



Training the engineering students in soft skills through J.K.Rowling's 'Harry potter and the philosopher's stone'

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 5 August 2011;

Received in revised form:

21 December 2014;

Accepted: 9 January 2015;

Keywords

Soft Skills,
Assertive Harry,
Passive Behaviour,
Family Milieu.

ABSTRACT

A novel depicts a wide range of imaginary characters concerning the behaviour of human beings in real life. An individual who takes delight in interpreting novels can gain knowledge and obtain worldly wisdom. Also, since the reader is exposed to several situations, most of them being real-life circumstances, he/she gets an opportunity to acquire and enhance the soft skill sets required for both personal and professional lives. What is resolutely believed by the employers and colleges these days is that a student of technology must possess few most important identities of soft skills which cannot be overlooked, especially the soft skills like communication skills, leadership qualities, time management, interpersonal skills and presentation skills. Offering training in soft skills through children's literature facilitates the students in putting up their behavioural skills in a superior style.

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Introduction

Significance of soft skills cannot be denied in this age of information and knowledge acquisition because all the businesses involve establishing good relationship with customers. This paper scrutinises the soft skills namely assertiveness and aggressiveness in J.K. Rowling's 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone' and also describes how these set of skills can be acquired to the apex through Literature. It also suggests some techniques to impart soft skills to engineering students to enhance their employability skills and presents the outcome of an experiment conducted to assess the students' acquisition of soft skills through reading Harry Potter Novels and watching the movies taken on those novels.

Soft Skills – Definition and Significance

Soft skills are basically people skills or behavioural skills. These skills are non technical personal skills that facilitate one to behave well in an organisation. They refer to a person's individual qualities like love, kindness, anger etc., which are partly present by birth and communication skill, presentation skills etc., which are partly acquired.

Soft skills include personal personality traits, social graces, and facility with language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism that mark people to varying degrees. Soft skills compliment hard skills which are the technical requirements of a job. (Soft skill.blogspot.com/2008/021)

Soft skills also refer to the huddle of behavioural skills like responsibility, confidence, friendliness, self-control, honesty, team building, management skill, negotiating talent, customer satisfaction, working with cultural diversity and also possessing or developing qualities such as optimism and assertiveness. Some of the soft skills at workplace are leadership qualities, assertiveness, communication skills, time management, interpersonal skills, stress management, self control, decision making, creativity, lateral thinking, problem solving, conflict handling, listening skills and presentation skills.

Today's corporate employees are put up with great challenges in managing varied circumstances. They have to

lever the competitive market, latest technology, different human resources and globalisation. Soft skills are obligatory for the success of employees, employers and also for the institution as they distinguish the best organisation from the rest.

No longer just dependent on financial capital or capital equipment, today's organisations need human capital (employees experience, skills and creative ideas) to be used as leverage for competitive advantage. (Fred Luthans, Organisational Behavior)

In order to survive and thrive in the highly competitive environment, organisations require employees who are quick to adapt, creative at problem solving and good at relation building. An employee with ample soft skills is considered an asset as he/she creates a conducive work atmosphere.

The nature of today's jobs demands exposition of creativity, confidence, assertiveness and team building. To be successful in workplace, hard skills or technical knowledge alone is not enough. Soft skills or people skills are needed for the employees to mould their character, to manage conflicts, to deal with the customers and to work with mutual understanding with one's contemporaries. The present scenario at the job market proves that a potential recruit with soft skills stands a very good chance in today's competition for and at jobs. So, one has to build an equally strong competence in soft skills to be an efficient team member and a much sought after employee.

Soft Skills for the Edification of Engineering Students

It is widely documented and well known that there is a real challenge on the demand side for the supply of people with adequate soft skills.

There is a need for young engineers to become competent in soft skills invariably for effective communication and performance at their jobs because engineers appointed as professionals lack the required soft skills even though they are technically qualified.

"The highly advanced Mathematical and analytical brain may not be much of a communicator". (Dr.Sharath Kumar Variyar 2008)

During the previous decades, educational institutions have been focusing their attention on imparting technical skills to their students and have neglected the soft skills. As a result, Students have been awarded degrees without becoming industry ready. But, nowadays, most of the colleges have become aware of the need for training the students in soft skills to face campus recruitments and have started enriching their students' mind with soft skills to fulfill the demand in the workplace.

