

Effectiveness of Soft Skills on Teaching Competencies at Higher Educational Institution: A Narrative Review Article

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Abstract: Soft skills encompass personality qualities, social graces, linguistic facility, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that individuals develop as they grow and mature. Higher educational institutions expect high classroom performance from university teachers. Teachers' soft skills and teaching competencies are the most prominent factors leading to such outcomes, whereas, in pursuit of improving teaching competencies, the teachers accomplish high classroom performance. This implies that the quality of teachers depends on the soft skill implementation and specific teaching competencies executed by the university teachers. Soft skills act as a catalyst for teaching competencies and classroom performance. This paper examines the important role of soft skills for university teachers. It is purely a conceptual paper. The study relies heavily on secondary sources of information derived from various published data sets. This study concludes that soft skills are crucial for university teachers to develop students effectively. A significant recommendation of this study is to create awareness among university faculty regarding soft skills through seminars and conferences.

Keywords: Soft Skills, Communication Skills, Time Management Skills, Leadership Skills, Adaptability Skills, Teaching Competencies

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Introduction

A soft skill is an individual characteristic that enhances an individual's ability to interact, perform, and view career prospects. Various levels of personal qualities, social graces, language fluency, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism are the characteristics of soft skills, according to Touloumakos (2020). Soft skills should be incorporated into teachers' selection of community skills and character traits (Tang, 2019). Hence, the studies showed that identifying soft skills is comparatively difficult compared to the daily technical skills used in the classroom. Escolà-Gascón and Gallifa (2022) found in their study that measuring skills such as communication, problem-solving skills, and other group tasks is difficult compared to measuring technical skills used by the teachers. According to Parlamis and Monnot (2019), the teaching process is important because it changes the student's behavior with the help of teaching values, attitudes, and skills. Therefore, a recent study by Heckman and Kautz (2012) suggests that teaching is a multifaceted profession that requires both hard and soft skills. Teaching is a social activity that requires the teacher and the student to work together.

Prasertcharoensuk Tang (2016) presented that a teaching style may be the sum of several behaviors. Therefore, teaching is more than merely transmitting knowledge from teacher to student. Rather, it is a multifaceted procedure that facilitates and impacts student learning. Mailool et al. (2020) say that a teacher's "soft skills" are interpersonal and social skills, which help them work well in a high-performance setting. Scheerens et al. (2020) argue that soft skills enhance competency, increasing capacity to stimulate communal advancement and transformation. Asbari et al. (2020) found that human capital is significant in the education system as it has produced and improved the quality of education. Human capital can be developed or induced with the help of a properly designed and planned environment in the education system. To develop the scale at which the needs of the people of the society can be fully met, a well-planned structure of higher education institutions should be propagated in the education system. According to Zuo et al. (2018), higher education institutions use soft skills to assess students' and teachers' future capabilities. However, for this human capital to emerge, it must be carefully planned and well-organized. So, higher education institutions make a big difference in human capital production by giving students skills they can use later (Pachauri & Yadav, 2014).

On the other hand, Rao (2018) says that teachers are aware of the importance of soft skills but need to incorporate them into their instruction. For a teacher to successfully impart soft skills acquisition to their students, comprehensive preparation and progression are required. The acquisition of soft skills is directly related to one's ability to teach. To ensure that students are taught using a variety of approaches, teachers must have a thorough understanding of soft skills themselves (Parlami & Monnot, 2019). Similarly, according to Tang (2020), a teacher's role in building a student's soft skills is crucial. To cultivate such human capital, it is necessary to have an educated and well-designed educational system (Pachauri & Yadav, 2014). Regardless of their specific expertise, soft skills are essential for all teachers. Soft skills are as important as hard or traditional job qualifications in predicting job performance. As a nation's inhabitants must be highly rational and skilled, this study addresses an urgent need to tackle globalization's challenges. (Matteson et al., 2016).

