

Empowering Gen Y as Future Manager through Soft Skills

B. Vinay Kumar, Saradha Rajkumar

Abstract—Preparing Gen Y students to be critical thinkers and effective communicators is more essential in today's complex education environment. In addition to Life Skills, it is necessary and much more important for students to communicate confidently and effectively. Life skills for effective learning, successful career planning and development have the ability to reinforce and enhance knowledge in any real-life situation. There are several areas to engage students in the learning process and to verify that students have the ability to analyze, incorporate and apply their Interpersonal and Intrapersonal skills. The language laboratory is the ideal place to simulate listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. For this, the present paper proposes a mixed-method approach and consolidates the assessment by providing different methods of assessing Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Skills, Application Orientation, with the aid of English Language Communication Skills Laboratory and classrooms with enterprising theory teaching techniques for obtaining more precise and effective outcome-based results.

Index Terms—Body Language, Gen Y, Intra & Interpersonal Skills, LSRW Skills, Soft Skills.

I. INTRODUCTION

Generation Y (Gen Y) is the group of people under 25 years old [1]. In recent years there has been much publicity about how widely different this generation is from those who have gone before. Gen Y is often classified negatively as consisting of disenfranchised, antisocial technophiles with short attention spans and poor communication skills. Media articles therefore focus on character traits, motivating young people and how older generations can adapt to Gen Y. The reality for the workplace is far more complex. Overall, there is a consensus that Gen Y [2]:

- Grown up in a very different environment to previous generations.
- Comes to the workplace with different skills.
- Is motivated by different things.
- Thinks differently about learning and development.
- Approaches work relationships differently.

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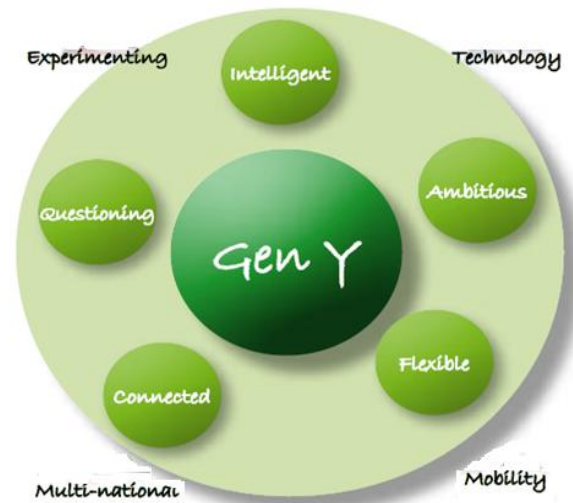


Fig.1: Shared and local cultural strengths in Gen Y

II. WHO ARE GEN Y

They are not a group of homogenous clones. It is made up of individuals with a wide range of skills and behaviours. Yet some common trends are appearing in both this generation and the workplace that require attention and analysis. Gen Y is the same across the world. It is the gap with their managers that creates the differences (Fig.1).

A. Offers to Gen Y

Educational and training package that would provide them with learning basic foreign language skills and processes about trends, discontinuities, uncertainties and how

- They can be used to develop pictures of how the future might turn out.
- To develop alternative views of the future from a global, regional, national, community and personal perspective, and determine preferred futures.
- To develop skills in identifying future opportunity areas that they could aspire to from both the career and societal perspectives.

Firstly, having knowledge of English is not only to get a good job. It is rapidly becoming a “global language” [3]. It is the fastest growing language with more people speaking it than ever. The importance of English cannot be described in words. All the books on higher education of every branch of knowledge are written in English. To earn vast knowledge and higher education in any branch, students are to take the help from those books [4]. Today more than 80% of all the information in the world's computers is in English. Ours is an age of globalization. Many foreign guests and delegates come to our country.

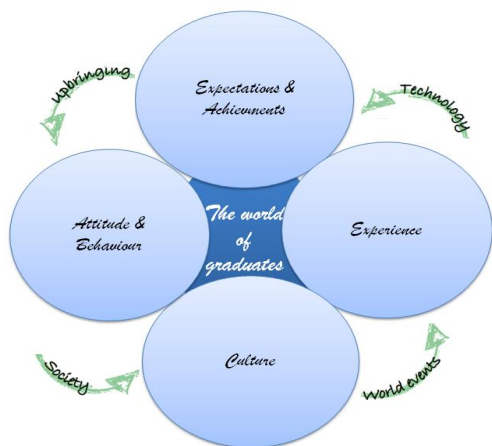


Fig.2: Key themes for empowering Gen Y.

Students need to have the knowledge of English to communicate with them. Moreover Working knowledge of the English language can create many opportunities in international markets and regions.

