Chapter VII

Conclusions and Suggestion
The final chapter deals with the conclusions and suggestions. It also indicates the amount of energy, effort and time put into the research so as to fill the gaps. And it becomes a researcher has to take efforts for the future researchers in the domain of soft skills to try and find out something new. In this context, let us look at the objectives of the research study that have been met satisfactorily.

All efforts have been made to see that soft skills are very much relevant not only to management and engineering students but also to all students who would like to seek jobs. It is proved beyond doubt that soft skills are the core skills essential for the success of any individual. This is the first objective that has been fulfilled.

Coming to the second objective of bridging the gap between the campus and the industry, the role of Training and Placement Officer (TPO) is crucial in providing the soft skills training to the students so as to make them employable. And the same has been fulfilled.

With regard to the third objective of finding out the scientific and creative methods of teaching to the students, the Active Learning methods and PLeSe methods would help the students. Besides, in Singapore the students are taught by way of enacting drama as it involves listening, seeing and also role-playing. It is an effective tool to teach and train in soft skills for the students. Let us look at below a few innovative tools and techniques in teaching the students:

7.1 Innovative Tools and Techniques in Training:

7.1.1 Role of Faculties:

The process begins with the faculty's efforts to think, design, explain and execute the technique in the classroom. First of all, s/he has to think of an area such as spoken,
written or reading. Then s/he has to brainstorm about the topic to be taken for the practice session. Next is to explain it to the students. After that the faculty has to execute and assign the work to the students.

7.1.2 Duration:

The time is another important factor. The number of hours to be devoted for the assignment largely depends on the level of students—school, college, university etc. It is necessary to know the size of the class and how many pages are needed are to be written. For management and engineering students, a 45-minute session for 8-10 students can be taken into consideration, for the sake of individual attention and focus.

7.1.3 Teaching and Training Methodologies:

There are different methodologies in teaching at both management and engineering institutions. They can be listed such as Lecture, Case study, Experiential, Simulation, and Communicative/Interactive methods. Out of these, in imparting these activities the authors have chosen Communicative Methodology, as this would help in interacting with the students and give the students feedback as required.

7.1.4 Feasibility:

The faculty has to check whether it is possible for the students to complete the project within the set objectives and time. The other issues such as the student’s capacity should be taken care of.

7.1.5 Role of Students:

Students need to do some homework regarding pre-reading and the after reading activity. They can either organize or re-organize their thoughts before writing the assignment. They have to complete the writing assignment in about 15 minute and show it to the faculty. And then speak about it without looking at it much. They are not encouraged to stop in-between.
7.1.6 Outcome:

The faculty has to ensure that students have completed the task in the stipulated time limit and also submitted. Each assignment improves the students methodically, so it becomes a serious business for both the students and the faculties.

7.1.7 Just A Minute (JAM):

This is one of the vibrant activities which instantly stimulates, activates and challenges the students to speak out. The faculty can always correct the students on the spot as the case may be.

7.1.8 Current Corporate Analysis (CCA):

This is a unique activity that tremendously improves the domain knowledge of the students and prepares them to make excellent presentations with strong content and in-depth knowledge of management concepts and other subjects.

It helps in knowing about various issues in the Corporate World along with its statistical data in stipulated time and it also improves domain knowledge, reading, writing and presentation skills and the knowledge of various corporate issues.

7.1.9 Extempore/Debate:

This is an interesting activity that ensures total participation of the students. A topic is displayed on the screen using a laptop and LCD projector. The students are instructed that they should start speaking on the topic displayed immediately. After the students speak for 3 to 5 minutes, as an extension and to increase the complexity, a debate can be initiated involving the audience to interact and cross-question the speaker.

7.1.10 Writing and Speaking on Living and Non-living Things:

This activity improves not only writing and speaking skills but also allows the listeners to interpret a person in terms of 'personality', 'attitude' and 'behavior'. This enhances the chances for the students to express them without inhibitions and at times
makes them emotional also. The benefit is the students are prepared for any behavioral interviews that are conducted by HR Managers in the industry.