Mostly, the teachers face various challenging problems in their daily life during their teaching process as they have to tackle the students' problems, daily preparation of lesson plans, and their proper implementation in the classroom, as well as the requests of the parents, are also considered regarding the study issues of their children (Fox et al., 2022). When a teacher possesses strong soft skills, then he/ she can easily handle the challenges. Soft skills are really helpful for teachers in managing their daily duties in challenging conditions. Kirillov et al. (2015) found in their study that a teacher can directly change his students' behavior with the help of strong communication with them, which is part of soft skills. Hence, the relationship between the skills of the teachers and their impact on the quality of teaching has interesting questions for future studies.

Objectives of Study

- To explain the concept and significance of soft skills for university teachers.
- To identify the influence of soft skills (communication skills, teamwork skills, problem-solving skills, time management skills, adaptability skills, and leadership skills) on the teaching competencies of university teachers.

Methodology

The present study's nature was purely conceptual, and the data was collected from secondary sources such as websites, eBooks, and journals.

Soft Skills: Conceptualizing

The term soft skills refers to a number of the traits of personality, social upgradation, different language skills, and friendly behaviour, including a person's personal habits, which directly leads to the varying degrees of the people. In the same pattern, soft skills lead to technical skills, which are hard to measure in a time period (Qizi, 2020). However, "Soft skills" include collaboration, problem-solving, etc. These skills must be acquired through a process of change that may be uncomfortable or difficult at times. On the other hand, soft skills are subjective skills that are difficult to



quantify and are generally referred to as "people skills" or "interpersonal skills." (Fernandes et al., [2021](#)). Sharma ([2018](#)) explains that a soft skill is a set of behaviors that can be applied appropriately and responsibly in managing one's personal affairs. They are skills that people learn through direct experience or by being taught. They help us figure out how to deal with everyday problems and questions (Gruzdev et al., [2018](#)).

"Soft Skills" are closely related to the following terms: "Life Skills," "Emotional Intelligence," "Social Skills," "Interpersonal Skills," and Intelligence Quotients. Usually, "soft skills" refers to a person's emotional intelligence quotient (EQ). It refers to a person's character traits that affect relationships, such as social graces, communication, language, habits, friendliness, managing people, and leadership. The ability to enhance relationships, job performance, and career prospects is enhanced through soft skills, also known as people skills (Parlami & Monnot, [2019](#)).

Anggiani ([2017](#)) explained that "soft skill" refers to the personal traits that enhance interpersonal interactions. Hendarman Cantner ([2018](#)) suggested the term "soft skills," which is used interchangeably with core skills, personal skills, and basic proficiencies. Soft skill is a non-intellectual ability inherent in every individual and essential for establishing and maintaining effective social relationships at work.

In the same way, soft skills like cooperation, communication, independence, leadership, and creativity are hard to measure because they are closely tied to a person's attitude (Succi & Canovi, [2020](#)). Soft skills are the ability to connect with individuals who are not directly associated with a particular task. However, these skills are crucial in any position because they are most often associated with other individuals within the organization. Similarly, Asbari et al. ([2020](#)) defined soft skills as a bunch of skills in which different attitudes, abilities, personal attributes, and behaviors are included, leading to successful source management. These skills are mostly used worldwide, and people apply them to enhance their capacity for work behaviours in all fields, such as academics, careers, and daily life.

Vogler et al. ([2018](#)) refer to generic skills as soft, common, and general skills. It includes key skills, employability skills, essential skills, competencies skills, and basic skills. Communication, motivation, teamwork, enthusiasm, problem-solving, and trust are considered the most important soft skills in the workplace (Eryilmaz & Kara, [2017](#)). Moreover, there has been a significant increase in the importance of soft skills in today's highly competitive marketplace (Sharma, [2018](#)). There must be more than technical skills to compete in this competitive market. Therefore, technical and soft skills employees are the most valuable in any organization (Efrat, [2022](#)). Hence, for the success and well-being of an organization, soft skills are essential (Seetha, [2014](#)).

