

ESSENCE OF SOFT SKILLS IN THE AREA OF TEACHING PROFESSION FOR EMPLOYABILITY: BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVE

Shafayet Mansoor^a
Umme Kulsum^b

Abstract : *In this day and age, the significance of soft skills has turned out to be the most elusive skills, that are sought by the employers in general and educational institutes in particular. This is because soft skills compliment hard skills that exhibit a candidate's qualifications and specific professional experiences. Years ago, the value of soft skills had hardly been paid heed as educators were recruited mostly on their academic excellences and experiences in both government and private educational institutions. Soft skills must be given importance in educational institutions to turn them into more engaging experience for the learners. This study sheds lights on the real market soft-skills requirements in teaching profession because it is believed that developed nations have redesigned their teaching methods incorporating soft skills to bring a greater change in learning outcome. As part of the study, 300 job advertisements in academic sectors in Bangladesh were evaluated and found only 55% of the employers seek soft-skills as job requirements along with the hard skills (mostly in Private sectors), whereas, rest of the 45% is completely ignoring the candidates' these emerging skills. The Government owned institutions, which is near about 85% of the total number, vastly represents the ignoring portions of the soft skills. The study produces insights of ten different types of soft skills mentioned in the job advertisement for the teaching profession where communication skills is found to be highest in demand (23.22%) and ethical and moral aspect were found to be lowest in demand (2.21%).*

Keywords: *Soft skills, teaching profession, job advertisement, communication skills, Government owned institutions, private owned institutions.*

Introduction

In Bangladesh, there are around 80000 primary schools enrolling over 5.0 million students and 17000 high schools enrolling 7.0 million students. Besides, there are over 1200 intermediate colleges, 24 public universities and 56 private universities. The quality of education in all primary, secondary and post- secondary or tertiary level is very poor with a number of problems such as class size, insufficient resources, unequal access (gender and economic disparity), students lacking in soft skills and overall learning skills such as time management, organization, work habit and transferable skills. So teacher's soft skill is important to make difference with quality teaching and learning process. As the meaning of teaching has been changing day by day because of coping up with global

^aDepartment of Business Administration, Faculty of Business and Economics, Daffodil International University

^bDepartment of Business Administration, Faculty of Business and Economics, Daffodil International University

Corresponding e-mail: shafayet@daffodilvarsity.edu.bd

education, so this is the very high time to change our teaching systems to keep pace with it. To build an efficient human capital, it is very important to show them a right track and it is only possible by imparting them quality education. Quality education can be only possible when learning and teaching process of a teacher and a student can go through in a straight line. Along with hard skill, if teaching staff or a teacher equipped with full concept of soft skill then both teacher and student can communicate at a same point. Because, soft skills can enhance the individual interaction, job performance and career prospects are greatly improved. Teacher and students can be able to work as teammate because of soft skills provides lots of interpersonal and social interaction. So importance of soft skill is a vital slogan for reorientation of education trustworthiness. For this study, 300 educational institutions with respect to their job advertisement has been examined and analyzed from Bangladesh.

Literature Review

Soft skills are a combination of interpersonal people skills, social skills, communication skills, character traits, attitudes, personality, leadership, management styles, career and emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) among others that enable people to effectively navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals with complementing hard skills (University of Sydney, Identifying your and Attributes, 2016) the term "soft skills" as "desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge: they include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude. (Bonnie, Urciuoli 2008). Soft skills are important job-related skills that involve little or no interaction with machines and whose application on the job is quite generalized. With a remark "in other words, those job functions about which we know a good deal are hard skills and those about which we know very little are soft skills. (Whitmore, Paul G). A people skill is the synonymous of soft skill. People skills are patterns of behavior and behavior interactions, among people; it is an umbrella term for skills under three related set of abilities: personal effectiveness, interaction skills, and intercession skills. (Neil Thompson, 2009.) Soft skills complement hard skills also known as technical skills, for productive workplace performance and everyday life competencies (Arkansas Department of Education, 2007). In the 20th century soft skills are a major differentiator, a sine qua non for employability and success in life. (Heckman and Kautz, 2012). "Skills" with occupational demands of neo-liberal economies, workers are required to "own their skills" and successfully market them to employers. (Bonnie, Urciuoli, 2008). Following is a list of soft skills compiled by Eastern Kentucky University from executive listings.