Pervasiveness of Soft Skills in Literature

Literature, which has got soft skills incorporated in it, plays a vital role in every sphere of the human lives. A person who cherishes reading literature will realise cent percent of soft skills within himself not only in words but also in action because if actions do not articulate soft skills then words will never communicate effectively. Since literature is the collective body of literary productions, it has enormous knowledge and fancy preserved in writing. According to C.S Lewis "Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides and in this respect, it irrigates the desert that our lives have already become". The beauty of literature can be understood and acknowledged through the process of reading and listening about it.

From Chaucer to Twenty first century literary works, literature has got wide-ranging collection of works in various genres like drama, poetry, essays, fiction and non fiction. Each of these terms has got its own readers and people those who are fascinated towards a particular kind of reading will edify themselves through the focused work. For example, if a reader is more interested in Chaucer's 'The Canterbury Tales', he/she will undeniably get inspired and attracted towards any of the characters in the work by identifying himself/herself with the nature of the character. The reader might strengthen that uniqueness which is presented through the character. For example, Chaucer describes about the Knight in his general preface that the Knight represents the ideal medieval Christian man at arms. The Knight has participated in no less than fifteen of the great crusades of his era. The narrator deeply admires him for the banner he holds and the character he explores and those heroic qualities are recognized as unique characteristics in olden days and it is termed as soft skills in the present scenario.

The current popularity of science fiction and fantasy provides an opportunity to introduce students to enjoy literature and the truths that are presented in fabled form reflect reality which will enable the youngsters to comprehend the happenings around them and respond to them better. For instance, in 'Pygmalion', George Bernard Shaw illustrates the concept of self gratifying prediction. The Pygmalion effect, or Rosenthal effect, refers to the phenomenon in which the greater the expectation placed upon people, often children or students and employees, the better they perform. The effect is named after Pygmalion, a Cypriot sculptor in a narrative by Ovid in Greek mythology, who fell in love with a female statue he had carved out of ivory. The Pygmalion effect is a form of self-fulfilling prophecy, and, in this respect, people with poor expectations internalize their negative label, and those with positive labels succeed accordingly. Within sociology, the effect is often cited with regard to education and social class. Even renowned writers like Francis Bacon and William Shakespeare derive out the purpose of life and character through their writings. Bacon claimed that any moral action is the action of the human will, which is governed by belief and spurred on by the passions.

Good habit is what aids men in directing their will towards the good. Similarly, Shakespeare's sonnets are concerned with love, beauty, poetry, and, perhaps most pervasively, the force that the passage of time exerts upon all the three. In Sonnet 116, the narrator tells the "young man" that it is in the capacity of humans to adapt to the force of time according to the seasons of human life. (Manoah, JJS, 2011) Reading literature not only develops the skills but also enables the personal development of the students.

Imparting soft skills through novel J.K. Rowling's 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone'

Explaining the theories of soft skills to college students through lecturing alone will not serve the purpose. Students may become unresponsive and teachers may find it difficult to explicate soft skills as it refers to behavioural skills. Inculcating soft skills through reading a novel or story and watching a movie will help them understand and analyse behaviours better than the monotonous talk as the story or the novel or the movie depicts different characters in it.

The Harry Potter stories will lend a hand in serving this purpose because they are adventurous and famous and being read by people all over the world. The hero, Harry, is admired by both the young and the old as he faces the challenges at home and also in his school right from his childhood and overcomes them brilliantly. J.K.Rowling, the author of the series, has said in her bibliography that she has written the novel not only for children but also for the adults. Each character of the story demonstrates numerous soft skills like leadership, team work, assertiveness etc., and students will find it more interesting and useful if they read the stories and understand the nature of the characters. A wide range of innovative training methods can be adopted to make the students comprehend and acquire different soft skills that are required for the workplace, through the novel.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

