



## Importance of Soft Skills Training for Students of ITI's and Polytechnics: The Teachers' View

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### Abstract

A well rounded personality, full of confidence is the first step to gain success in each and every aspect of life. Soft skills play a pivotal role in shaping and polishing a person's personality and are avidly sought by one and all in today's competitive world. This paper makes an attempt to know how important is soft skills training for the students of the Industrial Training Institutes (ITI's) and Polytechnics according to their teachers. The study was conducted in Delhi on 300 teachers of 5 ITI's and 5 Polytechnics. Judgemental and Convenience sampling was used as the sampling technique and primary data was collected through a self-developed questionnaire. The results of the study showed that most teachers considered soft skills to be of great importance for advancement in one's career and also for social interaction. Communication skills, presentation skills, leadership skills, time management and stress management were the five most important soft skills identified by the teachers.

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### Introduction

A well rounded personality, full of confidence is the first step to gain success in each and every aspect of life. Soft skills are highly sought after by both, employers and employees of today's world. Rainsbury, Hodges, Burchell and Lay (2002) defined soft skills as "interpersonal, human, people or behavioural skills necessary for applying technical skills and knowledge in the workplace" (As cited in Osman, 2013). According to Sirat et al (2012), soft skills refer to an individual quality which follow the attributes terms, such as self-confidence, focus and commitment (As cited in Osman, 2013). Soft skills basically refer to personalities, attributes, qualities and personal behaviour of individuals. Soft skills include certain abilities such as communication, problem-solving, self-motivation, decision-making, and time management skills (As cited in Majid, Liming, Tong and Raihana, 2012). According to Hewitt Sean (2008) soft skills are "non-technical, intangible, personality specific skills" which determines an individual's strength as "a leader, listener and negotiator, or as a conflict mediator" (AS cited in Seetha, 2013). Soft skills are the traits and abilities of attitude and behaviour rather than of knowledge or technical aptitude (Tobin, 2006), (As cited in Seetha, 2013).

### Literature Review

Concerning the importance of including soft skills in colleges, Thacker and Yost (2002) noted that students require training to be effective team members. Employers often come across that "business graduates lack good team leadership skills" (As cited in Seetha, 2013). Similarly, according to Knell et al (2007) employers are continually asking for a work force rich in creativity, communication skills and cultural understanding (As cited in Seetha, 2013).



In a recent survey, 348 IT managers were asked to rate the importance of various skills (Aasheim et al., 2009). Soft skills were rated high, while hard skills related to knowledge of operating systems, hardware, databases, security, web development languages, telecommunications, and networking were rated much lower (As cited in Zhang, 2012). Soft skills have become the new mantra for organizations and trainers. Despite the occasional emphasis on sensitivity towards overseas cultures and visitors, it has become important not only in dealing with foreign clients, but also domestic ones (Venkataramana, 2013), (As cited in Kumar. K. R and Kumar. A. V., 2014). It is important to invest effort in perfecting soft skills to face everyday situations in not only the organization but also in our daily life. The development of ‘soft skills’ in the job market is important when there is intense competition for many available positions (www. hinduonnet.com), (As cited in Kumar. K. R and Kumar. A. V., 2014).

Studies have proved that employers of today’s world give great importance to soft skills while recruiting, so, even students of today’s world should give equal importance to these skills and make a sincere effort in acquiring soft skills. Giving students soft skills could make the difference in their being hired for a job in their field (Evenson, 1999), and the lack of soft skills can sink the promising career of someone who has technical ability and professional expertise but no interpersonal qualities (Klaus, 2010), (As cited in Robles, 2012).

### Objectives of the study

1. To investigate the importance given by the teachers to soft skills.
2. To find out the top five soft skills according to the teachers.
3. To find out the level of soft skills possessed by the students according to the teachers.

### Methodology of the study

1. **Data source:** Primary data was the source of data used for the study.
2. **Sampling technique:** Judgemental sampling was used to select the five ITI’s and five Polytechnics from Delhi, further to select the respondents from the five ITI’s and Five Polytechnics, convenience sampling was used.
3. **Sample size:** 300 teachers were selected as the sample for the study.
4. **Method of data collection:** A questionnaire consisting of closed ended questions was used to collect data from the teachers. The questionnaire consisted mainly of a rating scale matrix questions to elicit responses. The questionnaires were handed out manually to the respondents and collected immediately after they were completely filled by them.

### 5. Limitations of the study:

1. The study is limited to Delhi.
2. The five ITI’s and five Polytechnics selected were on the basis of judgemental sampling technique.
3. From the ITI’s and Polytechnics, the respondents were selected on the basis of convenience sampling technique.

### Findings and Discussion

The objective wise findings and discussion of the study are as follows:

1. **Importance given to soft skills by the teachers:** Table 1 below shows the teachers’ overall perceptions of the importance of soft skills. It was found that majority of the teachers either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements that soft skills were very important for career advancement, highly sought after by employers, important for getting a better job, getting along with people, and difficult to learn as compared to professional knowledge. On



the contrary it was found that a majority of the teachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements that soft skills can't be enhanced through practice, these skills are important for academic performance, and that these skills were not as important as professional knowledge.

**Table 1: General perceptions of soft skills**

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Soft skills are critical for career advancement	4	14	38	152	92
Soft skills are highly sought after by employers	11	15	24	166	84
Soft skills are important for getting a better job	8	10	60	186	36
Soft skills are difficult to learn compared to professional knowledge	14	52	38	138	58
Soft skills cannot be enhanced through practice	159	85	25	17	14
Soft skills are not as important as professional knowledge	77	129	46	31	17
Soft skills are important for getting along with people	10	15	20	177	78
Soft skills are important for academic performance	46	132	59	42	21

**SD: strongly disagree, D: disagree, N: neutral  
 A: agree, SA: strongly agree**

2. **Top five soft skills as per the teachers:** Table 2 below shows the top five soft skills as per the teachers. The top five soft skills as per them were: communication skills, presentation skills, leadership skills, time management and stress management.

**Table 2: Top five soft skills**

Soft Skills	Rank
Communication Skills	1
Presentation Skills	2
Leadership Skills	3
Time Management	4
Stress Management	5

3. **Level of soft skills possessed by the students as per the teachers:** The teachers were asked to do an assessment of the level of soft skills possessed by the students of their institute, and the top five soft skills which the teachers assessed the students to be good at were: team work (91%), willingness to learn (80%), decision making (65%), motivation (61%), leadership skills (59%)

### Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to know the importance of soft skills training for the students of the Industrial Training Institutes (ITI's) and Polytechnics according to their teachers. The results showed that the teachers believed that soft skills play a very important role in the lives



of a student because, apart from professional knowledge, employers of today's world judge people on their confidence level, communication skills, presentation skills, leadership qualities, body language, time management skills, etc. while interviewing them for various positions. Thus, it can be concluded from the study that, apart from education, the one thing that separates the successful from the mediocre is Personality. A well rounded personality, full of confidence is the first step to gain success in each and every aspect of life, be it academics, co-curricular activities, personal relationships, business or career.

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