- Communication – oral, speaking capability, written, presenting, listening.
- Courtesy – manners, etiquette, business etiquette, gracious, says please and thank you, respectful.
- Flexibility – adaptability, willing to change, lifelong learner, accepts new things, adjusts, teachable.
- Integrity – honest, ethical, high morals, has personal values, does what's right.

- Interpersonal skills – nice, personable, sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic, has self-control, patient, sociability, warmth, social skills.
- Positive attitude – optimistic, enthusiastic, encouraging, happy, confident.
- Professionalism – businesslike, well-dressed, appearance, poised.
- Responsibility – accountable, reliable, gets the job done, resourceful, self-disciplined wants to do well, conscientious, common sense.
- Teamwork – cooperative gets along with others, agreeable, supportive, helpful, and collaborative.
- Work ethic – hard working, willing to work, loyal, initiative, self-motivated, on time, good attendance.(Marcel M. Robles,2014)

Several psychological concepts are related to the definition of skill. At times, the distinctions among these concepts tend to blur. The relationship between skills and dispositions or traits is particularly difficult to ascertain. For example, although Irena Grugulis and Steven Vincent warn against defining personal attributes and behaviors as skills, examples in the literature show that traits, goals, motivations, and preferences have all been considered soft skills.(Irena Grugulis and Steven Vincent, ,Work, James J. Heckman and Tim 2009) Kautz, "Hard Evidence on Soft Skills," *Labour Economics* 19, 4 (2012): 451–64) In fact, these are personal attributes, not skills Daniel Goleman (1995), psychologist, researcher and author defines the soft skills as "emotional intelligence" in his book of the same name. He suggests that the possession and use of soft skills contributes more to an individual's ultimate success or failure than technical skills or intelligence.(Rowena Crosbie,2005).

To meaningfully define soft skills, we must first establish what skills are and how they differ from related concepts, such as attitudes, beliefs, dispositions and traits, and values. Tim Peterson and David Van Fleet define a skill as "the ability either to perform some specific behavioral task or the ability to perform some specific cognitive process that is functionally related to some particular task. (Tim O. Peterson and David D. Van Fleet,2004).A skill, also is also defined as, develops over time, with practice; involves cognitive processes and manipulation of knowledge and includes an element of discretion that allows performance with economy of effort.(Scott A. Hurrell, Dora Scholarios, and Paul Thompson, 2012). Among the various definitions of skill, the concept of execution is central in all of them. That is, skill implies the prerequisites of having and accessing certain knowledge, processes, or sequences of behavior leading to a specific performance. However, for something to be considered a skill, it must contain an element of action. In addition, Evers, Rush, and Berdrow suggest that skills fall on a competency continuum from low to high, are associated with knowledge and values, and can be developed, moving from basic to more advanced.

This is an area of exploration about how a person behaves and how they are perceived irrespective of their thinking and feeling. It is further elaborated as dynamics between personal ecology (cognitive, affective, physical and spiritual dimensions) and its function with other people's personality styles in numerous environments (life event's, institution's, life challenges etc. another said definition is "the ability to communicate effectively with

people in a friendly way, especially in business" or personal effectiveness skills. In business it is a connection among people in a humane level to achieve productivity. People skill includes how to effectively communicate and understand the other value. Ability may be interacted with others effectively that may not give rise any kind of conflict.

Why are soft skills important?