According to Lippman et al. ([2015](#)), five fundamental soft skills enhance employee performance. Self-control, social skills, communication, and positive self-concept are among the soft skills that increase people's chances of success in various aspects. According to Zhong et al. ([2022](#)), hard and soft skills influence employees' performance. Manullang ([2017](#)) concluded that the principal's leadership skills are influenced by his or her soft skills. Moreover, he stated that soft skills will be developed to enhance the principal's leadership. Polnaya et al. ([2018](#)) found that teachers' performance is closely related to their soft skills. This means teachers' performance increases as their soft skills increase (Hendarman & Cantner, [2018](#)).

Significance of Soft Skills for University Teachers

An effective teacher must be able to explain things vividly to students in order for them to understand ideas, concepts, and principles. However, there are many soft skills that can be used to develop the teaching competency of university teachers (Qizi, [2020](#)). Developing soft skills became essential to improve the teachers' competency in their profession (Ngang et al., [2015](#)). On the other hand, Teaching is a profession that is skill-based. The only way for teachers to perform well is to be skilled. Soft skills are the skills of the 21st century (Kim et al., [2022](#)). In addition to listening, speaking, reading, and writing, soft skills have emerged to show learners and professionals many other skills to develop (Heckman & Kautz, [2012](#)). Inculcating essential soft skills produces quality human capital and thus develops their ability to learn, understand, and value. This is why their importance to teachers cannot be overstated (Pachaiyappan, [2022](#)). Having soft skills alone will not help a teacher. Teachers must be able to utilize soft skills in new



and problematic situations to succeed. As a result of the researcher's research, "soft skills management" refers to how soft skills are utilized wisely (Mailool et al., [2020](#)).

Hence, the personality of human beings can be shaped with the help of soft skills. This is the main point of every graduate that he could graduate with skills such as a change in behavior, excellence in teaching patterns, and strong communication with matured behaviors (Tang, [2020](#)). A significant difference can be seen when we compare hard skills with soft skills, as soft skills produce an effective environment in the teaching and learning context. The perception of the people about the implementation of soft skills also changed as time passed. It is significant for teachers to develop soft skills in their teaching to make advancements in their careers as well as the advancement of their students (Yan et al., [2019](#)). Teaching and working with parents, administrators, and other teachers requires soft skills. A teacher needs soft skills in order to successfully navigate these individuals' needs (Rao, [2019](#)).

In the same context, Communication skills are needed daily for a teacher to convey information to her students effectively. In faculty meetings and other school-wide functions, teachers use teamwork and collaboration. It is possible for teachers to effectively manage classroom behaviors and student progress by using critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Marin-Zapata et al., [2022](#)). It is possible to improve a teacher's effectiveness by developing these skills. In the presence of an effective teacher, students tend to achieve success. Differences in teacher effectiveness can impact students' academic performance (Khan et al., [2017](#)).

Role of Soft Skills for Teachers

A soft skill is an ability to communicate, think analytically and solve problems, work in a team, learn and gain knowledge throughout life, be entrepreneurial, be ethical, and be a good leader. Teacher should incorporate these seven soft skills into their teaching to improve their effectiveness.

Time management Skill

Time management refers to all the practices you follow to manage your time effectively. It entails maximizing your time (Adams & Blair, [2019](#)). To put it more narrowly, people use the principles and systems to make conscious choices about their time. Accordingly, the world recognizes that time management for teachers is more important than any other profession since they are in charge of the fate of future generations. A teacher's effectiveness and institution results are directly affected by time management (Saketi & Taheri, [2010](#)). In recent years, time management has become an increasingly important topic for academicians and researchers who seek in-depth insights on specific strategies for time management for teachers (Indreica et al., [2011](#)).

Teachers can improve their time management skills by participating in time management training. However, it does not affect performance directly and automatically (Sevari & Kandy, [2011](#)). Thus, time management is one of the most essential skills for teachers to be productive, efficient, and meet deadlines. The key to effective time management is analyzing workloads, assigning priorities, and maintaining focus on productive tasks (Kirillov et al., [2015](#)).

However, University organizations require teachers to manage their time effectively because they are expected to perform additional responsibilities beyond teaching and learning (Häfner et al., [2014](#)). The teachers sometimes deal with student behavior problems, interact with parents, attend meetings, and oversee co-curricular activities. Thus, time management needs to be efficient and effective (Karakose, [2015](#)).