B. Research

The emphasis on English Language is enormously increasing as an effective medium of communication in all sectors the World over. The focus of the students and the teachers is to improve proficiency in English communication skills and developing Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) skills [5]. Studies by Stanford Research Institute and the Carnegie Mellon Foundation among Fortune 500 CEOs found that 75% of long term job success depended on people skills and only 25% on technical skills. This is true at other levels as well [6]. For effective performance in the workplace, companies need their employees to have not only domain knowledge, technical and analytical skills, but also the skills to deal with the external world of clients, customers, vendors, the government and public; and to work in a collaborative manner with their colleagues. So, soft skills play an extremely effective role in the life of an individual regarding his career, thereafter the demand for development and growth of soft skills has increased.

III. KEY THEMES FOR EMPOWERING GEN Y

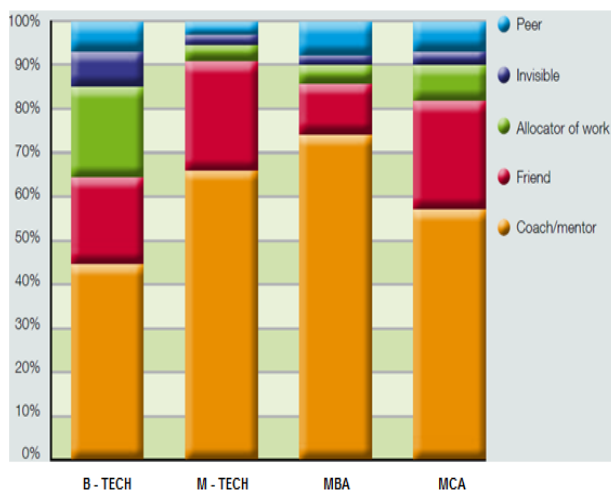


Fig.3: Young graduate's expected ideal relationship with their managers.

Rapid changes in technology, communication, human resourcing and business models, combined with shifting

political and cultural norms provide a very different background to Gen Y's workplace when compared to that of their parents. It has also meant that Gen Y is dealing with bosses who struggle to adapt to the approach to work that young people bring. There is puzzlement and sometimes frustration on both sides, who view the world of work through different lenses. As the Baby Boomers and Generation X make way for the leaders of the future, all generations need to review their differences and find new ways of working for the future. The content of the four sections in (Fig.2) is explored in more depth in the full report and includes:

- Expectations of graduates, achievements and external influences
- Work experience, development and maturity
- National and corporate culture
- Attitudes and behaviour, relationships and work/life balance.

A. Expectations and Achievements

Graduates expect responsibility and support and believe they need development in technical skills whereas managers expect them to fit into the culture, work hard and develop their emotional intelligence and people skills. 40% - 70% of graduates want their managers as a coach or mentor (Fig.3).

B. Experience

Graduates are missing out on in-depth experience at work due to rapid job changes and are not gaining the decision making skills needed as future leaders. Gen Y needs development in soft skills, particularly face-to-face behaviour. Office etiquette, respect, teamwork and political behaviour are important areas for development [7].

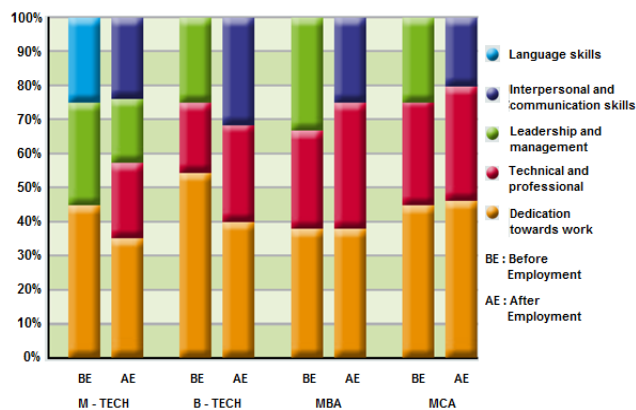


Fig.4: Missing skills in young graduates.

If things do not work out at one organization, they will move on. They don't feel a need to go through the pains of rectifying the problems. Progression is based on competence and performance, not on time. They want and need coaching and mentoring from other staff to improve these people skills and to help them take more ownership for their own development (Fig.4). Changes in skills sets are needed [8]. Translating increasing demand for products, both old and new, into jobs is not straightforward. First, workers must have the skills required for new production structures, and workers at all levels need enhanced skills [9].



For example, workers transitioning from agriculture to entry-level jobs in industry or services need basic literacy, numeracy and various soft skills. Strengthening education systems, especially primary education, is key to this process. However, secondary and post-secondary systems are important, too, as the burgeoning industry and services sectors will need capable workers for technical, managerial and leadership positions [10].