After having elaborated so much on soft skills, the answer to why they are considered as being so important is still open. There are numerous reasons for having a critical look at a person's soft skills. One straightforward reason is today's job-market, which in many fields is becoming ever increasingly competitive. To be successful in this tough environment, candidates for jobs have to bring along a "competitive edge" that distinguishes them from other candidates with similar qualifications and comparable evaluation results. And where do they find this competitive advantage? In bringing along additional knowledge and skills, added up by convincing personal traits and habits. This sounds familiar.

Understandably, employers prefer to take in job candidates who will be productive from a very early stage on. If a graduate from university first has to be trained on putting more than three sentences together, how to do a proper presentation, or how to chat in a pleasant and winning manner with colleagues and customers, this graduate will not qualify as a quick starter. Also basic knowledge in business management, project management and general economy will improve the chances of a job candidate considerably. Already during the job interview itself good communication skills are invaluable. (Bernd Schulz,2008).

Hard skill versus Soft Skill

In the world of work, "hard skills" are technical or administrative procedures related to an organization's core business. Examples include machine operation, computer protocols, safety standards, financial procedures and sales administration. These skills are typically easy to observe, quantify and measure. They're also easy to train, because most of the time the skill sets are brand new to the learner and noun learning is involved.

By contrast, "soft skills" (also called "people skills") are typically hard to observe, quantify and measure. People skills are needed for everyday life as much as they're needed for work. They have to do with how people relate to each other: communicating, listening, engaging in dialogue, giving feedback, cooperating as a team member, solving problems, contributing in meetings and resolving conflict. Leaders at all levels rely heavily on people skills, too: setting an example teambuilding, facilitating meetings, encouraging innovation, solving problems, making decisions, planning, delegating, observing, instructing, coaching, encouraging and motivating. Obviously, people come to organizations with interpersonal behavior patterns already thoroughly ingrained, and they weren't learned in a classroom. Instead, individuals learn how to deal with relationships and other life challenges "on the street" at a very early age. They observe

how the people around them do things, they experiment, and they stick with what works for them. So everyone ends up with a unique portfolio of people skills; some behaviors may be effective, but others cause problems. By the time employees get to a training room, they've already worked hard for decades to reinforce the way they deal with people. Like all behavior patterns, interpersonal skills are "hard-wired" in the neuronal pathways of the cerebral cortex. This means that at some point a behavior was repeated often enough that neurons grew dendrites that reached out to other neurons to make the connections needed to make behavior pattern automatic. A myelin sheath coated the cells like electric wire insulation, making the connection extremely efficient. The end result: these ways of behaving now feel natural, easy and comfortable.(Dennis E. Coates,2006)

Teachers' soft skills are important. The attainment of these skills will make a difference in quality of teaching and effective learning. The quality of teaching is a crucial factor in promoting effective learning in schools (Tang, 2013). Teaching is a complex act, requiring a wide range of knowledge and skills including hard and soft skills to successfully manage the demands of the classroom (Tang, Nor Hashimah & Hashimah, 2015). Since teaching is an additional complex process (Flores & Days, 2006), teachers need to have important soft skills. Consequently, teacher educators today are confronted with the issue of how best to ensure that teaching graduates will continue to be relevant and bring value to the job market. Good manners, optimism, common sense, a sense of humor, empathy and the ability to collaborate and negotiate are all important soft skills for teachers. Other soft skills include situational awareness and the ability to read a situation as it unfolds to decide upon a response that yields the best result for all involved. Another important soft skill is adaptability. A teacher with this attribute has the ability to work in various situations equally well and move from one situation to another with ease and grace. The ability to be diplomatic and respectful even when there are disagreements is also a key soft skill. This skill requires the employee to maintain a professional tone and demeanor even when frustrated. Another research shows has been soughed in the effort to determine the specific soft skills to be implemented and used in teacher education program. Based on the research findings obtained, seven soft skills have been identified and chosen to be implemented in all institutions of teacher education.

