

# Drastic Need of including Soft Skill Development in Curriculum for Sustaining Quality Higher Education and Enhancing its Effectiveness

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## ABSTRACT

Over emphasis on equitable and affordable access to higher education for all social classes and groups has resulted in an explosion in the number of average students thus degrading the standard of Higher education system. The standards have gone so low that the education delivering sector has been tagged as a major source of earning or business even at the huge cost of quality education. Further, the country has scored rapidly in the number of Universities but the problem is of the lack of employment generating education. The problem leading to this scenario is not associated with the lack of educated manpower but the problem is mainly of the capability of the manpower which is associated with overall personality development and not only with that of subjective knowledge. The soft skills are the essential medium of reflecting one's personality and thus an essential medium of progress in this tough environment marked with effect of globalization. Keeping these aspects in consideration the present paper aims to emphasize the importance and hence inclusion of soft skills development in curriculum of higher education system in the country to enhance the quality and effectiveness of education in terms of augmenting employment generating potential.

## The Problem in Broader Perspective

University qualifications in our country are considered as an entryway to social mobility in an increasingly meritocratic-technocratic society rather than entry way for quality education accessibility, which has resulted in rapid increase in the incompetent and ineligible mass of students. Over emphasis on equitable and affordable access to higher education for all social classes and groups has further resulted in an explosion in the number of average students thus degrading the standard of Higher education system. In the present time, India has scored rapidly in the number of Universities but the problem is of the lack of employment generating education, further

in the name of employment generating education largely in private institutions the standards have gone so low that the education delivering sector has been tagged as a major source of earning or business even at the huge cost of quality education. But in the present context leaving aside the highest employment creating sectors (medicine) and few educational institutions recognized globally for quality education, (IIM's, IIT's, NIT's) a big chunk of the education delivering system which is awarding degrees is producing manpower which is poor to survive in this tough competitive environment.

The problem leading to this scenario is not associated with the lack of educated manpower but the problem is mainly of the capability of the manpower. Our higher education system with the simultaneous efforts of public and private sector has produced bulk of manpower with higher education degrees. Our higher education system by and large has always given thrust on imparting of hard skills that is the subjective knowledge but has always lacked on imparting the soft skills. The soft skills in this context relates to the verbal capability of effectively communicating one's thought, ideas and knowledge to others which is a major medium of reflecting one's overall knowledge and in broader sense the entire personality one possess. Personality is the aura which one could lay on others and the major mode of transmitting this aura is the communication skills which one possesses. We could effectively look the impact of poor communication skills in this perspective; there is a case of the student who has good subjective knowledge but do not possess the verbal capability to express it to the others which clearly undermines his potential in front of others. This is the impact which could have on his employment opportunities or others. The other case is of the student who lacks the communication skills and hence has always failed to scientifically reason with his tutors or with other class of the educated mass effectively in his education period. This has severe effect on his education quality and his ability to think in

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broader perspective due to the obstruction created by his inability to express his problems and queries.

### **The Curriculum in Higher Education and Importance given to Soft skills in India**

The evaluation of curriculum in Higher education system in India reveals that soft skills development is not an essential part of it. University Grants commission as regulatory, monitory and aiding apex body to Higher education institutions has also ignored this aspect while framing the model curriculum for them. Although to meet the demand brought out by the current globalization the UGC has emphasized on the development of ICT knowledge and research activities but has overlooked the importance of including soft skills development as an essential part of model curriculum. In the name of soft skills development the curriculum of various Universities has included periodical presentation which is like a tip of an ice berg. The curriculum based assessment of students is a good way of measuring their subjective or hard skills but certainly fails to test their communication skill which is a major shortfall in the curriculum and assessment in Indian higher education system.

The problems of lack of soft skills somewhere originates from our school education system. According to current estimates, 80% of all schools are government schools, (<http://www.dise.in/ar2005.html>) making government the major provider of education. However, because of poor quality of public education, 27% of Indian children are privately educated. Kremer (2005) survey deducted that, on average, 25 percent of teachers in government primary schools were absent from school on a given day. PROBE Team (1999) states that the extreme cases of teacher negligence were less devastating than the quiet inertia of the majority of teachers. A research by UNICEF in India states that due to the poor quality of teaching, many children drop out before completing five years of primary school and many of those who stay on, learn little. The curriculum and teaching methodologies stand obsolete and outdated, with the emphasis being on merely developing reading and writing skills instead of holistic education. Lack of vocational training and non-availability of such courses renders students with barely any

employable skills at the end of their schooling. Mainly the government schools are present in the rural areas and study shows that there are significant disparities in enrolment ratio between rural and urban area. In 2003-04 the GER in urban area being four times higher compared with rural area. (UGC,2006). This reflects the problems in the schooling system in India which is more prominent in the rural areas.

