



SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL SKILL AND ITS CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Dr. Shiva Nand Jha

Former Associate Professor & Head
Department of Geography
Jawaharlal Nehru College, PASIGHAT
Arunachal Pradesh-791103, INDIA

Abstract: Skill is an ability to perform any activity in competent way. The development of social skills is one of the most important aspect of human life in any society. The practice of desired social skills makes a person liked in a group and at large in society. Based on the phenomena of human interaction, humans spend their lives in groups encompassing family, school and the society at large. Family, schools, society, religion and understanding of history, social sciences and other field of knowledge provide the information necessary to be inculcated in the young minds of individuals. Social skills work as an interaction tool with other members following the most appropriate ways of dealing that is necessary for smooth human activities in various contexts. These are the competencies developed in order to have better relationships with different groups in the society, including family, friends, job and society at large.

Key Words: Skill Development, Social Skill, Human Interaction, Social relationship

INTRODUCTION

The canvas of this immensely important seminar prompted me to know:

- SKILL?
- SKILL DEVELOPMENT? and its relevance in Indian context and finally, the main topic-
- “SOCIAL SKILL”

Basically, skill is an ability to perform any activity in a competent manner. Skills can be classified into three main types: Knowledge-based skills, transferable skills, and Personal Traits or self-management skills.

Generally skill development refers to the productive capabilities acquired through all levels of learning and training, occurring in formal, non-formal, informal and on-the-job settings. It also refers to identifying the skill gap in a person and ensuring that he or she develops these skills. Skills determine the ability to achieve goals and execute better plans. All skills can generally be divided into two main types: hard skills and soft skills. We need both in our career.

Examples of HARD SKILLS and SOFT SKILLS

HARD SKILLS	SOFT SKILLS
Proficiency in a foreign language	Communication
A degree or certificate	Flexibility
Typing speed	Leadership
Machine operation	Teamwork
Computer programming	Time management

IMPORTANCE

Whether you're a professional or a graduate, in your job hunt, your skills matter. Your skills tell potential employers what you can do, how you can do it, and even who you are. Moreover, the development of skills can contribute to structural transformation and economic growth by enhancing employability and labour productivity and helping countries to become more competitive.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT: THE INDIAN CONTEXT

The skill development ecosystem in India is complex, large and diverse, providing varied levels of skills across an extremely heterogeneous population. Skill development in India can be broadly segmented into Education and Vocational Training. The current state of affairs and the future requirements, the challenges related to skill development in India are enormous.

The skill development ecosystem in India is skewed towards a formal education system with limited vocational training. Both qualitatively and quantitatively, while the vocational training is in a dismal state in India, the higher education system itself is grappling with issues related to scale and quality.

Moreover, there is a wide gap between the formal education system and work requirements, compounding the challenges related to the skill gap. Transforming the skill development ecosystem and making it responsive to needs of both industry and citizens requires a scalable, efficient and comprehensive vocational training ecosystem to meet future requirements.

Some of the major channels of formal vocation training include the government-run Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), privately operated Industrial Training Centres (ITCs), vocational schools, specialized institutes for technical training, and apprenticeship training by the industry.

The National Policy on Skill Development was first formulated in 2009 to create a skills ecosystem in India. The present government has introduced a National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in 2015. The policy aims to provide an umbrella framework to all skill related activities carried out within the country, to align them to common standards and link skill activities with demand centres. The new skills policy also provides details on how skill development efforts across the country can be aligned within the existing institutional arrangements.

The creation of the first-ever separate Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June 2014. It is conceived to encompass all other ministries to work in a unified way, set common standards, as well as coordinate and streamline the functioning of different organisations working for skill development. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship is entrusted to make broad policies for all other ministries' skill development initiatives and National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). Mapping and certifying skills, market research and designing curriculum, encouraging education in entrepreneurship, make policies for boosting soft skills and computer education to bridge the demand and supply gaps are also among the important goals.

'SOCIAL SKILL' is one of the important component under the broader framework of Skill Development. Without going in much details, it seems appropriate to move on the main topic of the seminar, i.e. "SOCIAL SKILL".

SOCIAL SKILL

We all know that MAN IS A SOCIAL ANIMAL. Being a social creature we have developed a number of ways to communicate our messages, thoughts and feelings with others. Unlike topics related to mathematics, physics, geography, or history, social skills are more of a "LEARN ON THE JOB" skill. When we are a child, we learn how to manage conflict, make friends and navigate groups by doing it. In other words, learning social skills can be difficult if we were not exposed to traditional group dynamics as a child. Since social skill is a lifelong learning process, it is important to know the most basic aspects of child psychology which is based on our social foundation and 'Emotional Intelligence'.

