

Conference Book

ISSN No-2278-5655



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**Shree Maharani Tarabai Government College of
Education, Kolhapur, (Maharashtra)- 416001**

One Day Interdisciplinary International Conference

On

**SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER
EDUCATION**



2nd February, 2019

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AARHAT PUBLICATION & AARHAT JOURNAL'S

108, Gokuldharm Park, Dr. Ambedkar Chowk, Near T.V. Tower, Badlapur (E)-421503.
Email ID: aarhatpublication@gmail.com • Phone: 9822307164
Website: www.aarhat.com



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Book No : 2

First Edition: 2nd February, 2019

Organized by:

Shree Maharani Tarabai Government College of Education, Kolhapur, (Maharashtra)-

Published by: Aarhat Publication & Aarhat Journal's

Mobile No: 9822307164/8355852142

**AARHAT MULTIDISCIPLINARY INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION
RESEARCH JOURNAL (AMIERJ)**

SJIF Impact Factor 6.236

Peer Reviewed Refereed Journal

ISSN 2278-5655,

Volume–VIII, Special Issue–II

EDITORS:

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SOFT SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A REVIEW**Dr.Machhindra Govind Varpe**

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Abstract:

This paper attempts at redefining the concepts of soft skills and hard skills .Soft skills are the basic and fundamental need of education and higher education. It also propagates an urgent need of soft skills as an integrated part of inclusive education .It refers to as transferable skills or professional skills. It consists of activities like communication, teamwork and problem solving. Soft skills relate to our attitudes and intuitions. This research paper also tries to explain the need of more focus on soft skills .Corporate jobs and employers also search for employees with updated soft skills. Traditional education is not sufficient for the survival of individual and society as well .Education without soft skills has proved to be inadequate. This paper also will deal with types of soft skills such as Leadership Skills ,Teamwork Skills , Time Management, Positive Attitude, Goal Setting, Stress Management etc. and how are they acquired .There is a general consensus that soft skills are made up of combination of the four Cs : communication ,collaboration and creativity .

KEY WORDS: *soft skills, communication, creativity, collaboration, leadership, management* **Introduction:** The term ‘soft skills’ refers to a group of skills and personal qualities that present-day employers look for value in their employees. It is essential to have soft skills in higher education and inclusive education in the 21st century. Soft skills relate to excellent communication skills both spoken and written , positive personality traits , social skills and personal attitudes. In this sense, soft skills complement hard skills ,which have to do the technical requirements of a job. Hence ,we may have the right professional qualifications , be academically brilliant and perhaps even have the required work experience , but we will be successful in an organisation only if we know , for example ,how to work as part of a team or how to get along with both your senior and junior colleagues . In other words, soft skills are all about how we deal with people . They are very important in the present-day professional context that requires constant interaction and communication.

While soft skills are acquired early in life and depend to a great extent on the environment in which we are brought up, they can also be consciously learnt. The process could begin by asking someone who knows us closely to decide whether we possess the soft skills concerned or through doing an honest self-appraisal. We can begin by looking at some of the soft skills recommended by behavioural experts.

In short, soft skills are personality traits that determine a person’s interaction with others and the ability to be successful at work. Soft skills complement a person’s professional skills and affect his or her performance at work, relationships with colleagues an career prospects .Some soft skills employers look for in the people they take on are attitude, adaptability, goal setting, motivation , time management ,stress management, critical thinking, and problem solving , team work and leadership. In this research paper , I briefly discuss a few of these skill:

Leadership Skills:

Leadership skills involve the ability to take decisions, to take initiative, to motivate and lead by example, to use reason rather than emotion to resolve conflicts, to take blame when things go wrong, to handle emergencies and unforeseen situations, and good organisation skills. We will briefly discuss some of the characteristics of a good leader.

A good leader is a motivator: he/she will be able to inspire confidence in co-workers and team members and will be able to motivate them to perform the task at hand.

Honesty is a key quality: a good leader will be able to take honest and right decisions to protect his/her appraisal of colleagues and subordinates and express himself/herself without bias.

Trust the team: a good leader trusts his/her team to perform well. This trust will inspire confidence in the team.