7.1.11 Product Design:

This is a multi-faceted activity, which clicks well in any professional colleges like MBA and B.Tech classes. It takes care of creativity, content development, visual merchandizing and marketing communication apart from Business Communication. Various tangible and intangible products- consumables, concepts, consultancy services etc., can be designed and presented by the students in front of the class as the entire class and the faculty cross-questions the presenters. It generates a lot of interaction in the class leading to innovative business ideas for budding managers.

7.1.12 Listening and Decision-making:

This is another interesting activity that improves skills. The students have to be instructed to blind fold 5 students and send them out of the class for the dramatic effect. These blind folded students have to just follow the instructions of the students seated in the class as they enter into the room.

For the sake of complexity, each student can give 2 or three instructions such as ‘turn right’, ‘go straight’, take this ...that’ etc., it is really difficult for the blind folded person to follow this due to lack of listening skills and understanding skills.

Extension of this activity could be giving multiple instructions to a single person from different corners of the class. The result is improvement of listening, understanding and decision-making.

7.1.13 Role Plays:

These can be practically stimulating and involving. There are two ways to do this activity. Either the trainer/faculty can go with the copies of Role-Plays or ask the students to develop in the class by giving adequate time. The themes of the role-plays
can be 'time management', 'leadership', 'positive attitude', 'adaptability' etc., depending upon the need and the level of the students. A competition of the various groups in the class that enact this role-plays would work wonderfully as the students get a chance to perform in front of the class.

7.1.14 Feedback:

This is very important for the students because every comment leads to fluency, accuracy and content development. They have to be evaluated and individual comments have to be spelt out and written on their papers. And the same have to be conveyed to the students clearly so that they get to know the mistakes that they commit in speaking and writing and rectify the same and not repeat them in the next assignment.

Questions and answers can be discussed individually with the students. The faculty can point out the mistakes and the fall back (Tense, Punctuation, Vocabulary, Structure and content) of each student and make him rectify it.

Having seen the above techniques, the Socratic method\textsuperscript{12} of learning is relevant to train the students where the students are posed various questions and thereby extracting their hidden talent apart from involving them in the teaching and training process would be an ideal innovative tool and technique.

Regarding the fourth objective of making the students the plug and play recruits, the research scholar has already highlighted the practical education i.e. learning by doing, role-playing, involvement, questioning, interaction, dramatizing etc., This is the fulfillment of the fourth objective.

The fifth objective of innovating tools and techniques to impart soft skills to both faculties and students, we have already discussed the scientific and creative methods and the same would apply i.e. dramatizing while teaching and training and Socratic Method.

\textsuperscript{12} \url{www.greatbooksacademy.org/html/what_is_the_socratic_method_html} as accessed on 24 September 2014.
Of course, we can also go for blended training, game based training, informal training etc.,

For any innovative training, it should have a balance of these three elements.

7.1.15 Human Capital:

The skills and knowledge an individual brings to the workplace for the organization to be productive. Most training programs focus on this sphere alone.

7.1.16 Cultural Capital:

The "moral and cognitive assets" of one's own culture (e.g., ability to use language and behave appropriately in a certain environment) and skills for managing other people from other cultures, whether they be customers, suppliers, or colleagues in other units. There are countless organizations where there is great need for this.

7.1.17 Social Capital:

The networks of contacts through which people can find work and get things done, rather than relying only on qualifications alone and evidence of past success. Networking skills are not usually taught in schools and universities where people get their professional education; people learn these skills on their own along the way.

Coming to the sixth objective, of finding the probable grey areas of the present educational system, there is a strong need to revolutionize the present educational system by making it practical and employment oriented. Besides, the students and the faculties have stated that they rather would like to have practical education than the outdated theoretical and classroom education. Therefore, the research scholar has successfully fulfilled this objective.

Regarding the seventh objective of bringing out effective synchronization and coordination amongst the four constituents like students, faculties, recruiters (industry) and directors of management institutions, there is an extra need for the fifth force i.e. the
TPO (Training and Placement Officer) who can ensure this effective and efficient coordination and synchronization among all the constituents. Apart from this, all the four constituents have to cooperate with one another to make the process of imparting soft skills for better employability.