C. Culture

There are two aspects to culture – the national culture of the country or region, and the internal culture of the organization. These changes were having a major impact and challenging some of the more traditional cultural behaviours as the global business world shrinks. At the same time national culture was seen as core strength in business success and in particular in respectful conduct in today’s fast-paced world. We can look out the window and see first world infrastructure. It is very easy to change buildings. It is very difficult to change people. Gen Y craves public recognition for work well done. It is important to fit to the corporate culture and to review that culture to see

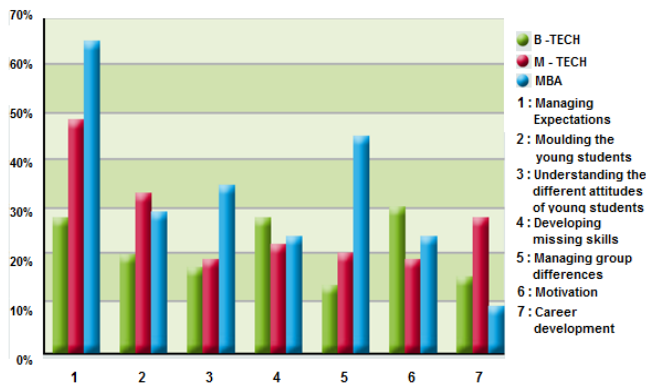


Fig.5: Biggest challenges for the teachers.

what is fundamental to the organization and which practices are no longer important. Without eliminating the old practice it is needed to blend in both old and new.

D. Attitudes and Behaviour

There are a number of areas where young people and managers have widely different attitudes, and these differing approaches impact both productivity and longevity in graduate jobs. Key areas from this research include:

- Views on the graduate/manager relationship
- Attitudes to progression
- Respect and trust
- Communication
- Feedback – both positive and negative
- Work/life balance
- Focus on self vs. focus on team/organization.

Graduates felt that many leaders were more focused on heading for retirement and unlikely to champion change. The managers on the other hand admired the intelligence and energy of their graduates but struggled on many other fronts with them. They saw them as seeking personal fame and recognition with less of a focus on teamwork and less respect for experience. Graduates do not ‘live to work’ and want both

interesting work and plenty of leisure time. Graduates do not want this lifestyle and that creates a challenge for talent management and succession planning initiatives (Fig.5).

IV. EXPERIMENT

The survey was completed in 12 Engineering Institutions with a total of 4320 respondents of whom 2000 were B-Tech, 500 were M-Tech, 1000 were MCA and 820 were MBA students. The above results show the effective assessment of the life skills from the young graduates through these four key themes. In addition to this the Communication skills, Intra and

Table. I: Assessment of LSRW Skills.

S. No:	Skills	Assessing techniques	Percentage of assessing the skills from the students
1	Writing Skills	Precise writing, Note making, Letter writing, Technical Report writing, Notices/Circulars Agenda and Minutes of a Meeting, E-Mail etiquette, Essay writing.	67
2	Reading Skills	Comprehensive reading, Essay reading, Find, select, sort, summarize and link information from a variety of sources?	70
3	Speaking Skills	JAM sessions, Turn coat, Group discussions, Public speaking.	60
4	Listening Skills	Speeches, Lectures, Attentive listening exercises, Hearing modules.	65

Interpersonal skills and the LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) skills were assessed from the students with various effective techniques exercised by them in the English Language Communication Skills Laboratory and classrooms. The Table. I summarize it. Table. II: summarizes the skills which are in high demand to be assessed from the graduates over the next five to ten years. These are obtained from a pilot survey conducted on the Human Resources professionals of different corporate sectors. Percentages reflect respondents who believe that digital skills and agile thinking skills will be enhanced only with the help of one’s inter- and intrapersonal skills [11]. To sum up, Soft skills are definitely more in demand and will continue to be so in the next five to ten years as stated earlier. Finally this is the best modus operandi to carve a niche for Gen Y learners when pitted against the scenario of global operating skills.

Table. II: Skills in high demand over the next five to ten years.

Digital Skills				
Digital Business Skills	Ability to work Virtually	Understanding of Corporate IT software and systems	Digital design skills	Ability to use social media and "Web 2.0"
50.60%	44.90%	40.10%	35.20%	29.30%
Agile Thinking Skills				
Ability to consider and prepare multiple scenarios	Innovation	Dealing with complexity and ambiguity	Managing paradoxes, balancing opposing views	Ability to see the "big picture"
54.80%	46.00%	42.90%	40.90%	15.30%
Interpersonal and Communication skills				
Co-creativity and Brainstorming	Relationship building (with customers)	Teaming (including virtual teaming)	Collaboration	Oral and written communication
48.30%	47.40%	44.90%	30.40%	29.00%
Global Operating skills				
Ability to manage diverse employees	Understanding international markets	Ability to work in multiple overseas locations	Foreign language Skills	Cultural sensitivity
49.10%	46.00%	37.50%	36.10%	31.50%



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