change in attitude on account of the soft skills training programmes in turn leading to performance.
Chapter One-Introduction

While the gamut of soft skills training programmes is broad, for the sake of the study the type of soft skill training programmes are as follows

1. Communication Skills Training- Verbal
2. Communication Skills Training- Non-Verbal Skills
3. Communication Skills – Written,
4. Leadership Skills Training,
5. Self- Awareness Training
6. Assertive Skills Training
7. Problem Solving
8. Team working Skills Training
9. Conflict Management Training
10. Presentation Skills Training
11. Time Management Training
12. Business Etiquette Training

The above programmes were selected for research because they are the most widely talked about training modules in industry and academia and it was required to know the perceptions of erstwhile or potential on whether they feel that these programmes are important, useful and whether they really bring about a change in attitude.

This topic was selected because, while training, especially in soft skills is proposed for equipping managers and potential managers with the soft skills or behavioural skills required to perform effectively, the role of training, especially, soft skills training, which focuses on building these skills in managers through formal training
methods, is at times scrutinized for their importance and their usefulness in bringing about performance and their ability to help individuals change their attitude through specific ways of behaviour which would develop into action that would orient them towards performance.

While it is professed that possession and demonstration soft skills is a requisite for growth and performance through research and through validation by many industrial and research experts, there could be various ways of imbibing or learning these soft skills. Soft skills can be learnt at an early age through schooling or exposure to typical situation in social life. Aspects such as etiquette and team work can be imbibed through family upbringing and local or global culture. The family set-up and connection can be a source of inculcation of appropriate grooming. Verbal Ability has been known to be inherited in certain cases and is also deemed to be one of the seven multiple intelligences put forward by Howard Gardner which is inherited in many cases. Skills such as team working and conflict management get developed in early life by interacting with peers, school friends and cousins. Development of assertive skills has been a major issue for discussion in behavioural labs which focuses on bringing about transformation from within through scientific probing of underlying behavioural history and patterns. This process mainly revolves around the domain of psychology. Self-awareness skills are said to be developed through the process of upbringing and can also be linked to studies in spirituality and other mindfulness studies. Non-verbal communication skills and presentation skills could be developed through theatre and fine arts.
Chapter One-Introduction

Time Management which strongly revolves around personal discipline and is connected with personality and cultural styles can also be learnt through observation, books on time management, self-introspection and getting rid of unhealthy habits developed over a period of time.

The avenues for learning and imbibing soft skills therefore can range from written sources such as books, videos, online sources, family upbringing, education and schooling, social interaction, cultural exposure, social milieu, psychological or behavioural labs as also through observation. Formal Training in soft skills which also forms one of the ways of learning and imbibing soft skills is the main focus of this study. As against the other methods of learning soft skills formal soft skills training programmes provide a structured and systematic platform to learn specific skills which are required at the workplace through proper planning and design with focus on specific outcomes generated out of each training intervention. Designed and delivered with proper pre-training assessment of training needs of individuals with scientifically designed modules customized for specific workplaces requirement and facilitated by experts trainers, formal soft skills training programmes could prove highly effective in helping managers and potential managers become ready for the professional and performance demands of the respective organizations and key accounts that they handle.

Soft Skills training programmes in various areas are also avenues to enable those who were not fortunate enough to learn these critical skills through other avenues mentioned above. The difference
between other avenues/platforms for learning soft skills and formal soft skills training programmes is that the latter can be customized to suit specific organizational requirements and specific training requirements of individuals. The learning here, too, does not happen by accident but would be deliberate and systematic. Organisational commitment and trainee buy-in is a critical factor in the conduct of these training intervention and also in determination of its effectiveness and usefulness of the training intervention. The passage between the training process and in transfer of the learnings from the soft skills workshop to the workplace and subsequent conversion into performance related behaviour would depend on factors such as conducive transfer environment, superior support, organization commitment to implementation of learning and the use of soft skills and use of metacognition and cognitive reasoning. A serious indication of commitment from the organization towards training would come through the implementation of strategic training intervention in the area of soft skills. However, along with all the above factors, training effectiveness and training transfer can be brought about only through an active and felt buy-in from the participants themselves who need to feel that the soft skills training interventions can equip them with the skills required to perform in an organisation and that these skills can be learnt through formal training interventions in soft skills. Training programmes will be effective when those who attend or are intended to be trained perceive the training interventions as important and of deliver value that can be transferred to the workplace. Behavioural training programmes are likely to fail if line managers feel that they are a waste of time and that they are mandatorily conducted by training.
Chapter One-Introduction

departments to report mandatory training hours for audit purpose. The unquantifiable nature of soft skills training programmes with no tangible evidence of measureable return on investment also lends itself to high skepticism on the merit of investing huge amounts of diffuse areas such as time management and assertive skills. The lengthy duration of time taken after the training to bring about a change in attitude as also the lack of clarity over specific indicators of attitudinal change, with effectiveness assessors not knowing what to identify as an indication of change in attitude makes things more complicated. Heavy investments in training budgets for soft skills require reassurance that they investments will prove fruitful, through some way, if not in concrete terms as in technical training, which can be reported through increase in technical output. While behavioural experts advise against measurement of soft skills training, it is required to at least show that managers and potential managers feel that soft skills training is important and is useful and that it helps to bring about attitudinal change.