J.K. Rowling's series of novels with a central character named Harry Potter is a wonderful fantasy literature for children entwined with the latest science and technology which can be used to coach college students, especially engineering students in soft skills as they are closely associated with the latest trends in science and technology. 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone' is the first novel in the Harry Potter series. In this novel, Harry Potter is described like an orphan and young wizard with magical powers who studies at the school of witchcraft and wizardry after so many obstacles. In the beginning of the novel, Harry is instituted under the care of his only living relatives, Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon, following the sudden death of his parents, James Potter and Lilly Potter who hail from the heritage of magic blood. The Dursleys, who are the strong disbelievers of magic and magicians, never let know Harry anything about his true self. On his eleventh birthday, Harry Potter receives weird letters from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, telling him that he has been chosen as one of the future students of the school. Hagrid, the gigantic man who brings the letter, introduces Harry into the real circumstances of his life: Harry's parents have been wizard and a witch; they have been murdered by the evil wizard Voldemort. Harry survives with a lightning-shaped scar on his forehead from that incident. Since he survives from the assault as a baby and also somehow deprives Voldemort from his powers, he has been famed in the wizarding world ever since.

Mary Pharr (2002) in her critical essay 'Harry Potter as Hero-in-Progress' compares Harry with Arthur, the son of

Uruk's King Lugalbanda and Luke, the son of Jedi Knight Anakin Skywalker, and says about the real condition of Harry. "As for Harry, he seems to be like Arthur and Luke; instinctively decent but initially unaware of both the mysteries within his past and the powers in his person" (Lana A. Whited 2002). Likewise, despite his heritage of being the direct heir of exceptional father and mother, James Potter and Lilly Potter who are famous wizards, Harry leads the miserable days of his early life without knowing his powers.

Harry lives a depressed life in the midst of his guardians who are 'muggles' (non-magical blood). Rubeus Hagrid, the keeper of the keys at Hogwarts School, helps Harry to recognise his talents and go and join Hogwarts. After Harry joins the magic school, he becomes aware of his magical powers, discovers himself as a wizard, and finds good friends like Ron Wesley and Hermione Granger at Hogwarts. Discovering the new dimension of his life there and with the help of his friends, he stops the challenging comeback of the evil wizard Voldemort who is described as 'He Who Must Not Be Named'. Voldemort, who has killed Harry's parents, tries to kill young Harry too and fails in his attempt as Harry's mother protects him with her magical power and the result is the scar in Harry's forehead.

Harry explores the magical world and builds up his skill to handle the complicated situations in the school. The first part of the novel ends with Harry's second clash with Lord Voldemort, who in his quest for immortality, yearns to gain the power of the Philosopher's Stone.

Transformation of passive Harry to assertive Harry Passive Behaviour

The novel 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone /Sorcerer's Stone' unfolds the ways in which Harry acquires the soft skills as he happens to meet with different problems in his aunt's house and also in his school. The reader is introduced to many situations throughout the novel and how they transform **Harry from passive to assertive nature.**

Unassertive or passive behaviour is a sort of behaviour that accepts whatever happens without reacting or trying to brawl against it. Passive people cannot perceive their goals as they neither know what they actually necessitate nor the actions they should initiate for their accomplishment. They leave their lives to the preference of other people to dictate them. Finally, they are placed into a state of depression.

Passive employees usually stumble early in their careers with the faith that if they speak up they cannot attain a promotion or praise. When people recognise that someone is passive, they seize the advantage and formulate unreasonable demands as they make out that passive people cannot say 'no'. Passive people submit to the wishes of others and hold their own wishes suppressed within themselves. They possess no power over their own lives and on the whole, they survive in a state of despondency and unassertiveness. This type of behavior is called passive behaviour.

A majority of the population – approximately 60% is passive-defensive. They protect themselves with avoidance, being dependent on others, trying to get others to accept them and using policies and procedures as a safety net. Therefore, unless you have skewed your hiring and selection, your workforce is 60% passive-defensive. And in fact a number of leadership teams contain passive defensive thinkers swell. (<http://UniqueDevelopment.com> 2009)

Passive or non-assertive behaviour comes primarily due to family background and lack of assistance by the parents. It is an

evasion of behaviour or an accommodation of other's wishes without standing for one's own right.

Acquiescence owing To family milieu

A child's behaviour gets moulded due to various reasons like age, family background, education, friends, financial position etc. Among all these factors, family environment plays a vital role in building a child's mental and physical growth. As a child grows up, parents have greater liability of nurturing the child with love, happiness, honesty and self confidence. Many children fall victim to family tribulations and their behaviour gets affected due to parental negligence. These children, even if they mature, develop either the submissive thoughts or aggressive approach due to their brought up. Even after acquiring education, many are not able to regulate their attitude and they are put into trouble when they face the world, especially at their work. It is difficult for them to deal with different types of people and varying trends in the work place. They mislay their jobs because of their approach. Their mindset can be customised to some extent through proper guidance and the soft skills training can help them realise and acquire the essential outlook to acclimatize them to the workplace. Thus, family milieu is one of the reasons for submissive or passive behaviour.