It has been concluded by Gul et al. ([2021](#)) that time management does not offer an answer to management problems. However, it offers a way for managers to find solutions, plan for the future, and assess progress in general. The three time-management skills are the ability to make priorities and goals, the ability to manage time mechanically, and the ability to organize time effectively. It is crucial for every individual, especially teachers, to receive time management training in this modern age. Ahmad Uzir et al. ([2020](#)) argue that personal time management evaluation is fundamental to the effectiveness of work.



Therefore, an individual's time management skills are the ability to manage his or her time effectively. It is also very important for teachers to possess these skills (Das & Bera, [2021](#); Zafarullah et al., [2016](#)). Hence, there is a positive correlation between time management skills and intrinsic motivation, according to research. Individuals deal with time management differently based on their nature and characteristics (Cemaloğlu & Filiz, [2010](#)). There is a close relationship between time management skills and time management behaviors. An output result of time management behavior can be time management skills (Wang, [2019](#)). It is more effective and efficient for teachers to manage their time effectively (Khanam et al., [2017](#)). Teachers need to make decisions regarding using their time effectively to achieve the best possible results at the school (Humpherys & Lazrig, [2021](#)).

Adaptability Skill

Adaptability is the ability to learn novel skills in response to changing circumstances. (Dishon & Gilead, [2021](#)). More specifically, the term adaptability means the capability of an individual to adapt to a challenging environment by utilizing all of his skills, attitudes, and abilities, which are used to complete different tasks and adjust to the social environment (Brock & Curby, [2016](#)). Adaptability is a life skill that is important for every individual to possess. There is a relationship between the adaptability skills of the teachers and the outcomes of both teachers and the students (İspir et al., [2019](#)). Therefore, Collie and Martin ([2017](#)) found in their study that teachers who possess strong adaptability skills can achieve their commitments on time more. Furthermore, Collie et al. ([2017](#)) also investigated that when a teacher is more adaptable to his work, his focus would be completely on its completion on time. According to Loughland and Alonzo ([2019](#)), when a teacher is more adaptable in his work, he will practice more classroom rules to make sure to meet the needs of the students.

According to Martin Gardiner ([2019](#)), adaptability was associated with higher workplace motivation and occupational self-concept among teacher assistants working with students with disabilities. There is clear evidence that teachers (and teacher assistants) need to be adaptable to thrive and be effective. Students' needs are continuously changing, and teachers must adapt their lessons to meet their needs, find alternative resources to explain or illustrate key points or adjust the pace of the lesson (Granziera et al., [2016](#)). Teachers must also be able to interact effectively with colleagues when working under changing circumstances, such as when they are asked to perform a new role, when they require resources for teaching a new subject, or when they require assistance with a new or challenging student (Parsons & Vaughn, [2016](#)). Additionally, the teachers can make adjustments in every environment and in every role given to them (Vulpe & Pribac, [2021](#)). In the modern era of education, teachers are practising new activities and skills regularly to learn new skills and integrate advanced knowledge. To the same extent, the changes in the Curriculum for adapting new skills must be required (McIlveen et al., [2019](#)). It is further studied that teachers are more efficiently accepting the changes in their teaching patterns and improving their teaching to make the process effective and advanced (Brock & Curby, [2016](#)).

A three-part model of adaptability used by Martin et al. (2012) can help us recognize likely adaptive responses by considering possible actions, thoughts, and emotions. Teachers must, for instance, regulate their thoughts in order to make connections between the new material and familiar topics when teaching a new subject that is unfamiliar to them (cognitive adaptability), regulate their behavior in order to search for someone with more knowledge and relevant resources (behavioral adaptability) and regulate their emotions in order to focus on finding a solution of problem during the activity.