A good leader will be able to delegate work: a good leader will be able to delegate work to appropriate departments and personnel, instead of letting work pile up on his/her desk. He/she will trust the team to play their part well in the project. For this, the leader should also be able to identify the comparative strengths and weaknesses of the team members.

Team members know the tasks each of the members is supposed to perform. The ability to communicate, both orally and in written and other forms, clearly is key here. A good leader will be a good communicator: He/she will be able to let the team know. Being a good communicator also means that the leader should be able to listen to the team members, and be sensitive to their needs. Most of managers nowadays promote an 'open-door policy' for his or her colleagues, encouraging co-workers and junior colleagues to walk into their offices and communicate on a one-on-one basis.

Confidence: A good leader is confident of himself/herself as well as his/her team. This shows during crises.

Positive Attitude: The leader's positive attitude will inspire the team to do well. A positive leader helps to keep the morale of the team up.

A good leader leads by example: He/she sets standards for the team to follow.

Humour sense: A leader with a good sense of humour will help the team to see the bad times through. It will keep the morale up and wipe away all tension and negativity. To become the leader of your time, we need to ensure that we seize the opportunity to take the initiative. We have to be active in our team meetings. Expressing our genuine enthusiasm for the tasks given to us, exuding confidence and a 'can-do' attitude, willingness to put extra effort in performing the tasks and to help our colleagues, our ability to step in and resolve problems- all these go a long way into persuading our peers to accept you as a leader.

Teamwork Skills: Every organisation looks to recruit people who have the ability to work as a team, to cooperate and help with one another. In short, to be a successful professional we need to be a 'team player'. There are a few essential qualities that one needs to develop to be an effective team player. To be an effective member of a team, one needs to develop the ability to work with people from various age, gender, educational, ethnic and other backgrounds. One needs to adapt to different kinds of people. Adaptability is the ability and willingness to adjust ourselves to changes or new situations so that we are able to function in them. It helps us respond positively to unfamiliar circumstances and ways of working and move forward in spite of difficulties. Adaptability, also sometimes referred to as flexibility, is thus an essential skill to be able to work with people and groups. However, this does not mean that one needs to lose one's individuality.

To be an effective team, each member of the team needs to know his/her roles, the part he/she is meant to play in an assignment. We also need to know our strengths and weaknesses so that we are able to choose the right and best-suited role. Team members should also be ready to rotate so that everyone gets to learn a wide range of skills.

Teamwork involves working within a group, and to do this effectively one needs to be a good communicator. Most importantly, the members of the team need to be able to listen to one another. Listening plays an important role in how well we do in a group because it allows us to respond appropriately to the viewpoints and arguments of the other members.

Team members should also be able to question one another. It is perfectly all right to disagree, but do not use a harsh, aggressive or offensive tone. Instead be polite and tactful.

Time Management:

Time management is a critical soft skill in the present hectic times, when all of us are expected to do far more in a day than we were earlier, both in our personal and professional lives. Time management is essential for optimum productivity and success. Time management is done by assessing workload, priority, planning and scheduling work, monitoring progress and taking quick action to make up for unexpected delays.

Goal Setting: The term ‘goal setting’ refers to designing or preparing an action plan aimed at guiding an individual or a group towards a goal. These goals may be personal or professional. They may include a set of goals that a person wants to achieve within a given period of time. It may involve the goals that a manager sets for his/her team to achieve in a financial year. Our focus here will be on the goal setting process in the professional sphere. While setting goals, one needs to consider the ways in which the specified goal is going to be achieved, and also, in the first place, why is it important to achieve the goal. It has been proved that well-considered goal setting leads to better performance, output and evaluation. In professional organisations goal setting is a collaborative exercise. Our goal setting should be S-M-A-R-T. S-M-A-S-R-T stands Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound.

Stress Management: Stress is a part of our lives. It is caused when the demands on us- physical, mental or emotional – are more than what we can comfortably handle. Instead of wishing it away, we should learn to cope with it. Stress management involves using different techniques to handle stress and prevent it from harming us.

Positive Attitude: It is important to maintain a positive attitude towards life and its problems to find solutions and to lead a happy life. We can define positive attitude as an approach to life which looks at every situation in life as the best situation. It is a way of approaching life where one sees opportunities and possibilities in even the worst of difficulties. It is a strong conviction that the future is going to be better.

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