The field and scope of soft skills training has expanded over the years with various behavioural offshoots being included under the umbrella of soft skills training. The definitions, content and the programmes design keep changing dynamically to include more and more areas with dynamic changes in terminology and styles of conducting training. Research shows that as many as 60 skills are included under the gamut of soft skills required or fresh graduates by employers including even math and driving skills, which otherwise are counted as technical skills or intelligences. New development leads to rephrasing of key terms in the soft skills
domain. For example, Business Etiquette and Grooming is currently popularly marketed under the title of Image Management. Nonverbal communication training was earlier limited to body language training but now includes several other aspects of nonverbal communication including artifacts. Language training took on new dimensions with voice and accent training with the growth of the BPO sector in under-developed countries. Industrial and economic dynamics also give rise to new training needs within the field of soft skills and contribute to training content and design. It is therefore critical to determine what is really relevant, important and really applicable and useful for the workplace and it is required to sift the important and useful from that which may not be relevant and useful. It is also required to change the myth that soft skills training programmes are cosmetic and superficial treatments meted out by the organization to give employees a feel good factor. This can only be done if content of soft skills that is considered essential and useful and is really essential and useful is included in soft skills training interventions. It is important to determine who benefits from these programmes so that training interventions can be designed to help them meet specific performance parameters at the workplace.

The focus and methodology of training is fast moving into the realm of learning and development, the difference being felt by the changing learning styles of adult learners who are the typical recipients of soft skills training. The concept of training delivery is rapidly moving into the realm of learning outcome with the focus on enabling self-learning through the use of experiential learning.
Chapter One-Introduction

methods within formal training set-ups. Training Methods such as exercises, activities, brainstorming, simulations and discussions are said to be preferred over the traditional lecturing method. However, it is required to determine the reality of the development in terms of the extent to which this displacement is taking place. The current study therefore also aims to find which of these methods are found to be more effective in making learning through soft skills more effective.

An important factor in bringing about the effectiveness of soft skills training is the passage between the actual training interventions, that is, the training programmes and the implementation of the learning from the training programme at the workplace. Training effectiveness is likely to be hampered if those who are trained in particular skills are unable to use those skills or to transfer them to the workplace because of lack of superior support, personal inhibitions, shyness, lack of encouragement and lack of conducive environment. Ignoring these factors and inability to thrash and address these issues and make the environment conducive to transfer can lead to atrophy of the skills learnt and obstruct the passage from learning to implementation. At the same time, it is important to know which factor among these is the most pressing and pre-dominant. This study also aims to determine which factors among the above needs higher attention based on the factors expressed as desirable for transfer and use of soft skills at the workplace.

The importance and usefulness of soft skills training programmes can vary from group to group, sector to sector depending on age,
Chapter One-Introduction

educational background, educational faculties, because it these factors determine the nature of each training intervention, the design of the training intervention, the content and methods of training as also their applicability and utility to the workplace based on the background of those trained. Training effectiveness is highly connected with the age or age–group of those trained because it depends on the receptivity. Learning ability or learning curve, relevance and felt importance of the training content to the particular age-group, and on how it gets interpreted and translated into performance related workplace behaviour. Educational background determines the level and depth at which the training intervention should be addressed. The higher the educational background the more sophisticated the intervention could get. Inversely, the lower the age-group the more challenging it could prove to the trainer to drive home the learning and the transformation.

The relevance of soft skills training could be different for people from different educational faculties or domains. Every faculty has its own interpretation or version of what each soft skills means to them. It was important to know how important and useful the selected training for study were found different educational faculties, in order to be able to design and segregate training interventions accordingly and to determine the sequence of training programmes in a preferred manner.

Experts and researchers, as put down in the literature review, have advocated against measuring the impact of soft skills training in monetary or financial terms to determine return on investment. On
the other hand, there is also a school that demands proof of the effectiveness of soft skills training programmes in terms of monetary value to prove return on investment in training. Notwithstanding these debates, it is often ignored that effectiveness of soft skills training programmes can also be determined through specific behavioural outcomes or parameters that in turn lead to performance.

While parameters such as Use of sound judgment, better use of knowledge or acumen, ability to lead people, Bring about changes at the work place, Build more and better relationships, Build a global perspective (think globally, self-development, career growth, change in outlook towards life, ability to take decisions faster, being able to say “no” without feeling inhibited, interact well at a social gathering, faster problem solving ability, being to comment or act on key issues at work, use of technical skills, speak and write better and getting more aware of oneself are objectives of learning outcomes of soft skills training programmes, they are strong indicators of behaviour that eventually leads to performance. It was therefore necessary to determine whether soft skills training programmes have been able to enable to achieve the indicators of performance related behaviour among the sample population.

