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Importance of Employability Skills Training for Undergraduate Engineering Students: Role of English Teachers

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Abstract:

With technology bringing us nearer and English becoming a global language, adeptness in English is considered indispensable for a person's personal and professional development. These days, it is proficient communication skills in English that result in students to realize their dream jobs; helps a professional move ahead of others; raise a common human to greater heights of success; and in a way, demarcates and redefines our endurance in this competitive world. Transforming younger generation into engineering graduates is an important task for any technical institutions; but making the graduates employable is much more important job. A very effective and efficient way of doing this is to take in and communicate soft skills training along with hard skills right from the start of the university course.

Keywords: Global language; Technology; Effective Communication; Engineering Graduates.

INTRODUCTION:

Engineering colleges have been rising up extensively in India in the last few years. A number of the world's foremost IT services sector like Accenture, TCS, Infosys, WIPRO, CTS, Tech Mahindra, are always in want of the industry set aspirants. Nevertheless, the opportunity to get the engineering students placed in anyone of these companies can be exploited only when these students are ready with much-needed employability skills. There is a dire necessity to bring in requisite changes in the curriculum and teaching methodology. Universities must make their students more conscientious, confident and skilled at communicating effectively, improve interpersonal skills, work in a team, and relate the theory learned in the classroom to practical world and to have a smooth shift from the academic world to the professional world. In response to changing individual choices and unpredictable organizational aspects, career and employment patterns have profoundly changed and will continue to change in the approaching years. On the other hand, regardless of these changes, some individuals maintain a traditional career mindset by simply maintaining their existing skills rather than preparing for changing circumstances through skill development and ongoing career self-assessment. For that reason, at the individual

level, the focus of managing one's own career must be on developing behaviors and attitudes that support employability.

The pragmatic challenge before the teaching community is positioning themselves as representatives in providing necessary inputs on the employability of the students through curriculum modifications and assessments to meet the needs of IT MNCs in today's corporate world. Naturally, the teaching community will have to do the role of a trainer's job apart from teaching. The academic pedagogy also has to be designed in a manner such that it enhances the employability skills of the distinctive candidates and help them get positioned in IT MNCs. Also, the teachers need to attend and participate in workshops so that they would be competent enough to guide the students. It is apparent that the corporate sectors are looking for young and talented professionals to carve a niche in today's competitive environment.

It is acknowledged that good communication skills and team-working capability are the two most important soft skills for graduates, but it is often intricate to develop these sufficiently in a curriculum which is designed previously. The ultimate aim of the engineering curricula is to produce engineering professionals who can provide technical solutions to the societal needs (Hassan B, 2007). The study shows that there is a strong need for receptiveness among the Indian graduates to know the employability skills crucial for the global talent market. It is crucial to revise the curriculum at regular intervals to cater to the needs of the industry. It is important to increase the industry-academia contact. Enhancing the skills and application of knowledge through explicit training that will facilitate the recruits to execute their jobs in a paramount manner and that is the need of the hour.

Today's challenging financial situation means that it is no longer sufficient for a new graduate to have knowledge of an academic subject; increasingly it is necessary for students to gain those skills which will enhance their prospects of employment" (Fallows & Steven, 2000). Employability skills include the following abilities: the retrieval and handling of information; communication and presentation; planning and problem solving; and social development and interaction, creative thinking, problem solving critical thinking, active and reflective application of knowledge (Fallows & Steven, 2000; Driscoll, 2000). These are the skills students need to succeed in their future workplace, so, they should be embedded within the academic curriculum.

To develop into proficient engineering graduates, students in India need to learn skills related to job interviews, presentations, group interaction, and telephone and teleconference communication. Engineering students are confronted with testing and demanding recruitment process in which they have to display their strength with English communication skills. In addition being good at English, they need to be aware of the employability skills required at their prospect workplaces. The ability to listen, question and express opinions and ideas properly and to write letters and reports using correct spelling and grammar is quite obligatory for every engineering student. (The UK Commission for Employment and Skills 2009). In addition, they require commendable English skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing to go up the

career ladder. This necessitates that engineering English should include more interactive sessions and language activities that would strengthen and hone the communication skills of students, as effective classroom interactive sessions help the learners to become effective communicators (Mateja Dagarin 2004). It is quite imperative for the English teacher to make the classroom a learner-centered one in order to expose the students to effective English language learning environment.

Sustaining employees with the appropriate skills for a specified employment is important to all types of organizations. Predominantly, possessing fitting employability skills may be the prime feature that gives support to boost an individual's confidence in a selective profession and give an optimistic effect to put them forward in an organization. Nonetheless, mere employability skills are just not sufficient to develop organizational performance and output. Consequently, the practice of identifying and developing appropriate talent is vital for organizations to meet short as well as long- term goals “ It can be argued that one needs to be realistic about the extent to which higher education can reduce the gap between higher education outcomes and employer expectations, and that employers need to also consider their role in providing on-the- job training and continuous development.” (Griesel & Parker, 2009).

CONCLUSION:

It is strongly recommended that the faculty in engineering institutions should provide learning experiences that sustain the acquisition of employability skills which are apparent to engineering graduates. In order to enable their students to possess better employability skills, it is important for the academia to examine deep into the industry requirements and be ready to incorporate the necessary changes not only in the curriculum but also in the pedagogical approaches.

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