

Importance of Generic Skill Development Courses in Higher Education in India

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ABSTRACT

India has accepted LPG Policy (Liberalization, Privatization & Globalization) in 1991. It means opening the country's economy to the world and facing the global competition. Hence organizations of different areas have become more quality conscious, customer - centric & innovative for surviving in the global competition. This needs qualified professionals not only with good academic records but also with the generic skill and knowledge, which is offered by education system and higher education system in specific. The objective of this paper is to present the need of generic skills and knowledge, types of courses in higher education system and its importance in developing country like India. The paper also includes the feedback of student's performance as case.

India After 1991

Dr. Manmohan Singh (Present Prime Minister of India & the then Finance Minister of India) had introduced LPG Policy (Liberalization, Privatization & Globalization) in the year 1991. Due to which, the protected Indian environment had thrown up into the global market and removed the traditional barriers such as border, language, culture, currency, etc. for trade in different sectors. It means more space to sell the product and more organizations to compete with. Hence Indian organizations forced to be more customer – centric, more quality conscious and innovative in their products to face the global competition. These means

“QUALITY and CREATIVITY are the only options to survive in the era of globalization”

Fast Paced Development around the World and in India

World is being considered as a “Global Village” because of the remarkable rapid innovation in the fields of Electronics & Communication and Information Technology in the last decades of twentieth century. These leads lots of changes in different sectors like Manufacturing, Communication, Banking, Insurance, Medical, Media & Entertainment, Transportation Services, Information Technology. Hence one has to accept the challenges of globalization and need to make innovations/changes for survival.

India has emerged as one of the fast growing developing country along with various others and especially its neighboring country China. World has experienced lots of changes especially in communication, information technology, infrastructure, medical & pharmaceutical and manufacturing in India. Hence the organizations in India have to accept the rapid changes / innovations than ever before to meet the demands of changing scenario.

Because of the changing business conditions, organizations require flexibility, initiative, and ability to undertake different tasks in as teamwork. These brings focus to the qualified professionals (Human Resource) not only with good academic records but also with other skills like communication skill, ability to work as a leader of a team and as a member of a team, business etiquette, language

proficiency, basic IT skills, cultural sensitivity, networking and personal skills & attributes etc. which are part of generic skills.

What are Generic Skills?

Generic Skills are also known by various terms around the world according to importance. They are known as Soft Skills, Core Skills, Key Skills, Essential Skills, Key Competencies, Basic Skills, Employability Skills, Necessary Skills, Transferable Skills, Common Skills etc. In general, generic skills represent the intangible nature of human and difficult to describe or measure. Few definitions of generic skills are as follows:

According to Wikipedia “Soft skills are defined as the cluster of personality traits, social grace, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark people to varying degrees”.

“Generic skill is defined as a range of abilities including work ethic, courtesy, teamwork, self-discipline and self-confidence, professional presence, language proficiency, cultural sensitivity, communication skills, ability to accept and learn from criticism, ability to handle client relationship and networking, creativity, ability to motivate yourself and others, time management, leadership, interpersonal skill and presentation skills”.

According to NCVET, Australia, the generic skills have six elements as follows.

- Basic Fundamental skills – such as literacy, using numbers, using technology
- People related skills – such as communication, interpersonal, teamwork, customer- service skills
- Conceptual/Thinking skills – such as collecting and organizing information, problem – solving, planning and organizing, learning to learn skill.
- Personal skills and attributes – such as being responsible, resourceful, flexible, able to manage own time, having self-esteem.
- Skills related to business world – such as innovation skills, enterprise skills
- Skills related to community – such as civic or citizenship knowledge and skill

A survey of more than 400 CEOs / technical leaders suggests that generic skills are of more importance than the technical skills for the success of any project / task especially in the era of outsourcing [Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) and Knowledge Processing Outsourcing (KPO)]. In recent past India is known as hub of outsourcing. Hence, it is essential to have synergy of technical skills and generic skills in the modern era of globalization. Also merely possession of generic skills does not guarantee the success unless one practices them in day – today life.

Importance of Generic Skills Development Courses in Education in India.

“The aim of education is not the acquisition of technical skills, through essential in modern society, but development of the bent of mind, that attitude of reason, that spirit of democracy which will make us responsible citizens.”