Keeping in highest priority the poor level of school education and no emphasis on personality development skills mainly in the rural areas it becomes essential for the higher education system to rectify such lacunas in the attainment of quality education and overall development of students aspiring for employment opportunities.

### **The Over emphasized Debate: Language as an art of learning and communication**

Proficiency in English is widely perceived as an important avenue for employment and upward mobility, which also greatly facilitates the pursuit of higher education. The National Knowledge Commission has emphasized the importance of an inclusive society as the foundation for a knowledge society. NKC has also recognized the significance of language, not only as a medium of instruction or a means of communication but also as a determinant of access. An understanding of and command over the English language is a most important determinant of access to higher education, employment possibilities and social opportunities. (National Knowledge commission, GOI, 2007)

In our education system communication skills or broadly soft skills are often positively correlated with the proficiency in English language. The more you are comfortable in English, more you possess the soft skills, is the dogma that is highly attached with this language. For testing this equally accepted belief we have conducted a test to verify its validity. For the test we have purposively selected 67 students from HNB Garhwal University on the basis of the criteria, i.e., proficiency in English and in Hindi language. A test on the basis of extempore was conducted on all the 67 students having good academic records. Three general topics related to common knowledge was given to each student for presentation. The students were asked to give presentation in both English and Hindi language. The student who were

proficient in English language were asked to give first presentation in Hindi and then in English. Similarly, students who were proficient in Hindi

language were asked to give first presentation in English and then in Hindi. The results of the test are shown in Table No.1:

**Table No. 1**  
**Results of test to study the association of language proficiency and communication skills**

Student Proficient in language	Result of presentation of students (Extempore)							
	Mode of presentation (Hindi) and result of performance				Mode of presentation (English) and result of performance			
	Excellent	Good	Average	poor	Excellent	Good	Average	poor
English	-	07	05	16	-	04	09	15
Hindi	-	09	11	19	-	03	08	28

*Source:* Test conducted in year Nov, 2012 in HNBGU

The results revealed in Table No.1 clearly that the proficiency in any language neither Hindi nor English has any impact on the presentation skills of the students. The study shows that majority of students were poor in their presentation in both the languages in which they were not proficient and in even in the language in which they were comfortable. This clearly explains the fact that communication skills have no direct correlation with any language proficiency. It could be possible that they may be highly proficient in the subject knowledge but when they were asked to come out of their comfort zone .i.e subjective knowledge, they were left blank. The fact that associates with the communication skills is not only the subjective knowledge but the overall knowledge and the level of confidence that only comes when one possess it. The soft skills deal with the factors which strongly reflects one's overall personality and knowledge and the communication skills is a major tool for it. The communication skills could be developed by not only developing language proficiency but by also exploring the thoughts and awareness levels to the broader arena and further by the development of confidence level. The ability to question and reason is the other aspect of overall personality development which could be inculcated in the process.

#### **Impact of Globalization and Importance of English as a Language**

School-leavers who are not adequately trained in English as a language are always at a handicap in the world of higher education. More often than

not, teaching is in English. Even if it is not, in most subjects, books and journals are available only in English. And those who do not know English well enough find it exceedingly difficult to compete for a place in premier educational institutions. This disadvantage is accentuated further in the world of work, not only in professional occupations but also in white-collar occupations overall. (NKC, GOI, 2007)

The discussed test results should not be taken to undermine the importance of English in the occurrence of increasing globalization impact on the society which is not only limited to the economic field but also has leaked through to the social and cultural fields also. English proficiency could not be a major indicator of communication skills but it is important to mention that English in the present world has become a major mode of learning. The major reason for it is the impact of globalization of the education which has resulted in the inclination towards the English as a major medium of tutorial (mainly in urban areas) and majority of publication of good subjective and research books in English. The upcoming of management and ICT sector and growth of private sector in India has been rapid and on the lines of westernization which has resulted in the demand of the human workforce not only having high qualifications but also essentially good in communication skills with single out emphasis on English as a language. Keeping these challenges in perspective we cannot ignore the importance of English although it is important to mention that having its knowledge and proficiency is not the

only means of becoming efficient in soft skills.

### **Suggestive Measure**

The precise meaning of education quality and the path to improvement of quality are often left unexplained. More comprehensive views are also found, and interpretation of quality may be based on an institution's or program's reputation, the extent to which schooling has influenced change in student knowledge, attitudes, values, and behavior, or a complete theory or ideology of acquisition and application of learning (Adams 1998). The study strongly recommends the inclusion of soft skills development as compulsory part of curriculum in higher education system in India which will not only improve the quality of higher education but will also lead to the holistic development of student which will further lead to more probabilities of achieving his or her targets amidst the challenges faced by the ever increasing process of globalization.

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- [http://www.unicef.org/india/children\\_166.htm](http://www.unicef.org/india/children_166.htm)



Be happy for no reason, like a child.  
If you are happy for the reason, you are in trouble.  
Because the reason can be, Taken from you.

*Deepak Chopra*