In simple words, 'Emotional Intelligence' is our ability to acknowledge our own emotions, recognize emotions of others and use that information to guide our behaviour. This is a relatively new area of study in the field of psychology, and developing our own Emotional Intelligence can help us understand and improve our social interactions.

There are several models of emotional intelligence, but for present purposes, I would like to outline **Daniel Goleman's** five general categories of Emotional Intelligence that complement and support one another.

1. **Self-awareness:** This simply means being able to identify our own emotions and how they work. Are we anxious in loud environments? Do we get angry when people talk over us? If we know these things about ourselves, then we are practicing self-awareness.
2. **Self-regulation:** Self-regulation deals with our ability not just to know our emotions, but manage them. Self-regulation help us to do something better in our own lives.
3. **Motivation:** External factors like money, status, or pain are powerful motivators. But in Goleman's model, internal motivation is a key component. This means that we know how to manage our own motivation and continue our projects because we choose to do so and not because someone demands it.
4. **Empathy:** It's just as important to be aware of the emotions of others. This might mean developing the skills to recognize how people are expressing themselves. It also means understanding how other people may respond to the circumstances they're in.
5. **Socialization:** This area deals with our ability to steer our relationships and navigate social situations. It doesn't mean controlling others, but understanding how to get where we want to be with other people. That might mean conveying our ideas to co-workers, managing a team, or dealing with a conflict in a relationship.

Now, we may say that every social situation is different and there isn't always a "correct" way to handle any of them. However, when viewed through the lens of these core competencies, most social situations become a lot more manageable.

In spite of complexities, the main aspects of social skill may conveniently be covered under the definitions of social skills with simple elaborations. In fact, social skills are the skills we use to communicate and interact with each other, both verbally and non-verbally, through gestures, body language and our personal appearance. What is said is influenced by both verbal language and the way we use it, e.g. – the tone of voice, volume of speech and the words we choose as well as by more subtle messages such as body language, gestures and other non-verbal communication methods.

Developing social skills is about being aware of how we communicate with others, the messages we send and how methods of communication can be improved to make the way we communicate more efficiently and effectively.

Social rules and regulations are created, communicated and changed in verbal and nonverbal ways. To know, the proper way of following these rules is known as social skills. To be precise, Social skills are the abilities to interact and behave socially and effectively, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, making responsible decisions and handling challenging situations confidently with appropriate self-control.

According to **Walker (1983)**, social skills are the set of competencies that allow us to initiate and maintain positive social relationships, contribute to peer acceptance and to a satisfactory adjustment, and allow us to cope effectively with social environment. Good social skills are very important for proper functioning in life. These skills help us to know how to make good decisions in life, what to say to others, how to ask others for help, and how to maintain good relationships in the society. Social Skills enable an individual to behave in diverse situations. The academic performance, involvement in co-curricular activities, social relationships, behaviour, and family relationships are based on the extent to which an individual possess good social skills.

According to **Zins, Wang, & Walberg, (2004)**, “Social skills can also be defined within the context of social and emotional learning - recognizing and managing our emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically”.

Social skills are necessary for an individual to behave in the society according to their culture. There are many important social skills for an individual to acquire for successful functioning in life; these can be organized into particular areas to make it easier to understand them. These are known as components of social skills e.g. conversation skills (verbal and non-verbal), relationship skills, self-control and mannerisms.

- **Conversation skills-** To adjust in the society we need to interact with others. With the help of conversation skills we are able to communicate with others in appropriate ways according to our culture and situations. Without good conversation skills there can't be effective communication. Conversation skills are the abilities to express oneself in verbal and nonverbal ways. We are able to express our desires, needs and opinions etc. effectively with good conversation skills. Good conversations skills are a set of keys to get success in life and work and to maintain good relationships.
- **Relationship skills-** Relationship skills constitute the behaviour that is performed by an individual for the sake of maintaining healthy relationship with others. An individual should care about needs and feelings of the other people for maintaining successful and positive relations with others. Relationship skills help to establish rewarding, healthy and positive relations with the people we interact with. These relationships skills constitute the skills of preserving and managing relations, resolving conflicts, seeking help at needed time and co-operation. All these are important to maintain friendly relations.
- **Self-control** – Self-control is the ability in the individuals to control the emotions in the particular situation and acting in appropriate ways. Self-control helps to check levels of stress by changing the environment and responding to the emotions like anger, sadness etc. appropriately. The person having self-control is able to communicate effectively with others and make positive and healthy relationships in the society.
- **Mannerism-** Mannerism means acting appropriately in socially acceptable ways and to display respect and consideration for others. Good manners help to maintain better relationships with others. Everybody wants to have relationship with the person having good manners. This includes table etiquettes, basic etiquettes etc. Examples of such skills are: being polite and showing respect to the others and following the general rules while behaving.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL SKILLS ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The process of Education takes place in the society. Learning is ultimately a social process. People initially learn something independently and eventually that learning is modified through interaction with others. It is very important for a child to have good social skills to learn meaningfully while interacting with the members of the society. According Ten Dam & Volman, (2007), social skills are important for preparing young people (children) to mature and succeed in their adult roles within the family, workplace and community.