The socio-economic aspects of the application of soft skills is the eighth objective where the research has clearly stated that the students belong to rural and semi urban area with middle class and lower middle class background of the students.

With the last and final objective i.e. ninth objective, the research has mentioned that soft skills are not only required for management and engineering institutions but also to all educational institutional as it equips the students with extra characteristics like confidence, courage and communication that will help them succeed in all fronts. To move further, it is not only required from peon to principal but also to non employees too for their survival and success.

Having successfully fulfilled all the objectives given in the synopsis with extensive research, let us look at the conclusions and suggestions.

7.2 Conclusions:

As per our research topic titled “A Study of Soft Skills in Management and Engineering Institutions in the Nizamabad District of Andhra Pradesh” below are the conclusions:

1. Most of the mushrooming management and engineering institutions of higher learning in the country are churning out “educated illiterates”. The tribes of educated illiterates are those who find themselves unemployed even after pursuing some course of study. It’s an irony to note that with ever increasing opportunities across sectors, many of the talented students find themselves at the receiving end even after completing their education from decent colleges and
universities. The reason for this development is the absence of holistic and synergistic approaches as far as student development is concerned. It's a proven fact that there is a huge difference between the world of theory and practical. Most of the time the fresh graduates come out from the institutes with brilliant academic grades but somehow are unable to get a good job and even if they land one, are unable to meet the requirements at the workplace and therefore calls it quits after a brief interval. It is here the integrated role of all the stakeholders like faculties, recruiters, students, directors of educational institutions becomes an absolute must. The compartmentalized approach in addressing the problem of educated illiterates would never reduce the employment potential of a nation. All stakeholders have to see each other eye to eye and communicate their respective requirements, roles and responsibilities in coordinated fashion so that the students become employable.

2. Faculty need to understand the expectations of the employer, an employer need to know the industry specifics, and likewise even the society should interwine closely with all of them so as to make the holistic growth a reality. One big reason for a country like that of India is to have only a handful few quality educational institutions can be due to this fact of no integration or a myopic approach adopted by the so called academic entrepreneurs or fly by night operators. Even though organizations are present for a very longer duration of time, their performance matrix in terms of churning out employable pupils does have much to show. All approaches starting from academic planning, academic delivery, academic processes, and follow-up mechanisms need to have the employability factor as the anchor to all their short and long term endeavors. The faster the management institutions understand the fact that employability is
directly proportional to the soft skills and domain grooming, rather than an imperfect balance between the two, the better it is for the students and other stakeholders to understand the nuances of employability.

3. To live to the challenge of globalization, which is in line with the era of information economy, the strength of a nation is strongly dependent of the ability of its citizen to highly intellectual and skillful. The development of human capital is thus important and necessary since it drives the nation to envision vision and mission. Without a quality human capital, a nation will be weak as there is no human factor that is capable to embark on new initiatives and perspectives. A quality human capital comes from a quality education process. A carefully designed and well-planned education system is critical to developing such human capital. Thus, management and engineering educational institutions play a very important role to produce a human capital that is highly knowledgeable and skillful to meet the demand and expectations of many people. The teaching and training processes in institutions of higher learning should be capable to provide such knowledge and skills to future graduates.

4. Although the notion of sustainability was not imposed in the embedding of the soft skills in the curriculum of higher education, it emerged as an essential skill during the implementation stage and the essence of sustainability is well reflected in the wishes of the government to develop a quality human capital. Therefore, it is hoped that instilling soft skills into the lives of future generation is also aimed at developing their knowledge, understanding, values and skills, which are the essence of education for sustainable development.