Today, graduates are academically competent and excellent with relation to hard skills but seriously lack in skills like 'team-work', 'leadership', quantitative aptitude and verbal reasoning'. More than 40 years ago, the German Engineering Association (VDI) recommended that at least 20% of the Engineering curricula should be dedicated to Soft Skills. Students coming out from Universities should have Soft Skills as well as the knowledge of a few cultures and foreign languages. The situation has now further deteriorated all over the world. Comparing the Soft Skills of students coming from two different Engineering streams can be evaluated and considered similar to that of an aboriginal man. However, on the other hand, students of history, arts or commerce are termed better in Soft Skills. The English Scientist C. P. Snow established this fact in his much famous speech titled "The Two Cultures" in which he defined that because of the nature of the courses, students inculcate the Soft Skills. He emphasized that non-technical courses and programs generally put more emphasis on Soft Skills or the courses are themselves are very Soft Skill related by nature.

Teaching technical skills is one of the most important tasks of a surgeon. This article discusses current issues in teaching and testing technical skills. For the most part, the level of technical skills cannot be predicted before a surgical resident starts a program. Different methods of teaching technical skills are reviewed (in and out of the operating room). (Richard K. Reznick, March 1993)

They are (soft skills are defined according to Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (2006).

1. Communicative skills.
2. Thinking skills and Problem solving skills.
3. Team work force
4. Life-long learning and Information Management
5. Entrepreneur skill
6. Ethics, moral and professionalism
7. Leadership skills

Each of the above soft skills comprised of several sub-skills. These sub-skills are divided into two categories of implementation. The first category delineates the soft skills that every individual must have and the second category represents soft skills that are good to have. Despite the emphasis being put on the soft skills that must be present (must have), it is also encouraged to inculcate the soft skills that are good to have. All elements of soft skills must be acquired by each individual student and evaluated effectively and comprehensively.

Hence, soft skills development should be imbued into the professional training program. Furthermore, universities should combine hard skills and soft skills in the curriculum if confident students with a sense of balance and proportion in these skills to be produced (Hairuzila, 2009). It seems that teaching soft skills has never been so important as it is right now. And there is good reason for that. Childhood and young adulthood isn't the same experience it was in the not too distant past. The lifestyle and environment that children and students are experiencing today is not properly preparing them for working with others and performing well in the workplace outside of their actual job skill.

There are three common methods for creating opportunities for experiential learning of soft skills. One is interactive teaching, through which instructors facilitate exercises that provide opportunities for experience, practice, reinforcement, and reflection. A system of spiraling teachable moments that progresses to increasingly more difficult soft-skill tasks reinforces the learning while building the repertoire of skills. This approach requires skilled instructors and a well-designed curriculum, but has the disadvantage that the exercises, no matter how well designed, lack the authenticity of the real workplace. The second method for teaching soft skills experientially is to use a coach in a workplace spiraling teachable moments that progresses to increasingly more difficult soft-skill to assure that learning takes precedence over workplace productivity. The third method is to alter aspects of the classroom setting where general education or hard skills are being taught to workforce entrants so that the classroom simulates the workplace. This approach provides an authentic context for teaching and practicing soft skills that entails

minimal costs and effort, affords the teacher control over the teaching agenda, and creates a classroom environment that benefits from the improved soft skills of its students. This approach for teaching soft skills can be universally applied to have maximum impact on soft-skill deficits among our youth without new legislation, additional money, or new players. It just requires knowing how. (Office of employability disability policy, June,10)

Rationale of the study

Though in many articles, it has been asserted that the importance of soft skills in the modern world has no bound. In most cases it has been found that soft skills were framed into mostly of Information technology. But the soft skills have the scope to apply in different fields like service sector, education sector etc. The dimension of soft skills also can be applied according to the changing pattern of the real world scenario. In Bangladesh it is regrettably found that a very few organizations are concerned about that and so any Government owned university or private university. In this regard, this study has been focused on different job recruitment circular to find out that are there any requirement with soft skill has been asked or not for teaching profession? By identifying the global demand of incorporating soft skills this study will try to draw out importance of soft skills in teaching profession as well the significance of different soft skills in various educational institutions under the light of job advertisement.