Harry's submissive nature in the novel

The novel, 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone' displays numerous soft skills all the way through its characters. To commence with, Harry Potter who is portrayed as a passive character feels low-esteemed under the control of his aunt and uncle. His wishes are censored and his queries are unanswered whenever Harry enquires about his parents or about the scar on his forehead to his guardians. Out of the belief that practising magic will reduce the honour of their family in the society and also due to the aversion towards Harry's parents, who are magicians, his guardians ill-treat Harry. Even though Harry is aunt Petunia's own sister's son, they either answer harshly or reject his wishes and shout at him for simple reasons. Marry Pharr (2002) clearly states in her critical essay that, "Actually, 'raises' is the wrong word here; 'torments' is the more appropriate verb for the Dursleys treatment of Harry" (Lana A. Whited 2002). The atrocious treatment and abuses by the guardians and their son Dudley turn Harry into a passive person.

Harry is given least importance in the house and is made to wear only the old dresses of Dudley. The childhood denial by the guardians makes Harry dejected and passive. Also, he misses the support and assistance of his parents as they are killed by Voldemort. Age is also one of the reasons for his passivity because Harry is only eleven years old as the novel begins. Children of that age gain awareness about the world and build up their skills only from their elders especially from their parents and teachers. Anne Hiebert Alton (2003) explains the status of Harry in the novel in her critical essay that

At the opening of Sorcerer's Stone, Harry is quite literally a child- a baby, in fact –with no knowledge of the world or his special powers; as the first few chapters progress, he starts to become aware not only of his orphan status and resulting poor lot in life (who in their right mind would want to be stuck with the Dursleys) but also that odd things seem to happen around him (Elizabeth E. Heilman 2003)

The merciless treatment of the guardians at a very young age disturbs Harry and the trepidation towards his guardians hinders the growth of his assertive attitude. An incident which is the very beginning of the story reveals the unassertive

behaviour of Harry. Harry is found asleep in his bed and in the early morning, aunt Petunia shouts at him to wake up to look after the kitchen.

'His aunt was back outside the door.

"Are you up yet?" she demanded.

"Nearly" said Harry. "Well, get a move on, I want you to look after the bacon. And don't you dare let it burn, I want everything perfect on Dudley's birthday".

Harry groaned,

"What did you say?" his aunt snapped through the door.

"Nothing, nothing..." said Harry. (Rowling.J.K 2001)

Harry is scared of his big uncle, discourteous aunt and their mischievous son. He leads a gloomy childhood with his guardians by controlling his emotions, feelings and does not recognise his powers till he meets Rubeus Hagrid, keeper of keys and grounds at school. Thus, Harry's passive nature is reflected in the manner in which he handles the plight caused by his aggressive guardians and their son.

Harry Potter can be compared with Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer, in the sense that both lose their parents and live under the care of guardians. Tom Sawyer is an active and energetic young boy like Harry. But unlike Harry, Tom is assertive from the beginning and does not hesitate to express his opinion. He acts assertively and cleverly handles the punishment given by his aunt for disobeying her. This is due to the fact that Aunt Polly is strict but not cruel and rude to Tom Sawyer as Harry's guardians are. Aunt Polly punishes Tom when he does some mistakes to bring about good changes in him (Mark Twain 1920). On the other hand, uncle Vernon and aunt Petunia treat Harry like a slave and humiliate Harry's wishes. This attitude of the guardians and the family situations make Harry passive and Tom Sawyer assertive.

Assertive behaviour

Assertiveness is expressing one's opinions or wishes impressively with self-confidence without hurting others' feelings. Assertive people understand their rights and responsibilities and stand up for them. Assertive people do not get threatened and do not allow others to control their behaviour. Having an active orientation towards their lives, they approach the problems positively and project a positive image of themselves.

Assertiveness is the process of expressing one's thoughts and feelings in an appropriate way without endangering the rights and respect of others. Being assertive is generally the most productive behaviour. (M.S.Shookla 2004).

