ABSTRACT

1) Introduction:

The Indian students are facing with several challenges in 21st century. Of which, lack of soft skills and entrepreneurial skills are the two major challenges for the Indian youth. Indians are good at mathematics and information technology and they left a mark across the world in these two domains.

In India, more than the unemployment problem it is the unemployability problem which is a cause for concern. Unemployment problem exists when there is suitability, capability and eligibility for the post but there is dearth of employment opportunities. Unemployability exists when there are employment opportunities but people lack suitability and capability in spite of having eligibility to employment.

When students pass out after their management and engineering education with excellent academic track record successfully, they face several problems to convince the prospective employers about their non-domain skills which are popularly known as soft skills. In some cases, they convince their capabilities and take employment. After some time, they are fired for lack of soft skills which are also known as people skills, life skills, interpersonal skills, employability skills and emotional intelligence. It is rightly said that people rise in organizations because of hard skills and fall due to lack of soft skills. The hard skills are nothing but the core skills, domain skills and technical skills.

2) Significance of the study:

The companies like Sun Microsystems, Mastek, Polaris and Infosys have one thing in common i.e. they have all added soft skills in their training agenda. All these companies are aware of the importance and significance attached to soft skills and they emphasize to train and groom their employees so as to improve their productivity and performance. Infosys has come out with a novel program known as 'Campus Connect
Initiative. It provides Special Training Program (STP) for the teaching faculties of professional engineering colleges and trains them in Soft Skills who in turn form a core team of 5 members in their respective colleges for further training. Of course, it is a type of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) that aims at bridging the gap between the campus and industry. Infosys addresses the issue of unemployability from three dimensions such as student, faculty and the institutional level.

3) Objectives of the study:

Following are the main objectives of the present study.

1. To study the relevance and importance of Soft Skills in both management and engineering institutions.
2. To bridge the gap between the campus and industry.
3. To find out the scientific and creative methods of teaching to the students.
4. To help in providing practical education to students so that they become plug and play employees in their organizations.
5. To find out innovative tools and techniques to impart Soft Skills to both faculties and students.
6. To find out probable grey areas to plug the inaccuracies and deficiencies in the present system.
7. To provide effective and efficient coordination amongst the students, faculties, educational institutions and the industry for the larger benefits towards society.
8. To study the socio-economic aspects of application of Soft Skills.
9. To prove beyond doubt that Soft Skills are essential from the post of peon to principal in every institution.

4) Hypothesis:

With the above mentioned objectives the following hypothesis are made.
1) Socio-economic background of the respondents has a major role to play in effective implementation of soft skills.

2) Soft skills bring out the best results for students if there is effective coordination amongst students, faculty and management people.

3) Industry must come out with Special Training Program (STP) like Infosys Technologies Ltd to encourage the students and faculty.

4) There is a great stress on providing practical education to engineering and management students.

5) Activities like Role-playing, involving the active participation of students in brainstorming sessions, group discussions, and paper presentations are essential.

6) The industry has a vital role to play in this regard such as they need to absorb the students in their companies and then train and groom them in soft skills as students are fresh pass outs and also as they are flexible to absorb at this age.

5) Research Methodology:

The research design, research approach, research strategy, sample collection methods, data collection methods and data analysis are the main constituents of research methodology.

5.1 Research Approach:

Since the purpose is to establish relationship between students, faculties, industry and directors of management institutions about soft skills the research scholar has profiled number of questionnaires from various publications and websites and formed a format related to the titled topic. Additionally to supplement the qualitative research approach regarding soft skills, small quantitative study was conducted. Below titled are the tools and techniques involved in framing questionnaire.
5.2 Research Strategy:

Questionnaire has been used as a research strategy in this study. The questionnaire is quite popular and most common strategy in management research. The questionnaire allows the collection of large amount of data from a sample in most economical way. The questionnaire, observation and interview are some of the methods coming in this strategy.

5.3 Data Collection:

For collection of data, a structured interview schedule has been constructed. The interview schedule consists of many questions which are both open and closed ended questions. The questions framed are easy in style with specific content in order to facilitate the respondents' reply.

Lot of efforts have been initiated to format and frame questionnaire in order to get maximum information, comments, opinions and data from faculty, students, recruits and management people. It was a four dimensional approach to bring justification to the study. This is basically to collect primary data. The questions were framed which are combination of both open and close ended questions. Initially the questionnaire started with close-ended questions and later on shifted to open ended and ultimately questions emphasized in depth. Many techniques were utilized with an urge to get the best out of the respondents. Indeed it was interesting, informative, enriching and enlightening.

The questionnaire began with socio-economic conditions of the respondents and then about the study keeping the objectives of the study in view. Efforts have been made to avoid deviating from the main track. In the socio-economic perspective, it highlights the questions related to name, age, sex, caste, religion, place of birth, whether rural or urban background, address with email id, educational qualification, occupation, annual income and languages known.
The questions are basically related to Soft Skills, Hard Skills, Education, Training methods, present Learning environment, the influence of technology, teaching methodology, Communication Skills, Body Language, Practical Education, Problems in the Present education system, employability, gap between the Campus and Industry and finally encouraged the participants to come out with creative solutions and suggestions.

The questions related to effective and efficient coordination amongst Faculty, Students, Industry and Management Institutions were focused.

5.4 Primary Data:

Primary data was collected through observation, questionnaires and interviews. A well structured questionnaire was framed by considering the problems being faced by students, faculties, recruiters and directors of educational institutions vis-à-vis soft skills. The researcher has collected primary data during 2008-2009.

