SUSTAINABLE SOFT SKILL DEVELOPMENT: STUDY OF SELF-RELIANCE AS AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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Abstract

The education industry is rapidly changing and as time has progressed the distinction between hard and soft skills has come forth and today both occupy an important role as compared to yester years. Soft skills has gained importance in the recent few years but in spite of that many management colleges have overlooked the same and not included many skills to be imparted as a part of the course curriculum. Education in the sector of sustainable development for enabling students who are vigilant, sensitized and analytical is the approach the institutions need to adopt for the future. In Soft Skills, Self Reliance is the major component for imparting training to achieve a sustainable development of management students is to be embedded in the curriculum. The purpose of the study is to estimate the impact of development of self-reliance skill in management students as a result of soft skills training programs. Methodology used for the study is Experimental and Control Group designs have been used over a sample of 150 students using a structured questionnaire method. As per the findings of study, the impact of self-reliance skills training has revealed that there are significant differences and with such training sessions, skills necessary for sustainable development can be enhanced. Hence, Educational institutions, government and corporates must embed self-reliance as an indispensible tool for sustainable skill development.

Keywords: *Self Reliance, sustainability, soft skills training program, skill development*

The education industry is rapidly changing and as time has progressed the distinction between hard and soft skills has come forth and today both occupy an important role as compared to yester years.Soft skills has gained importance in the recent few years but in spite of that many management colleges have overlooked the same and not included many skills to be imparted as a part of the course curriculum. Through various studies it has been indicated that self-reliance skill can develop self-awareness and self-initiativeof students to achieve sustainability as a skill required for employability. This research paper is empirical evidence to the fact that the management colleges need to incorporate self-reliance skill as a part of their soft skill curriculum and is the only way to ensure sustainable development for successful placement opportunities. This paper is based on a comparison between those students given the opportunity to learn and absorb self-reliance skills sessions in the form of soft skill sessions and those who have yet not experienced the same.

According to Hewitt Sean (2008) soft skills are "non-technical, intangible, personality specific skills" which determines an individual's strength as "a leader, listener and negotiator, or as a conflict mediator". Soft Skills classified as the non-technical skills in the stream of self-reliance which propagates self-initiative and self-directed action and decision making forms the basis for sustainable development. Education in the sector of sustainable development for enabling students who are vigilant, sensitized and analytical is the approach the institutions need to adopt for the future .(Barth, M., Godemann, J., Rieckmann, M., & Stoltenberg, U. 2007). In Soft Skills Self Reliance is the major component for imparting training for sustainability. Self-Reliance as defined as the ability to decide and take action without the influence of others independently. Self-Reliance covers up all areas of self-awareness, self-directed learning, proactive approach and a decision maker. This is the only skill vital and important for the students to become sensitized and socially aware and critical. Education system is responsible for fulfilling the requirement of responsible citizens who can take their own self-directed decisions. (Salih, M. 2008).

Need of Developing Self Reliance Soft Skills and Research Evidences: There are many job seekers who possess excellent academic records and well qualified, but so many of them lack the ability to be proactive and take self-directedactions .To advance in soft skills educationand to learn the aspects of self-reliance among many other skills is the edge that the students can develop if it is a part of their curriculum which can help them to achieve a confident personality ready to face the industry. Majority of the literature review has been able to identify the importance of embedding sustainable education in the curriculum. (Nyerere, J. K. (1967).There are limited studies aimed at developing self-reliance soft skill for achieving the same. There are some studies which have discussed sustainability tools. (Tilbury, D. (1995); (Stephens, J. C., Hernandez, M. E., Román, M., Graham, A. C., & Scholz, R. W. 2008).There are some authors who have explained about self-reliant individuals for self-reliance. (Hmelo-Silver, C. E. 2004); (Barrows, H. S. 1983). There are limited studies aimed at developing a holistic approach to achieving maximum effectiveness for sustainability in the curriculum of a management institution.

This paper targets to find out how self-reliance soft skill training once included as an integral part of the curriculum of a management college can impact on the improvement of the self-reliant development and bring forth a realization to the importance of the training.This will be measured through a study on the students by comparing their personalities within a period of two years from the start till the end of their enrollment in a post graduate degree.

Objective

To estimate the impact of development of self-reliance skill in management students as a result of soft skills training programs.

Research Design

The research design used for the study was 'post test' experimental design. For this study two groups were researched upon who were exposed and not exposed to the self-reliance soft skill training.One experimental group was exposed to the skills trainings and in their second year of post-graduation and another control group who were not exposed to the training and in their first year of study. In this study students were selected who were homogenous with demographic factors like education qualification, age , gender and economic background.It is also assumed at the same time that all other extraneous variables like culture, parenting and environmental background make their own impacts to both the groups Out of 360 post graduate management students in one management college in South Delhi, 180 are in their first year and yet not exposed to soft skills training and 180 are in the second year that are exposed to soft skills training. The research was conducted on both the groups within the age group of 21-24. This constituted the universe of the study. The total sample size taken into consideration was 150 students. 75 students were from first year and 75 more from the second year, using simple random sampling method. Tools for data collection was a structured questionnaire comprising of questions related to different soft skill components among self-reliance as a key component.