5. The study highlights the importance of soft skills. The study does not intend to diminish the importance of technical or 'hard skills'. On the other hand, such
knowledge is a platform on which the edifice of technical excellence is built. When one appreciates the fact that it is the softer or inner effectiveness, coupled with soft skills, that facilitate the transition between knowledge and performance, then one can put the criticality of soft skills in the right perspective. It is also common knowledge that the ‘soft’ development of individuals comprises the ‘skills’ as well as the behavioral part. It is this behavioral (person) part that one usually loses sight of. Once this is addressed the rest of the development process flows on to its logical conclusion.

6. In the past, there were no means to measure soft skills. But now there are tools, exercises and tests available to measure them. But these need to be selected carefully, keeping in mind the industry, country and company environment especially we are talking of the same for management and engineering students. Moreover, measurement should be done periodically as improvement in soft skills is a constant process.

7. Motivation is a fundamental requirement for improving soft skills. People need to get rid of their ‘know it all’ and ‘do not need any learning’ attitude and behave more maturely; as such an attitude only stills one’s growth. No one is ever too old to learn soft skills. Anyone can go through these training and counseling sessions at any point of their life. And if you are planning to shift your career or line of work at a mature age, then there is all the more reason for you to go for these sessions. As society changes, so do soft skills. These sessions not only help in opening the mindsets, but also bring some of these skills to the top of one’s mind so he/she becomes more aware of the finer details. In order to survive and succeed in the corporate world, we should be open and ready for change in soft skills.
8. Globalization poses new challenges to educational institutions. To successfully address the emerging challenges education managers have to create an efficient educational environment for providing a sustaining learning process. Multidisciplinary education – an essential characteristic of modern educational systems - can only be accomplished in the highly integrated educational environment, which is sensitive to changes in technology, new developments in pedagogy and management, and the importance of lifelong learning. The integrated educational environment, where students have an opportunity to develop their creative potential, is an efficient means of preparing students for productive and satisfying careers in the knowledge-based economy.

9. Educational managers operate in a complicated educational environment, which includes pedagogical, organizational, managerial, and technological aspects. To be efficient the educational environment must work as a coordinated system; its subsystems should be more integrated and interconnected. The integration between the internal subsystems is essential to distributing the educational environment resources to the greatest benefit for all learners with regard to the learning goal orientation. The environment, which provides the resources integration, is conducive to performance. Efficient performance, in turn, is associated with the qualitative changes in the educational environment.

10. In fact, soft skills are most of the time considered to be a filler vis-à-vis Management domain subjects like marketing, IT, finance, systems, operations, etc. However, it is soft skills, which decide whether one can harness one's abilities in the workplace. In an era of privatization and globalization, a penny saved is a penny earned, which means that no professional organizations would like to fill their openings only in terms of quantity. They are interested in quality,
which unfortunately at times, is at loggerheads with that of a teacher, a parent or even a peer member’s lexicon. The employer defines quality in terms of soft skills, whereas teacher, parent and peer member try to classify quality on the basis of the marks scored.

11. To conclude finally, soft skills might be the soft part of ones personality, but they are definitely required for all battle hardened professionals and even individuals in their lives. Soft skills most of the time cannot be taught as part of the formal curriculum and instead should be incorporated informally in all the endeavors an organization involves itself in. The leaders should involve more in walk the talk, rather than mere lip service so as to cultivate the best soft skills practices as part of the academic delivery or the organization culture.

7.3 Suggestions:

“A truly international B-School must include soft-skills training in languages and cultural understanding, global job postings, an international faculty, overseas study opportunities, and worldwide alumni network... not to mention diversity in the student body”. – Professor Cynthia Zoubir\textsuperscript{13}, Thunderbird School of Global Management, Europe.

1. Finishing schools should be made part of the engineering and management institutions to bridge the gap between campus and the industry.

2. Training and Placement Officer (TPO) in the management and engineering institutions can play a crucial role in bridging the gap between the campus and the industry. It is the training and placement officer who works for the educational institution in India on a regular basis and who contributes his best for the same.