Assertive people do not feel shy or hesitant to solicit clarification from others because they feel confident about themselves. Since assertiveness is one of the key strengths that support young people become mature and responsible adults, assertiveness is a necessary quality desired for today's employees to excel in their career.

Buoyancy in the Novel

Harry is invited to study at Hogwarts and Uncle Vernon destroys number of letters which come to Harry from Hogwarts. In order to stay away from lots of letters arriving from Hogwarts everyday inviting Harry to join the school of witchcraft and wizardry and also to hide the reality of Harry's life, Uncle Vernon moves to an island. Hagrid appears there and reveals the secret that Dursleys have been concealing from Harry. Harry comes to know about his powers with the help of Hagrid and understands that he is a wizard by birth. As Rowling narrates The giant squeezed his way into the hut and said,

But yeh must know about yer mum and dad,' he said, 'I mean they're famous. You're famous'.

I'm a what?' gasped Harry.

'A Wizard, O'course' said Hagrid' (Rowling.J.K 2001)

Hagrid discloses the secrets that Harry is a wizard by birth and shows the invitation from Hogwarts School asking Harry to join in the magic school. Harry realises his power and from then on, Harry's attitude turns assertive as he gains confidence that he can overcome any situation as Anne Hiebert Alton (2003) rightly sums up in her critical essay 'Playing the Genre Game' that

As the series develops, Harry experiences a number of events that leads to his growth, change and maturation; he learns that he is a wizard, and that he is already famous for having vanquished Voldemort (though he has no idea how he managed to do so); he leaves the world of muggles for Hogwarts to begin his formal education and he adapts to the many challenges of this new environment (Elizabeth E. Heilman 2003)

The positive mindset makes Harry feel that he is strong enabling him to perform difficult task. Harry speaks boldly and at the same time courteously about his interest in joining the magic school to his guardians. Harry does not affront anybody in the family through his actions or deeds but politely expresses his desire to join the magic school which exhibits his assertive attitude. Through Hagrid, Harry visits Diagon Alley, a magical shopping place in London which sells all the magical things that are needed to learn magic. Also, he becomes aware of his wealth which has been deposited by his parents in the Gringotts Bank in the Diagon Alley. Hagrid helps Harry to buy books and other equipment he requires for studying at Hogwarts. Harry's confidence level increases thereafter because his parents have kept him enough money for his studies.

When the day comes for Harry to go to school, Uncle Vernon leaves him alone in the station and bids good-bye with a malicious smile. Harry is not scared of being alone and finds the hiding platform 93/4 to catch the train to Hogwarts and boards the train with the help of Weasley family and makes new friends in the train. Harry is able to do all these only because of his self confidence. Thus, knowing his strength makes Harry assertive.

Harry goes on with assertive attitude in school also and behaves smartly. He involves himself enthusiastically in the magical lessons and games, builds friends and argues boldly against Mr.Snape when he teases him purposely in his class.

Once Harry puts aside Neville's remembrall from Malfoy. Malfoy throws Neville's remembrall in the sky challenging Harry to catch if he is capable of. Harry rushes boldly and flies high without minding the danger and catches the remembrall just in time before it falls down. Professor McGonagall notices Harry's power and permits him to participate in the match and Harry wins the Quidditch cup for his team. This attitude of Harry discloses his confidence which he has gained because of his assertive attitude. Thus, Harry's passive behaviour slowly turns assertive and he becomes courageous, smart, enthusiastic and self confident and wins the challenges after he realises his power.

According to Anne Hiebert Alton (2003), Rowling has avoided potential problems by making the series a typical bildungsroman (novel of formation) or erziehungsroman (novel of education). She says that

This genre focuses on the physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual development of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood, charting various situations and crises that lead to the

protagonist's maturity and recognition of his/her identity and place in the world (Elizabeth E. Heilman 2003)

Since the novel is about the challenges of real life situations, students can be made to acquire the required behavioural skills by conducting various group activities in the classroom. If they observe the transformation in Harry's character, the students will be stimulated to become a leader like Harry and build up their behavioural attitude so as to par with the qualities of the hero Harry in the novel. They will make out themselves with Harry and learn to use soft skills like assertiveness to face challenges and build relationships.