The domain of Soft Skills Training Programmes has wide scope for further development in future business scenarios. However evaluation of soft skills training for effectiveness and impact on performance –individual and organizational is still a highly debated and researched issue. Researchers are divided on the issue on return-on-investment in training in soft skills as also on the factors
Chapter One-Introduction

to be considered to determine effectiveness. Impact of overall business strategy and mission, organisational revenue and profitability are considered as some of the organisational factors while individual productivity, personal growth and leadership development are individual factors for benchmarks.

1.6. Need and Significance of The Study

Training Transfer and Effectiveness depends to a large extent on the active belief that it is important and useful to those who get trained in respective areas and that the outcome of the training will lead to positive change in the form of career growth, attitude change or performance. While this is true of all training, that is, both technical and soft skills, the domain of soft skills training, because of its behavioural and intangible nature and because of the constant debate and difference of opinion whether it provides returns in tangible terms, is always subject to attack or criticism. While it was believed that soft skills are required, there is always controversy over the allocation of budgets for soft skills training in organisations.

An often ignored but very important issue in nominations and organizing of Soft Skills Training Programmes is that they tend to get generalized with no clear-cut idea of the aim, content, scope and methodology of different areas of soft skills training. Organisations and HR Managers tend to expect all aspects of soft skills development in short duration training programmes without an idea that each training is a specialized area and needs special attention and commitment in terms of training time spent by each training
participant. Certain training areas like time management and business etiquette training programmes get trivialized by assuming that they are superficial. This could lead to a lack of specific training objectives for the training. Owing to the lack of knowledge of the focus of different areas, soft skills training tends to tilt towards communication skills training and leadership skills not knowing that there are other skills which need development before embarking on leadership. Line managers also tend to expect immediate results out of their team members and feel that a one-time training in any random area in soft skills will bring about magical results. Sometimes, a general training in soft skills is expected to cover all areas of soft skills within a generic training module of four to eight hours.

In order to address these concerns, it was imperative to conduct a systematic study of specific training programmes in soft skills and know the perceptions of different groups segregated in the form of age–groups, educational background and educational faculties on how important each training programmes is to each group and also to find how useful it is. There was a need to determine whether all age–groups, educational backgrounds and educational faculties find each training programmes important and useful. There was also a strong need to test whether it was felt that soft skills training programmes help to bring in change in attitude.

This research was also required as an indication to Management Education Institutes as well as other educational set-ups on how important it is to begin formal training in soft skills in specific areas in a structured and systematic manner so as to help potential
Chapter One - Introduction

managers avoid career survival, growth and performance problems on the job owing to a lack of the right soft skills.

The research was also required to aim formal soft skills training programmes at the right segments and distinguish the importance, usefulness and potential for attitudinal transformations of different soft skills training programmes.

Studies from the literature review show that previous research has been focused on single time research either on generalized assumptions of soft skills training or on the effectiveness of just one training programmes. There is no evidence in the literature review of a comprehensive study covering a gamut of soft skills training programmes to study the perceptions of importance and usefulness. The study was also required to give soft skills training programmes their rightful place in the scheme of management education, in human resource development and the cycle of performance management.

1.7. Scope of the Study

For the sake of the study, the type of soft skills training programmes that have been selected for study

1. Communication Skills Training - Verbal
2. Communication Skills Training - Non-Verbal Skills
3. Communication Skills – Written,
4. Leadership Skills Training,
5. Self- Awareness Training
6. Assertive Skills Training
Chapter One-Introduction

7. Problem Solving
8. Team working Skills Training
9. Conflict Management Training
10. Presentation Skills Training
11. Time Management Training
12. Business Etiquette Training

The above programmes were selected for research after consulting with experts trainers & HR professionals, and also because they are the most widely talked about training programmes in industry and academia. It was required to know the perceptions of erstwhile or potential managers on whether they feel that these programmes are important, useful and whether they really bring about a change in attitude. The research is therefore based on understanding the perceptions of respondents on the importance of the above 12 soft skills training programmes, the role of soft skills training in bringing about change in attitude through behavioural indicators that demonstrate change in attitude, and the usefulness of the training programmes taken for the study in determining performance. The respondents for the study cover sectors such as Airlines, Aviation, Banking sector, Chemical Manufacturing, Telecommunications, Energy generation sector, Financial Services, Hospitality Industry, Infrastructure Development, Insurance sector, IT and IT enabled services, Oil and Gas Management Services, Shipping Industry, Transport Finance, Paint manufacturing, Pharmaceuticals, Entertainment Industry and Management Education Institutes as these sectors tend to engage in soft skills training in different forms within their fields.
Chapter One-Introduction