\textsuperscript{13} http://www.topmba.com/research/top_100_business_schools/5_top_business_schools_by_specialisation/
doeessea on z4 September 2008.
He provides training to the faculties and students about soft skills or employability skills on a continuity basis. He also contacts the industry by his telephonic, email or letter communication requesting them to visit his campus for recruiting the strengths. He projects the strengths of his institution whether it is B- School or engineering institution and also that of the students so that the recruiters from the industry comes for campus recruitment and the selection of the students take place.

It is the duty of TPO to provide regular soft skills training to the faculties who in turn provide soft skills training to the students so that students are in a comfortable and in a confident position to take on the corporate interviews.

Besides, the industry (recruiters) would also be happy to recruit the students who until recently did not possess employability skills but being trained in soft skills in the institutions itself. And it makes easy for the industry as the recruited candidates will become productive immediately.

Keeping our research study in view, one of the objectives is to fill the existing inaccuracies and bridging the gap between the campus and the industry, the role of TPO needs to be strengthened in the management and engineering institutions to reach the desired objectives.

In its Deccan Chronicle newspaper report dated 30 Jul 2008 titled “MNCs groom students on campus14”, the role of corporates in training the students at the educational institutions itself has been highlighted. The excerpts of the report are mentioned below:

Infosys, Wipro, IBM, Oracle, Microsoft and Satyam have their own portals that groom students before they step into the corporate world. Infosys holds on campus training programmes in over 20 colleges in the city of Hyderabad as part of their

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‘Campus Connect’ programme. Wipro runs a similar programme through Mission10X
com which helps students upgrade their skills. Such endeavours make sense, they feel,
as it reduces the time they waste in training freshers all over again. Says Mr. Pratik
Kumar, executive vice-president of Wipro “This is a significant step in journey of
transforming young students into employable assets.” Likewise the corporate can come
forward to train and groom the students at the campus itself so that students can become
plug and play recruits at the corporate world.

To bridge the gap between the campus and industry the following suggestions
have been made:

Provide the vision and necessary orientation. Render proper guidance and
supervision. Expose students to various employment opportunities. Nurture talents.
Regular interaction with the students to know their interests and career goals. Organize
skill development programs. Build a strong network with company’s human resource
executives and alumni network. Arrange in-plant training and industrial visits. Teach
students in crafting a winning resume. Finally conduct mock interviews, presentations,
JAM and group discussions.

Role of Training and Placement Officer (TPO):

Regular workshops and lectures by industry experts will enrich students’
knowledge. An industry-institute interaction cell has to be formed to facilitate students’
interaction with professionals. The alumni can be invited to share their experiences
during campus recruitment process. A proper training and sharing of experience will lay
a strong foundation for students to face interviews.

TPO acts as a bridge between the industry and institution. S/he has to establish a
strong interaction between the industries and the institution by actively involving the
industry experts while formulating the curriculum and arranging industrial training for
both students and faculty members for knowledge upgradation. These kinds of interactions help the students and faculties in gaining practical knowledge and being exposed to latest trends. Hence, empower the students with soft skills training so as to bridge the gap between the campus and industry through TPO.

As organizations find their need for quality employees increases, it will be important for them to partner with management and engineering educational institutions to ensure they are graduating students with the right types of skills. Because many people agree that soft skills are best learned when included as part of regular classroom or academic training, schools will need to

- Establish classroom training that duplicates real life work settings both within general academic courses as well as part of business-specific classes.
- Incorporate employability skill development into school curriculum beginning at the high school level.
- Assign tasks to students that replicate what they might find within a work environment.
- Educate and evaluate students on the specific employability skills that employers will be seeking.
- Develop job preparedness opportunities on campus through classroom and extracurricular activities.

For employers to ensure that the flow of quality candidates meets their particular needs, they will have to:

- Develop internal training, development and evaluation programs to ensure current employees are equally well-versed in the same employability skills requested for new hires.
• Work closely with and communicate regularly with schools about what employability skills students will need.
• Collaborate with schools to provide on-the-job learning experiences through internships and volunteer job opportunities that will assist students to develop employability skills.
• Develop consistency in design and format of job descriptions on a regular preplanned basis.