Aggressive behaviour

Aggressive behaviour is the behaviour which causes physical or mental suffering. Aggressive behaviour is an intentional behaviour exhibited to cause harm or destruction to others. Aggressive behaviour can be exposed in the open both physically and verbally. For example, punching a person is physical aggressiveness, scolding and insulting amount to verbal aggressiveness.

Aggressive people are demanding, rude and dominating. They want their own way and force to gain control. Aggressive people are very competitive and do not like to lose. They will not hesitate to cheat and gain control. Since they have inherent inferiority complex, they try hard to prove their worth by violating other's right (M.S.Shookla).

Aggressive people earn hatred both in their family and also in the society as they always speak lies and create problems wherever they go. In any organisational situation, unremitting use of aggressive behaviour by managers or supervisors lead to conflicts and the employees cannot work peacefully which will in turn ruin the whole ambience.

Belligerence in the Novel

Normally, children turn aggressive due to improper parental nurturing and laxity. Dudley is the only child of Vernon and Petunia Dursley. He is a fat, mean, challenging, demanding, dictating and rude character. Dudley harasses and teases Harry at home and at school. He is a spoilt and selfish child who constantly wants attention and material possessions. Diana Mertz Hsieh (2004) in her critical essay about 'Dursley Duplicity' says that Dursleys' blind support spoils Dudley to the core. They do not control him when he commits mistake. Instead, they say 'there is no finer boy anywhere' Eleven year old Dudley punches Harry in the nose, throws tantrums, and cannot add 2+37 –all without provoking anger or concern in Petunia (David Baggett 2004)

The aggressive behaviour of Dudley creates nuisance to Harry under many situations because he often torments Harry, taking after the example set by his parents. On Dudley's birthday, uncle Vernon plans for an outing to visit a zoo leaving Harry in Mrs. Fogg's house. But Mrs. Fogg disagrees to take care of Harry as she has kaput her leg and when the same is said to Mrs. Vernon through phone, Dudley becomes stunned. While Vernon and Petunia are worried about Harry, Dudley pretends to cry, playing on his mother's habit of giving him whatever he desires. He starts crying bitterly and in between sobs Dudley comments that he does not want his birthday to be spoilt by taking Harry along with them. When his mother turns the other side, Dudley gives Harry a nasty smile to show his tomfoolery which is a clear sign of his aggressiveness.

On another instance, when uncle Vernon and aunt Petunia allocate Dudley's second bedroom to Harry according to the instruction specified in the letter from Hogwarts, Dudley bursts

out and claims that he needs the room. In an attempt to change his parents' mentality and not to provide the room for Harry, Dudley screams, hits his father with his smelting stick, throws up the stick on purpose, kicks his mother and throws his pet tortoise through the greenhouse roof. Again this rude behaviour of Dudley clearly indicates his aggressive behaviour.

Once again, on the advent of the post near the doorstep, Uncle Vernon asks Dudley to collect it from the hall. Seeing the letter from Hogwarts, Dudley yells that Harry has received another letter from Hogwarts and runs with the letter. Uncle Vernon struggles much to get the letter from Dudley as he wants to hide the truth from Harry.

With a strangled cry, Uncle Vernon leapt from his seat and down the hall, Harry right behind him. Uncle Vernon had to wrestle Dudley to the ground to get the letter from him, which is made difficult by the fact that Harry had grabbed Uncle Vernon around the neck from behind. After a minute of confused fighting, in which everyone got hit a lot by the Smeltings stick, Uncle Vernon straightened up, gasping for breath, with Harry's letter clutched in his hand'. (Rowling J.K 2001)

There are many circumstances that stand as a proof for Dudley's aggressive behaviour in the story. When students are made to read this story or watch the movie, it is certain that they will understand how aggressiveness makes people unhappy and they will perk up their attitude if they are aggressive.

In a work place, the team member's performance is very important for the accomplishment of the task. It doesn't matter how great the best member of a team performs or how efficient the leader of a group is, but the teams perform in the vicinity of the level of their weakest member. If full team cooperation is anticipated, then the person with aggressive attitude towards others will slow the group's performance. Teams tremendously perform as their members behave. A bad apple can not only spoil but destroy the barrel. Aggressive coworkers are the most frustrating and intolerable people in any workplace as they spoil the whole workplace atmosphere. The most awful case of aggressive behavior involves destructive attitudes such as pessimism, resentment, procrastination, chronic lateness, and intentional ineptitude.