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

This statement highlights the importance of generic skills development courses in the Indian education system. There is an opinion that generic skills can not be taught it is to be caught which is partially true. However few of the generic skill can be learnt by reading the books but remaining can be developed by creating awareness and training. It is a Life long learning process. Hence the education system has to design the new curriculum at various levels for technical professionals with more generic skill development courses.

India has seen lot of changes in the education system in the past few years. There are many world class education schools, technical and business institutes started with good infrastructure facilities in last fifteen years. Indian governments, state government and universities have already started paying attention to generic skill development courses and introduce various courses. Still it has to do lot many

changes to produce technical professionals demanding skills to compete globally especially with China. These bring focus to the education system and its role in generic skills development.

A Case

Institute of Diploma Studies has been established in the year 1997 under the aegis of Nirma Education and Research Foundation (NERF) by Dr. Karsanbhai K Patel, the founder of Nirma Industries and an internationally famous entrepreneur, along with various other institutes like Institute of Technology, Institute of Management, Institute of Pharmacy, Institute of Science and Institute of Law. Later it was established as a statutory University as Nirma University of Science and Technology, Ahmedabad in the year 2003 at the initiative of NERF. Since 2003 all institutes are constituent of Nirma University of Science and Technology.

As the founder of institute is an Industrialist with a wide vision, the managing committee has established the institute with a mission of not only producing good professionals, but also good and worthy citizens of a great country.

The mission statement of Institute of Diploma Studies, Nirma University of Science and Technology is as follows.

“Institute of Diploma Studies emphasizes on all round development of its students. It aims at not only producing good professionals, but also good and worthy citizens of a great country, aiding it in its overall progress and development.

It endeavors to treat every student as an individual, to recognize their potential and to ensure that they receive the best preparation and training for achieving their career ambitions and life goals.”

The Institute of Diploma Studies offers Diploma programs in Chemical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Plastic Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Electronics & Communication Engineering, Computer Engineering and Information Technology. The duration of Diploma programs is 4 years (8 semesters).

The academic schedules of Diploma programs provide for a reasonable mix of courses in Humanities, Basic Sciences, Basic & Applied technology and Advance Technology in interdisciplinary and advanced areas. Industrial Training of 20 weeks duration is compulsory for all students which is a unique feature of Diploma program. Various supplementary courses are also included in the entire Diploma program which promotes self – development, societal and environmental awareness and living values / moral values. The various generic skills development courses offered are given in Table – 1 with its teaching scheme.

TABLE: 1 GENERIC SKILLS DEVELOPMENT COURSES

Sr. No.	Course Name	Teaching Scheme			Remarks
		Lecture	Tutorial	Practical	
1	English	2	2	2	Compulsory Courses
2	Communication Skills	2	2	-	
3	Computer Application	-	-	4	
4	Interpersonal Skills	2	1	-	
5	Learning to Live	3	-	-	Supplementary Courses
6	Engineering Ethics	3	-	-	
7	Understanding our Environment	3	-	-	
8	Personality Development	3	-	-	
9	Yoga, Health and Hygiene	-	-	2	

Apart from regular technical education, special programs, workshops, expert's lecturer are organized throughout the academic year on technical topics and general awareness topics to enhance skills like leadership, teamwork, networking, presentation, organizing, etc. There are also various programs arranged annually like cultural program, sport day celebration, literacy program around nearby villages which gives ample opportunity to nurture the artistic ability, remaining healthy and interact with society.

These efforts are visible among the students through their performance and feedback. The few critical observations are listed as follows.

- Students passed the Diploma program with or without good academic records but are found with good knowledge of generic skills.
- The Industrial Training of 20 weeks duration gives students an opportunity to develop and learn the generic skills apart from technical especially employable skills.
- Approximately 75 % students are placed in various industries through Industry Institute Interaction cell of institute regularly through campus interview by Industries. Such placement is possible due to the student's ability and knowledge of generic skills apart from good technical skills.
- Students acquire good amount of moral values which help in becoming good citizens.
- Students know more about yoga, pranayam and ethics which are useful to them and family members to live peacefully, healthy throughout the life.

Conclusion

The authors strongly believe that developing country like India has high potential in form of youth of having approx 26 years age. But to compete in the era of globalization, it has to change a lot and at much faster rate. It is also equally important to sustain the developments. Hence the country's education system has to play its role to develop human resource. At the end, recalling the Henry Ford quotes,

**“Coming together is a beginning,
Keeping together is process,
Working together is SUCCESS”**

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