Methodology

The aim of the study was to identify and realize key soft skills of teachers required by the schools, college and universities. The study is also interested to understand the most required set of soft skills within the general pool by making a comparison. An evaluation of the employer's need of soft skill for teachers from studying and analyzing 300 job advertisements were done. These job advertisements were collected from several newspapers, job websites and institutions' website. The time frame of the collecting advertisements was set from last six month to till January 2017. The study was done in two phases. In the first phase, all the soft skills found on advertisement were listed. And in the second phase, listed soft skills were ranked in terms of percentage contributed by the sample. In the study, a focus was on schools, colleges and universities in Bangladesh and was illustrated a degree of comparison of soft skills required by different educational institutions in the recent time.

Objective of the study

- To understand about soft skills over the hard skills
- To understand the importance of soft skills for teaching profession in different educational institutions in Bangladesh
- To identify and analyze the mostly required key soft skills asked by the employers for teachers
- To figure out the recent industry texture of soft skills for the education sector
- To assess and understand the impact of soft skills on teaching profession

Findings and Discussion

The following portion presents analysis and findings in answering the research problem.

The Required Soft Skills as found in various media advertisement

Among 300 job advertisements, there are mainly ten different types of soft skills are classified and these merely overlap each other (Table I):

Table I: Job Advertisement Classification

Elements	Description
Communication skills	The teacher has to be good in communication skill. He/she has to be fluent in both Bangla and English. And also require good presentation skill to conduct the classes.
Positivity and Enthusiasm	The applicant has to be positive and enthusiastic in teaching profession. They should show positive attitude both inside and outside of the classroom.
Critical thinking and problem solving	The teachers should solve problems creatively on demand and manage situations in the time of any emergency.
Extra curriculum activities	The applicants who have expertise on extra curriculum activities like singing, dancing or others will be appreciated. In various cultural events, institutions seek active participation and coordination from the teachers.
Emotional intelligence	The teachers should be aware of their own emotion. They should have control and express their emotion positively. And they should be aware of interpersonal skills to accept emotions of others.
Professionalism	The candidate should be professional to the point as educational institution has given the instruction. Teachers should be punctual in taking classes and return exam scripts on time. They should maintain their office hour as per expectation.
Team work	The applicant should be a team player in collaborating among various departments in the institutions. He/she should understand every functional unit and manage them effectively. Also should contribute to the development of the comfortable and committed team environment.
Leadership skill	The applicant has to possess good leadership skill so that all the activities and teachers are directed to the right direction. And also has to lead as a figurehead of the organization to accomplish institution's goal.
Management style	The applicant must have positive management style which will benefit the institutions. The management expects from the teacher to practice proactive management for the betterment of the students.
Ethical and moral aspect	The teacher has to be ethical in every aspect. He/she has to be a role model for the students in terms of moral values and beliefs.

The following figures exhibit comparison of required soft skills demanded by job advertisers that are educational institutions on the basis of various aspects.

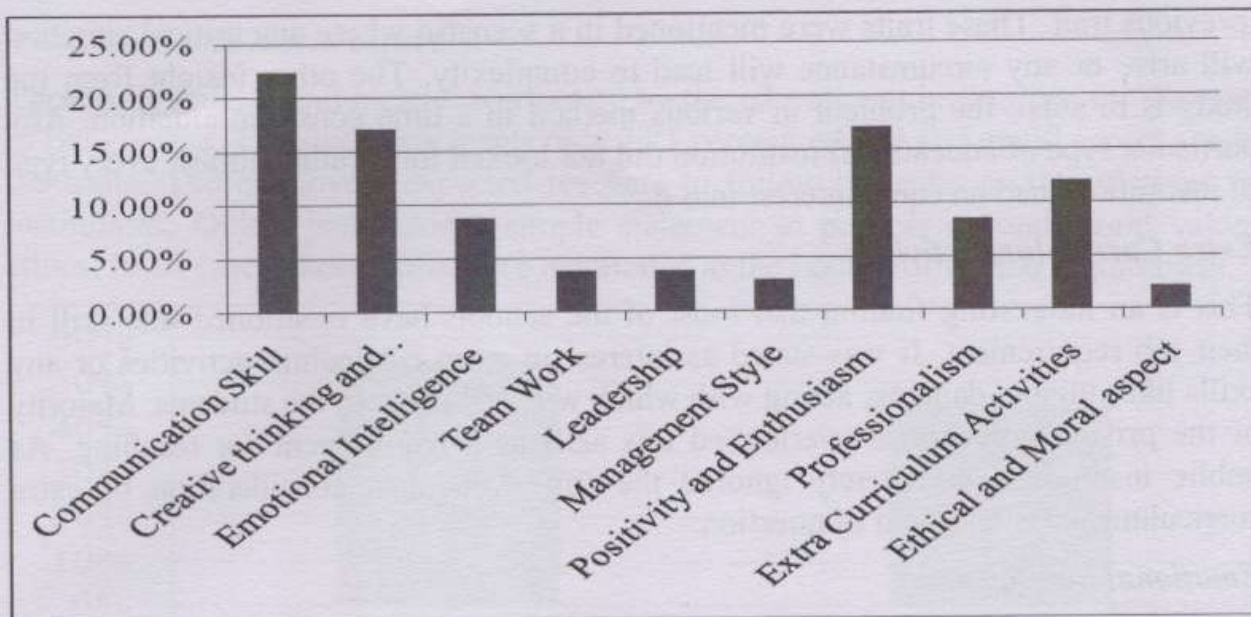


Figure 1: Comparison of required soft skills based on job advertisements.

The analysis of the studying 300 job advertisements of educational institutions in Bangladesh provide interesting insight starting from the most significant to the least important soft skills for teaching profession. This is clearly found that private owned educational institutions have better demand of soft skill from the teachers than the Government owned institutions. The outcome has given the impression of ten different soft skills where the employer and ethical-moral aspect scored lowest mostly asked communication skills. The soft skills are presented from the most to the least important soft skills asked by the educational institutions.

a. Communication skills

Majority of the educational institutions set communication skills as a requirement for teaching profession and the portion is 23.22 percent. The demand distribution of this soft skill is evenly textured. The employers range from school, college, university and other form of educational institutions look for better communication skill both in Bangla and English for teaching. In some cases, they detailed this communication skill as presentation skill and pronunciation skill.

b. Positivity and enthusiasm

The second most important soft skills asked in the job advertisement is positivity and enthusiasm. Most of the schools wanted these traits from the teachers than the other institutions. They mentioned in the job requirements to love the children and to show positive attitude towards the kids. In other cases, it was mentioned to become teachers as a role model for the students. The study reveals that 17.16 percent of the employers mentioned these traits in their job requirement list.

c. Critical thinking and problem solving skills

Many of the educational institutions mentioned that both critical thinking and problem solving skills are required for teaching and the portion is almost equal to the

previous trait. These traits were mentioned in a scenario where any critical situation will arise or any circumstance will lead to complexity. The other insight from the study is to solve the problem in various method in a time constrain situation. Any particular type of educational institution did not looked for it rather almost every type of institutions had an equal interest into it.

d. *Extra Curriculum activities*

This is an interesting finding that most of the schools have mentioned this skill in their job requirement. It was stated as interest in extra curriculum activities or any skills like singing, dancing, acting with which will add value to the students. Majority of the private universities overlooked this skill as a requirement for teaching. As public institutions completely ignored the soft skills then consideration of extra curriculum activities is out of question.

e. *Emotional intelligence*

This soft skill was found for the senior positions like professor, head of the department, principal etc. It was stated as the capacities of control any situation empathetically. In other cases, teachers were expected to express emotions judiciously. The study indicates 8.8 percent by proportion, which gives an impression of moderately required soft skill.

f. *Professionalism*

The employer almost equally asks this soft skill like the emotional intelligence. This skill was attributed by few ingredients like taking the profession seriously, perform the assigned tasks properly on duty, taking class on time, returning script in due date and so on. No polarization was found in terms of demand distribution of the educational institutions.

g. *Team work*

The portion of this skill is very few and 3.84 percent in total. The recruiter expected from teachers to take training in a team and to develop the curriculum in a team effort. Within this few percentage of the trait, private owned institutions mostly mentioned this skill as a requirement and in few cases as an expectation.

h. *Leadership skill*

According to the study, leadership skill scored equal to team work. But the insight shows a different pattern. Within this small percentage, most of the senior positions in the educational institutions looked for the teachers who can lead a team with the experience and administrative quality.

i. *Management style*

This skill was stated for the senior most positions for the teachers. In very few cases, the requirement was named as autocratic management style. In rest of the scenario, this soft skill was very generally stated like effective management style or good management style.

j. Ethical and moral aspect

These soft skills found mostly overlooked by the educational institutions for the teachers in Bangladesh. The study represents only 2.21 percent ethical and moral aspect among all the traits. The employers expected teachers to follow the rules and regulations of the institutions. Others just made a simple statement to possess a good moral value and ethics. In all cases, these skills were mentioned at the bottom of the job requirement.

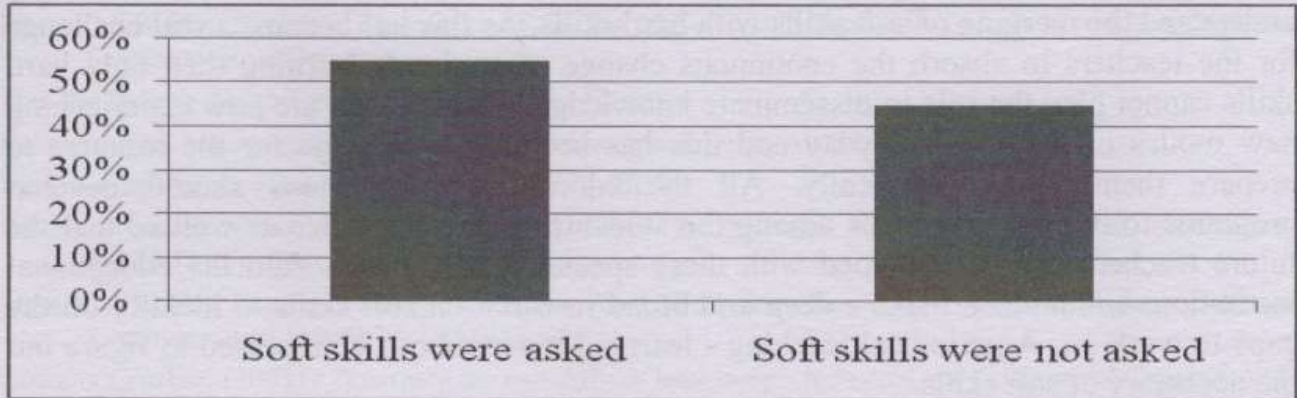


Figure 2: Distribution of soft skills according to the requirement of the institutions.

The figure shows that 55% of the job advertisements have expressed the need of soft skills in teaching where rest of them did not mention a single attribute of soft skill. This gives the impression that soft skills are not considered with importance for teaching with a big margin. The overlook of these attributes reflect the quality of learning among the students.

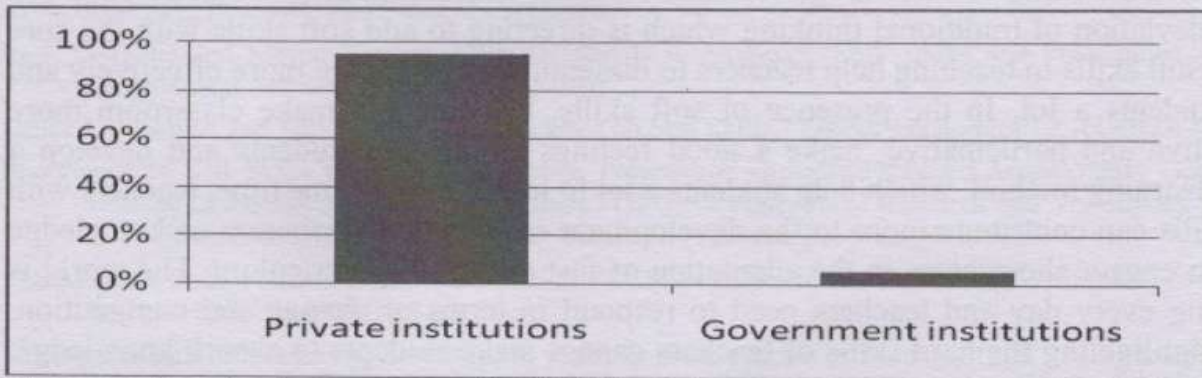


Figure 3: Required percentage of soft skills: Private versus Government institutions.

The comparison suggests that Government owned educational institutions hardly seek for soft skills for teaching. Most of the cases, it has observed that the government owned educational institutions just try to mention the job requirement as short as possible. The few percentage who has mentioned for soft skills is dominated by the job advertisement of top position in an institution. The private owned institutions, which are mostly in metropolitan areas, look for soft skills where others ignore and do not mention about it. So, geographical distribution has played a role to influence requirement of soft skills.

Implications

As it is understood from various studies that soft skills are required for teaching profession, but the job advertisements show a non-encouraging scenario to highlight on these specific set of skills. Only few of the educational institutions have given real importance on soft skills to deliver the essence of education. In order to cope up with the challenging world and future development, educational institutions have to really understand the merging of soft skills with hard skills. As this has become a real challenge for the teachers to absorb the continuous change of student's learning then only hard skills cannot play the role to disseminate knowledge. The students are now experiencing new modes of learning everyday and this has become a real urge for the teachers to prepare themselves dynamically. All the educational institutions should develop programs to implant soft skills among the students and also practice as well so that the future teachers can be equipped with these special sets of skills. And the educational institutions should also make a deep and broad research on soft skills to identify on the gaps to work on. A periodical teaching - learning outcome can be assessed to figure out the necessary of soft skills.

Conclusion

It has been revealed that soft skill is becoming important in every sector. So this report is prioritized over teaching profession on soft skill and hiring teachers on the basis of soft skill in Bangladesh perspective.

This article has demonstrated comparison of various soft skills demanded by the employers for teaching profession. Earlier, it was only perceived that the teachers only need the hard skills or knowledge to make students learning. But it has been observed that a deviation of traditional thinking which is directing to add soft skills with the core skills. Soft skills in teaching help teachers to disseminate knowledge more effectively and help students a lot. In the presence of soft skills, teachers can make classroom more interactive and participative, make a good feelings among the students and develop a joyful learning method, which help students a lot to learn. At the same time, teachers with soft skills can contribute more to the development of flexible distribution of knowledge and can engage themselves in the adaptation of fast changes in curriculum. The world is changing every day and teachers need to respond in terms of change and competition. Only highlighting the hard skills of teachers cannot make students to absorb knowledge. So, the bottom line is teachers have to embrace the requirement of soft skills to disseminate knowledge in this changing environment for the betterment of students. Then the students will have positive learning environment and can apply themselves better than before.

Future research can be done to identify the changing variables of soft skills and it will be conducted after a long interval. The research, which will be conducted in the future, may cover more detail analysis like the geographical variable, specific types of educational institutions and hierarchy of job.

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