Some researchers conducted studies to see the effect of social skills on academic achievement and school adjustment. **Gilliam & Shahar (2006)** conducted a study on Behaviour problems as meaningful predictors of continued behaviour problems i.e. poor peer standing, and academic difficulties during Kindergarten. The research has documented that children without adequate social skills are at risk to face difficulties as peer rejection, behaviour problems, and poor academic achievement. **Masten et al., (2005)** found that interpersonal skills are important for peer acceptance and social adjustment throughout childhood and adolescence. **Joseph A. Durlak (2011)** reported in “Study Finds Social-Skills Teaching Boosts Academics” that students who took part in social and emotional learning of SEL program improved in grades and standardized test. On the bases of the review of these researches, it can be concluded that Social Skills play an important role in the academic achievement and adjustment in school among children.

In other aspects of life also social skills are important for human beings throughout their life because they allow them to understand others and to be understood by others in a right way. **Herson & Bellack (1977)** rightly remarked that social skills help people to express their positive and negative feelings in interpersonal situations. Social skills play an important role in every situation whether it may be for the children in the age of their schooling or for the adults in their career.

There are distinct advantages to having well developed social skills. Here are five:

1. More and Better Relationships

Identifying well with individuals leads to more relationships and, at times, friendships. By developing your social skills you become more charismatic. People are more interested in charismatic people as charismatic people are or at least appear to be more interested in them. Focusing on relationships will help you get a job, get promoted and make new friends. Social skills can increase your happiness and satisfaction and give you a better outlook of life. More relationships can also help to reduce the negative effects of **stress** and boost your self-esteem.

2. Better Communication

Relating with people and being able to work in large groups naturally develops one's communication skills. After all, we cannot have great social skills without good communication skills and being able to convey one's thoughts and ideas may be the single most important skill that we can develop in life..

3. Greater Efficiency

It is a lot easier to attend a meeting at work or a party in our personal life if we know at least some of the people who will be there.

4. Advancing Career Prospects

Most worthwhile jobs have a 'people component' and the most lucrative positions often involve a large amount of time spent interacting with employees, media and colleagues. It is rare that an individual can remain isolated in their office and still excel in their job. Most organisations are looking for individuals with a particular, tactical, skill set: the ability to work well in a team and to influence and motivate people to get things done.

5. Increased Overall Happiness

Having the confidence to start a conversation at a work-related conference may lead to a new job offer with a higher salary. A smile and 'hello' in a social situation may lead to a friendship being formed.

Here are some pin-pointed personal development skills in the workplace

- Be an active listener. ...
- Work well with others. ...
- Organize your time, work and materials. ...
- Work through challenging situations. ...
- Believe in yourself. ...
- Adapt to change. ...
- Be truthful. ...
- Be committed to and passionate about your job.

CONCLUSION

Social skills are the abilities to interact and behave socially and effectively, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, making responsible decisions and handling challenging situations confidently with appropriate self- control. In each stage of life an individual needs to have good social skills to behave in diverse situations for better adjustment. A child having good social skills is able to perform better in academic achievement in school, behave positively and establish and maintain relationships with others effectively. Social skills help an individual to enhance academic achievement, personal development, better understanding, productivity, employability and career success.

It is generally acknowledged that social skills and character development are more difficult to attain and harder to change when people get older, so the sooner you start, the better. The most valuable social skills include- Effective communication, Active listening, Making eye contact, Showing respect, Being cooperative, Being empathetic, Smiling and being yourself, Having a positive, optimistic attitude and Inclusiveness. Above all, let me quote Mahatma Gandhi “relationships are based on four principles: respect, understanding, acceptance and understanding.

As teachers, we can inculcate social skill among the students by way of model manners, classroom activities, role-play social situations, class stories and class meetings, explicit instructions and so on. Remember, teachers are the role-models. Again let me quote Gandhiji, ‘My life is my message’. We must motivate our student. Our former president, the missile man APJ Abul Kalam rightly said ‘dream is not that you see while sleeping. It is something that does not let you sleep’. Let me conclude by quoting Sarvapalli Dr. Radhakrishnan, the great teacher and role models to many aspiring minds- ‘the end product of education should be a free creative man, who can battle against historical circumstances and adversities of nature.

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