5.5 Secondary Data:

The researcher has collected the secondary data from various sources, like internet website, books of management, government publications, journals of management and engineering institutions, newsletters and newspapers. The secondary had also been collected from select books of management.

5.6 Universe and Sample:

While conducting a survey, a question is usually asked: Should all people (entire population) be studied or only a limited number of persons drawn from the total population is studied and then extended our findings about the sample to the entire population? In the present study the population is the students, faculties, management people and industry (recruiters).
A large population cannot be studied in its entirety for reasons of size, time, cost or inaccessibility. Limited time, lack of large amount of funds, and population scattered in a very wide geographical area often make sampling necessary.

For our study Nizamabad district has been selected purposively because taking a district as a universe will do justification of the study. Seven colleges, which include engineering colleges offering both management (MBA) and engineering (B.Tech) education and other colleges that are offering BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration) including ICFAI University and Telengana University. ICFAI University provides MBA by flexible learning to graduates and while Telangana University provides management education through regular classes.

5.7 Sample Size:

Amongst all the management and engineering institutions, the total strength of students totaled approximately 6400, Faculty around 600, Industry-300, Management Directors 70. The researcher took a sample of 5 per cent of the Students, Faculty, Industry (Recruiters) and Directors. The total number who actually were provided the questionnaires is Students-320, Faculty-45, Industry-15, And Directors-5. However, less number of people responded to the questionnaires. The Recruiters are mostly from Infosys, Wipro, Tata Consultancy (TCS), Satyam, Cognizant Technology Services (CTS) etc.,

So, the researcher has selected 129 samples randomly out of 05% distributed questionnaires from different categories such as students, faculties, industry, directors of management institutions. Hence, approximately 02% of existing strength of the stakeholders has been selected for present study and interpreted properly.
5.8 Data Analysis:

After collecting all the data the process of analysis begins. To summarize and rearrange the data several interrelated procedures are performed during the data analysis stage. Data are analyzed statistically to get result. The statistics were presented with detail description and analyzed in combination with qualitative data.

The critical review of the literature has focused on developing soft skills in students, developing soft skills in higher education and soft skills for engineers. All these things dwell at length about the development of soft skills in students of management and engineering institutions.

It talks of the valuing of soft skills in various areas. It dwells the relevance of soft skills in avoiding the hard knocks. All major companies are investing in soft skills these days. Everyone focuses the importance of soft skills and hard skills and nobody touches upon the importance of soft skills by linking students, faculty, management and industry. Hence the same becomes the significance of the problem.

After collection of data the information had been coded and categorized. Analysis of the data has been carried out through horizontal percentages as well as cross tabulation. This has been facilitated by a paradigm of independent and dependent variables.

6) Scope and limitations of the study:

The study is handicapped on account of the following limitations:

1. The research scholar has made the study exhaustive and interesting and has put in lot of efforts and energies. However, money and limited management and engineering institutions in the district of Nizamabad are the main limitation.

2. Besides, the study is confined to the district of Nizamabad only. All the information and inputs furnished by the respondents is treated as correct.
3. The results obtained by the faculties, students, recruiters and management are only 5 per cent of the entire population. It highlights purely from the perspective of soft skills that can determine the employability for the students. Besides, there could be other skills for not getting employment opportunities for the students.

4. The study is confined to management and engineering institutions not of non-professional institutions. Therefore, these are the limitations of the study.

7) Chapter plan of the study:

The study is divided into seven chapters.

The first chapter focuses on introduction which is further divided into subchapters such as background of the study, significance of the study, soft skills, soft skills for employability, and objectives of the study, hypothesis, and the limitations of the study.

The chapter two deals with the design of the study in which the researcher has taken a hard core of thesis and dwells at length data analysis, universe and sample, management and engineering institutions in Nizamabad, sample size, instruments of data collection, research approach, analysis and interpretation and reliability and validity.

The chapter three covers the review of literature which is an in depth in nature. It defines about soft skills from the perspective of various globally renowned researchers, thinkers and domain experts. It touches upon soft and hard skills and how to develop soft skills among students. It emphasizes the way to sell hard skills through soft skills, campus recruitment, role of soft skills trainer, role of training and placement officer, the governmental and non-governmental role in imparting soft skills to students. It provides statistical information about both soft and hard skills across the world. This chapter adds value to the entire study as it covers the diversified views, opinions, quotes and comments from global experts thereby making the study an outstanding one.
The chapter four reveals the profile of Nizamabad district where the study is conducted. It covers history, geography, demography, places of interest and getting there. It lists out the number of management and engineering institutions in the district of Nizamabad.

The chapter five describes soft skills that are essential for management and engineering institutions. It outlines and explains the soft skills such as communication skills, interpersonal skills, time management skills, negotiation skills, motivation skills, writing skills, listening skills, reading skills and presentation skills to name a few.

The chapter six touches on analysis and interpretation of data where the data actually collected from students, faculties, recruiters (industry) and directors of educational institutions through a questionnaire, and are presented through several tables.

The final chapter outlines conclusions and suggestions. It fulfills all the objectives of the study successfully. It comes out with several creative tools and techniques to bridge the gap between the campus and the industry. It describes several amazing findings worth taking note of. The concept of finishing schools is relevant and it is a novel suggestion to make students employable.

This is a unique study in the domain of soft skills. The research scholar is passionate about soft skills and the research study is the result of sustained energies and efforts of the research scholar in covering wide range of literature. The research scholar is optimistic and confident that the present research study would open new vistas in the domain of soft skills.