Discussion and Analysis

The study has taken into consideration that both the groups experimental and control group are homogenous at the time of constitution, and any significant differences found between the two groups on the paradigm of self-reliance skill is primarily due to the training given in the area of self-reliance skill. The four areas for self-reliance skill assessed are self-awareness, proactive approach, willingness to learn and planning action approach of students under experimental group and control group.

Table 1.1

		Control Group			
	Self reliance parameters	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lowest	Self Awarness				
Moderate low					
Average		19	24.1	24.1	24.1
Moderately High		37	46.8	46.8	70.9
Maximum		23	29.1	29.1	100
Total		79	100	100	
Lowest	Proactive approach	1	1.3	1.3	25.3
Moderate Low		1	1.3	1.3	100
Average		19	24.1	24.1	24.1
Moderate High		42	53.2	53.2	98.7
Maximum		16	20.3	20.3	45.6
Total		79	100	100	
Lowest	Willingness to learn	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
Moderate Low		2	2.5	2.5	3.8
Average		15	19	19	22.8
Moderate High		38	48.1	48.1	70.9
Maximum		23	29.1	29.1	100
Total		79	100	100	
Lowest	Planning action				
Moderate Low					
Average		7	8.9	8.9	8.9
Moderate High		53	67.1	67.1	75.9
Maximum		19	24.1	24.1	100
Total					
Experimental Group					
Lowest	Self awareness				
Moderate low		4	5.1	5.1	5.1
Average		19	24.1	24.1	29.1
Moderately High		30	38	38	67.1
Maximum		26	32.9	32.9	100
Total		79	100	100	
Lowest	Proactive approach	3	3.8	3.8	32.9
Moderate Low		4	5.1	5.1	100
Average		23	29.1	29.1	29.1
Moderate High		30	38	38	94.9
Maximum		19	24.1	24.1	57
Total		79	100	100	
Lowest	Willinness to learn	1	1.3	1.3	30.4
Moderate Low		3	3.8	3.8	100
Average		23	29.1	29.1	29.1
Moderate High		29	36.7	36.7	96.2
Maximum		23	29.1	29.1	59.5
Total		79	100	100	
Lowest	Planning action	1	1.3	1.3	32.9
Moderate Low		6	7.6	7.6	100
Average		25	31.6	31.6	31.6
Moderate High		33	41.8	41.8	92.4
Maximum		14	17.7	17.7	50.6
Total		79	100	100	

The nature of impact of self-reliance skill training is calculated using 'chi square' test and SPSS 17 version is used for the same analysis. The result of the same holds the hypothesis validity.

Table 1.2

Chi Square Test For Experimental Group And Control Group				
Self Relaince Parameters		Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Self Awareness	Pearson Chi-Square	6.639[a]	6	0.355
	Likelihood Ratio	7.618	6	0.267
	N of Valid Cases	79		
	4 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .96.			
		Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Proactive Approach	Pearson Chi-Square	17.666[a]	8	0.024
	Likelihood Ratio	12.978	8	0.113
	N of Valid Cases	79		
	10 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .09.			
		Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Willingness To Learn	Pearson Chi-Square	8.496[a]	16	0.933
	Likelihood Ratio	9.809	16	0.876
	N of Valid Cases	79		
	18 cells (72.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.			
		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Planning Action	Pearson Chi-Square	14.582[a]	16	0.555
	Likelihood Ratio	16.754	16	0.402
	N of Valid Cases	79		
	19 cells (76.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .04.			

The data has been collected at the same time to avoid any transfer of biased responses from the respondents, students in the experimental group in their second year and given a comprehensive training for a year and

students in the control group at the same time in their first month of first year and with no exposure to training.

Findings: As per the objective the impact of self-reliance skills training to the management students in the experimental group was deduced using the analysis of the impact factor which was calculated as the difference between scores of both the groups experimental and control group .The 'chi square' test which has been performed is to find out the significant difference between the two groups.The analysis of the 'chi square' test proves the validity of the observation. The impact of self-reliance skills training has revealed that there are significant differences and with such training sessions, skills necessary for sustainable development can be enhanced.

Managerial Implications: Educational institutions must incorporate in the curriculum and pedagogy of the various categories of programs.Government Organizations andbusiness corporates must embed self-reliance as an indispensible tool for sustainable skill development in the learning and development departments of the organizations.

Scope for future work: Further studies on components of self-reliance and relative effectiveness of each can be undertaken. The four components studied here can be assessed individually to estimate the impact on self-reliance in different business organizations .More components of self-reliance can be derived to understand the impact and to derive the right mix of components of self-reliance training which can be prove to be the most effective in the future to gain a sustainable development of students for employability.

Limitations: Extraneous variables like maturity, placement related training sessions play an important role in self-reliance soft skill development of an individual and are not taken into consideration. Internship programme experience and the impact of the same into self-reliance skill development has not been taken into consideration. No control over daily life experiences and their individual personality traits are not taken into consideration as have no control over the same.

Conclusion

This analysis brings us the clarity to understand that soft skills are required to be integrated in the curriculum as much as any technical skills .The effectiveness to be proactive, have an approach to self-directed learning, self-initiative and self-awareness through self-reliance training is only possible when management colleges impart the right soft skills training and include it as a part of the curriculum. This paper proves that by regularly exposing the students to such training sessions, we can enhance the self-reliance skills of management students for sustainability and thereby these students have an edge over employability

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