Communication Skills

According to Rahman et al. ([2019](#)), the ability to communicate accurately and fluently is crucial for effective communication. Although thoughts can be expressed in writing, they can be more effectively communicated to an audience only through speaking without ambiguity. Teaching content should also be communicated systematically and structurally so students can easily comprehend it (Khan et al., [2017](#)). Knowledge (of content) and communication are key factors in teaching effectiveness (Gartmeier et al., [2015](#)). In addition to having deep knowledge of content, teachers must be able to communicate it effectively. Teachers' effectiveness is, therefore, determined by their content



and communication competencies (Claro et al., 2018). In order to become a successful teacher, aspiring teachers must be proficient and competent communicators, both in their native language and in English (Kurtz et al., 2017). They must be capable of expressing themselves clearly and confidently in writing and orally. They must also listen actively and respond appropriately to what they hear (Yuldashev & Yuldasheva, 2019). Hence, the teachers know their roles very well as helper facilitators and have a deeper understanding of the problems and challenges faced by their students (Gartmeier et al., 2015). Strong communication with the students is always maintained during the educational process. It is the basic skill in every teaching and learning process. Teachers should communicate with their students properly and understand the importance of nonverbal communication, too (Rao, 2019).

Problem-solving Skills

Problem-solving is a technique to solve challenging issues by providing a deeper understanding of the problems then analysis and evaluation occur (Marin & de la Pava, 2017). Problem-solving skills are abundantly used to provide practical solutions to students, and assessment and examination of the problem usually occur (Abed et al., 2015). It has many positive effects on the teaching competence of university teachers. It develops the ability to anticipate future problems and deal with them promptly. The ability to generate novel ideas and come up with innovative solutions. The ability to think outside the box and go beyond what you are comfortable with. Whenever necessary, provide advanced suggestions for improvement—the capacity to develop solutions for various problems (Rodzalan & Saat, 2015).

A university teacher should possess critical thinking, creativity, innovation, and analytical skills and be able to apply information based on these competencies. Detecting and evaluating complicated situations and making reasonable judgments are required for this component. Furthermore, they should be able to offer suggestions and alternative solutions while broadening and enhancing their thinking abilities (Hesse et al., 2015).

Ability to anticipate future problems and be able to deal with them promptly. The ability to generate novel ideas and come up with innovative solutions. The ability to think outside the box and go beyond what you are comfortable with. Whenever necessary, provide advanced suggestions for improvement—the capacity to develop solutions for various problems (Silber-Varod et al., 2019). The ability to solve problems is one of the most important life skills (Kirmizi et al., 2015). Problem Solving skills help us to deal constructively with problems in life. Left unresolved, major problems can result in mental stress and physical strain. Perseverance and determination can be used to achieve even the farthest dreams (Duda et al., 2019). At home and at institutions, one is constantly challenged with problems, no matter how big or small. In some cases, people can overcome problems by seeing them as opportunities for growth. Problems are always solved systematically when they deal with them. They become more confident and self-assured. As a result, some people fear challenges and need help to identify their exact problem (McPeck, 2016).

Teamwork Skill

Riebe et al. (2010) defined teamwork skills as those when people can work together cooperatively and communicate effectively. An individual with strong teamwork skills can collaborate and cooperate with students from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds to achieve a common goal (James et al., 2016). Accepting their peers' attitudes, behaviors, and perspectives is essential to establishing a successful working relationship. It is also expected that they will have to switch between the roles of group leader and group member as necessary (Sanyal & Hisam, 2018). The importance of teamwork in successful organizations and teaching is well established (Weinstein et al., 2013). When teachers work together as a team, they can assign tasks based on each member's according to their personality and expertise (Casper, 2017). As a result of teamwork, teachers are more likely to feel confident contributing their most dynamic skills to the improvement of the school, as well as a greater sense of trust and accountability (Beaubien & Baker, 2017).

García et al. (2016) postulated that communication and social skills are developed through teamwork, including listening actively and speaking effectively. Plotnikova Strukov (2019) reported that professional teaching standards



have been revised to emphasize the importance of teachers collaborating and participating in learning communities. Vangrieken et al. (2015) reported that teamwork motivates teachers, reduces workload, and increases self-efficacy. According to researchers, social support is a valuable tool for people facing work overload. Britton et al. (2017). In order to alleviate workload stress, supportive mentors, colleagues, or team members share positive experiences (Pavlenko & Pavlenko, 2021).