Finally, it should be incumbent on parents and students to work together to:

• Ensure students select courses that will enhance soft skill training in areas such as teamwork, written and oral communication.
• Involve parents in course selection and student support.
• Investigate and participate in internships, summer jobs, part-time and volunteer job opportunities to gain direct, on-the-job practical work experience and gain an understanding of how soft skills apply.

**Below are suggestions from different perspective:**

Educational institutions starting from schools, colleges, and universities need to align their approaches with the changing need of the other stakeholders. Many schools have started to impart computer education, management sciences, and leadership modules from a very early age today. All these courses were not even heard of at this level of education; forget about being included as part of the curriculum. The changing dynamics in the employment scenario with the fast evolution of science and technology has put the onus on all educational and training institutes to alter their offerings as contemporary courses are preferred by the ever vigilant students and parents community. An aspirant knows about his career map and makes his moves accordingly, it's therefore important for all educational providers to align themselves with the changing times. The
need for concepts like table manners, workplace etiquettes, cross cultural alliances, relationship management, and communication skills-real and virtual were never considered being a part of any curriculum. Today institutes pay special emphasis on such courses as they know the importance of bridging all these with the core domain area the pupil or the trainee is graduating in.

Here are some comments and suggestions expressed by employers (recruiters) concerning this education dilemma:

- Improving communication and links between industry employers and educationists to create a clearer direction for student learning.
- Making the curriculum content more relevant to current and future needs of engineering organizations.
- Restructuring/redefining classroom pedagogy so that it incorporates essential skill attributes.
- Encouraging students to obtain the needed skill-attributes through a structured and well-planned industrial internship programme, class projects/thesis, involvement with student and professional organizations and involvement in other campus organizations.
- Standardizing and making essential soft-skills education compulsory in the engineering curriculum.

Recruiters expect educational institutions of both management and engineering institutions to carry out more research studies on industrial skill needs, and to keep their curricula relevant.
As to training, Gatto\textsuperscript{15} believes the focus “should be on strengths or causes for successes and understanding weaknesses as opportunities that can be enhanced.” He indicates that 360-degree feedback\textsuperscript{16} processes and coaching by an outside consultant are helpful in that regard. Bradbary recommends a course on soft skills that emphasizes developing a plan, rehearsing the plan, selecting a coach to help them execute the plan, then evaluating successes and failures, and making the requisite adjustments.

Employers and corporations or even the industry as a whole also have added responsibilities in the present scenario. They can no more sit back, relax and ponder and get readymade manpower for their exponentially growing needs. The importance of industry-institute interface is one of the most essential relationships as continuous interactions between the duos are of paramount importance. This is one of the reasons most of the companies have started to have their chairs in various schools of management, engineering and other professional disciplines. It not only nurtures a culture of innovation and creativity resulting in new business practices and products, but also culminates in informing about the requisite need in all prospective manpower. Continuous relationships through collaborative research and developmental work have gone a long way in imbibing the requisite soft skills related quotient in all the future recruits (students). For instance, organizations like Microsoft, Intel; IBM communicates their standards and the attributes they look for in all employees through such forums which enables the trainers and trainees to incorporate all such practices in their professional syllabus both formally and informally. It’s a win-win proposition for both the employees and the employers.

It seems logical to suggest that because the 21st century workforce and classroom demographics have changed, faculties preparing future business leaders must undergo a

transformation. Emerging from these changes, course materials should consist of a
variety of learning activities so that first generation students can join the academic
culture and enrich the lives of other students while sharing their experiences with faculty
as well (Allen, 2000).

Finishing schools should now be made part of the engineering and management
institutions also to bridge the gap between campus and the industry.

7.4 Final Comments by the Research Scholar:

This is the unique research study in the domain of soft skills. The research
scholar struggled to get literature in area of soft skills. However the available literature
is limited. It indicates there is huge potential in the field of soft skills.

The research scholar strongly believes that this study would open up new vistas
in the area and would be the pillar for future research studies in the discipline of soft
skills.
References:


2 Employaid Your lifeline at work as accessed on 22 November 2008.

Web References:


