

Work and relationship between hard and soft skills education essay



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According to Kuldip Singh et al, 2009, soft or social skills are personal values and interpersonal skills that reflect the capability of someone to conform to any social establishments be it in groups or career. Bennett et al, 2000 emphasize that soft skills are common skills which can be applied in any form of environment. They further describe these skills as not industrial-specific, but useful in different context in the workplace, further studies and adult life in general. Meanwhile, Perrault, 2004 defined soft skills as the X factor that is present in a person that renders them better than others with similar qualifications. James and James, 2004 too acknowledge soft skills should be delivered and exhibited in one's career. Individuals who possess soft skills also make better impression in their workplace. Malaysian Institute of Higher Learning, 2006 incorporated 7 main elements into education, which are communication skills, critical thinking and problem-solving, teamwork skills, moral and professional ethics, leadership skills, continuous learning and information management and entrepreneurial skills.

The key to success in work is to make hard and soft skills supplement each other, as suggested by Kemper, 1999 and Mc Murchie, 1998. At the same time, research by Spencer and Spencer, 1993 denotes those who performs better actually have both technical and people skills. Hard skills are usually what might appear on the resume of individuals which make up the education level, experiences and level of expertise. This is supported by Roselina Shakir, 2009 who relates hard skills to technical work or practical task that are observable and quantifiable.

Generally, soft skills help a person to stand out among job seekers, empower and create opportunities and also to advance one's career. Realising this, <https://assignbuster.com/work-and-relationship-between-hard-and-soft-skills-education-essay/>

many universities worldwide are currently focusing on producing graduates who possess knowledge about their disciplines of study and adequate soft skills. According to Kuldip Singh et al, 2009, Stanford Research Institute and Carnegie Mellon Foundation conducted a study that showed 75% of permanent job success relies on interpersonal skills, and only 25% depends on hands-on knowledge. This shows that soft skills are a must to flourish in the workplace. Importance of soft skills is further supported by Meghan C. Halley et al, 2008 who states they would prefer to hire associates with agreeable behaviour and able to conduct good interaction with patients and colleagues although the technical aspect is important as well.

Realising the importance of soft skills, graduates are expected to be equipped with soft skills already. Yet, the 'skills gap' is the most obvious flaw among graduates as they do not possess the relevant soft skills. Daggett, 2006 and Evers et al, 1998 are in opinion that higher education has not put in enough effort to hone the soft skills of graduates. Woo, 2006 agreed that graduates today are lacking in soft skills as well as hard skills. The lack of soft skills is probably due to examination-based system implemented by the Malaysian government. Ahmad, 1998 state that students only focus on the 'rote-learning' style with the constant pressure from parents, peers and school to excel academically, thus causing them to ignore soft skills development during learning.

Considering the current predicament, Roselina Shakir, 2009 feels that Institute of Higher Learning should ascertain that they produce graduates with the necessary personal and ethical development instead of emphasizing on academic excellence blindly. Various literature has found evidence of <https://assignbuster.com/work-and-relationship-between-hard-and-soft-skills-education-essay/>

increasing soft skills development programs being introduced. Kristin Z. Victoroff et al, 2008 found that there is increasing interest in establishing additional local opportunities for leadership program developments, with the recent introduction of such programs at school level at the University of Michigan School of Dentistry and University of Southern Carolina School of Dentistry. Likewise, according to Harvey et al, University of Toronto revamped its conventional lecture-based medical curriculum in 1992 with the introduction of PBL and Self-Directed Learning opportunities. These reorganizations are made to fulfil the ideals by Barrows, 2000: “ Students would be stimulated by the experience, would see the relevance of what they were learning and would begin to understand the importance of responsible professional attitudes”. Survey findings by Arunodaya Barman et al, 2006 affirms that dental students of University Sains Malaysia feel that PBL sessions has benefited them in reaching their learning objectives and enhance their apprehension of the study topic, linking theory-based learning clinically and acquiring teamwork communication skills. Woodward and Ferrier, 1983 too accounted PBL graduates have on par or even better performance compared with those receiving normal traditional based teaching methods. This shows that those who had received some sort of soft skills development program are much well-received in the job market.

As for the implementation of soft skills at Malaysian institute of higher learning, development of soft skills are based on three methods, based on support program, formal teaching and learning; and on campus life. Shown below is the table as proposed by Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (2006).

Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (2006)

With the growing need for soft skills improvement among graduates, it is important to identify effective practises in facilitating soft skills development in order to make research-based recommendations on elements to be infused (or omitted) for the designation of future programs, as stated by Kuldip Singh et al, 2009. However, Kristin et al, 2008 found that there have been insufficient research findings on students' perceptions of importance of leadership abilities and / or their interest in acquiring these skills in dental school. There has also been no survey done to evaluate students' opinions of important soft skills in dentistry. Kristin Z. Victoroff et al, 2008 also feel that programs should determine and approach students' immediate perceived needs and understand what students think about leadership development. This is because some students had few leadership experiences and training, although many had it previously. When they enter into dental school, they have varying leadership skills. Thus program designation should be evaluated and customised to the needs of potential participants. This is the rationale on why we conducted this study, to find out regarding students' perceptions of important soft skills.

According to Kuldip Singh et al, 2009, immense research and expert opinions were obtained to identify particular soft skills for implementation. Based on the results, the seven soft skills elements to be incorporated are communicative skills, thinking skills and problem solving skills, teamwork force, life-long learning and information management, entrepreneurial skill, ethics, moral and professionalism; and leadership skills. We incorporated into our questionnaire these seven soft skills elements from Malaysian Soft Skills <https://assignbuster.com/work-and-relationship-between-hard-and-soft-skills-education-essay/>

Instrument Scale. We hope to bring to attention the participants of questionnaire of these list of soft skills that one should possess or improve on, and also to obtain their perception on the important soft skills. Our questionnaire requires participants to rate their soft skills and perceived importance of soft skills based on their own experience and judgement. This self-reflection process is regarded as an important aspect in evaluation program and has been approved by other dental educators, as stated by Strauss R et al, 2003.