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) also found a positive association between a collaborative and supportive work environment and fewer attrition rates. However, teacher teamwork, mentoring, and learning communities can lead to feelings of self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and enthusiasm.

Beaubien Baker (2017) argued that teamwork created in a climate of cohesion can smother diverse ideas and minimize reflection's benefits. Fox et al. (2018) recommended additional training, appropriate professional development, and more administrative support. Teachers often complain about inadequate resources and support, especially in hostile, unsupportive, or discouraging work environments. Casper (2017) discussed that group work and cooperative learning provide various positive pedagogical benefits, including encouraging students to deepen their learning, improve their communication skills, and learn how to deal with conflicting situations and negotiate.

Leadership Skill

Leadership is the art or strategy of influencing others to achieve (Lieberman et al., 2016). An individual's leadership ability measures their ability to undertake a wide range of duties as a new teacher. In order to be able to lead a project, teachers should have a basic understanding of leadership principles. The ability to perform both the roles of a leader and a team member is also important (Sun et al., 2016). As the educational environment is constantly changing, teachers must be able to respond immediately to changes in the social context, take the necessary decisions, share responsibilities, and promote innovative ideas with their students (Jacobs et al., 2016). Leadership skills can improve teachers' performance, make teachers more effective, and contribute to the effectiveness of universities (Gartmeier, 2018).

Developing leadership competence in teacher education is most effective when it entails cognitive, operational, and personal components. The most effective techniques for promoting basic leadership qualities are interactive technologies, problem-solving and communicative situations, discussions, case studies, and projects (Al et al., 2021). In the workplace, leadership skills enhance the ability of group members to lead others. As a result, respect is also developed towards other team members. It is important to develop leadership skills to develop positive attitudes and behaviors towards work and others and excellent coordination skills among teachers (Hamzah et al., 2016). The effectiveness of teachers can be improved in several ways through teacher leadership. Teachers' quality can be improved through continuous learning and excellence in teaching, and by spreading good practice throughout the school, teachers' expertise can increase (Warren, 2018). As teachers gain expertise and confidence, they will be more willing to introduce innovative teaching methods due to their increased responsibilities. In the study, teacher leadership contributed significantly to student learning variation and teacher effectiveness (Whitehead & Greenier, 2019).

Hakim (2015) found that taking on leadership roles positively affects teachers' ability to innovate in the classroom and positively affects student achievement. According to some studies, taking on leadership roles can help teachers become more motivated and confident in their abilities and teach them how to motivate, lead, and encourage others. As a result, teachers have more self-confidence, knowledge, and enthusiasm for teaching (Witziers et al., 2003).

Conclusion

Following the study results, soft skills are essential at every stage of life. A soft skill is a skill that develops human relationships, mutual understanding, collaboration, positive attitude, self-belief, self-awareness, social awareness, decision-making abilities, creative attitudes, logical approaches, and a positive attitude towards work. As a result, teachers can develop high energy, flexibility, humility, punctuality, responsibility, mannerisms, a vision for the future,



honesty, positive character, and the ability to manage difficult tasks, accept life challenges, and succeed professionally. Soft skills are also helpful in academic and professional settings, allowing one to present viewpoints clearly and easily. It promotes interpersonal skills among university teachers, resulting in their success in all aspects of their lives. As a result, they become competent members of educational institutions and society. It is, therefore, necessary to include soft skills in the teachers' training program.

Recommendations

- Teachers need to be aware of the importance of developing soft skills in the classroom.
- Seminars and conferences related to soft skills for teachers should be organized gradually and regularly.
- For the improvement of educational settings and the professional growth of teachers, it is essential to develop a clear professional vision for university teachers.
- A high priority must be placed on education, and a sufficient budget must be allocated to training sessions for teachers in soft skills.
- In order to recruit and appoint high-calibre teachers, strict and rigid measures must be followed.
- Facilitate soft skills opportunities for universities by providing whatever support is needed.



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