Methods to be adopted to impart soft skills to the students

Harry Potter novel can be used to inculcate soft skills to the students through the following activities:

Two groups of students consisting of 25 each were taken for this activity. First two chapters of the novel were taken for this activity.

Step 1 Lecture: The whole class was focused to regular lectures about the story and also about the soft skills that were associated in the novel. Firstly, both the groups of students were explained about the gist of the story of the first two chapters of the novel and also the soft skills to be taught in that. For example, the teacher explained elaborately about passiveness, assertiveness and aggressiveness that underlie in a particular part of the novel. The teacher explained the positive and negative impacts of these attitudes.

Step 2 Reading: One group was given the script of those chapters and was asked to read the plot and answer the questions about the soft skills in those chapters.

Step 3 Movie: Next group was shown a scene from the movie of those particular chapters and questions were given to write answers about the soft skill in that part of the movie.

(The performance of the students in answering the questions on soft skills after reading the novel and watching the relevant

movie has been depicted as bar diagrams in figure 1 and figure 2)

Step 4 Role Play: Students were divided into groups and one group was allotted a part of the novel that was to be enacted. Each student of the group was allotted a character and was given time to discuss their roles to be played and the soft skill demonstrated in it. The teacher helped the group by explaining the soft skills of the main characters. For example, the teacher spoke about Harry's passive behaviour and said how it was demonstrated in the novel. Also, the teacher narrated how Harry's passive behaviour turned assertive nature due to Hagrid's intervention. The teacher elucidated the ways in which Hagrid motivated Harry to turn out to be assertive to achieve success in his life and became the hero of the play. Then, the students started recognising the skills explained in the novel and then initiated the role plays accordingly. Another group was asked to observe each of the roles and was asked to describe the skills highlighted in that particular character.

Step 5 Group Discussion: Then the teacher discussed the advantages of positive skills like assertiveness and disadvantages of negative skills like aggressiveness and passiveness that were acted out and conducted group discussion on each of the skills to discuss the practical usage of the skill in the industry. Shared activities like lecturing, role play and group discussion enabled learners to explore different soft skills on their own.

Experiment: As a part of the research, a test was conducted in the novel for two groups of students of 25 each to read the novel and to watch the movie. Questions were framed to test the level of understanding of soft skill values.

Questions

1. Name the characters of the play.
2. What are the skills exhibited by the characters in the scene?
3. What are the traits of assertiveness?
4. What are the eccentricities of aggressiveness?
5. Is Harry passive or assertive in the beginning? Give reasons.
6. What is the nature of Dudley's character in the story? Explain.
7. Which is the essential skill needed for the working place - Assertive or Aggressive? Explain.
8. Is it necessary for the college students to acquire soft skills?
9. Do you think that the students who have soft skills will perform better in their workplace?
10. How do you find yourself - Assertive, Passive or Aggressive?

Results: The study shows that the students have understood the benefits of acquiring soft skills illustrated in the novel. They have answered the questions ornately with constructive points even though reading took more time than watching movie. The level of soft skills acquisition by the students through movie watching and reading the novel is presented in the bar diagrams (Figure 1 and Figure 2)

Marks scored by the students in the test through reading are depicted in figure.1. 10 students have scored between 80 and 90, 7 students between 70 and 80, 3 students between 60 and 70 and 5 students between 50 and 60.

Students find it more interesting to watch the movie and are able to identify the skills devoid of intricacy. Even the slow learners are able to learn the concepts well and realise the need to acquire those skills to make them industry ready. Marks scored by the students in acquiring soft skills through movie

watching are depicted in figure.2. 10 students have scored between 80 and 90, 7 students between 70 and 80. 5 students between 60 and 70 and 3 students between 50 and 60.

The overall performance is almost equal when watching movie and reading are compared. None of the students have scored below 50 in both the activities. All the students have invariably performed well which indicates that teaching soft skills through reading novel and watching relevant movies will help students get their hands on the skills better. Teachers, facilitators and trainers of soft skills can make use of Harry Potter novels to train the students in soft skills through different activities and can mould them into better workforce.

The emergence of IT sectors demands that the employees should be of the best caliber and so there is an urgent need to obtain soft skills along with technical skills among the students to cope up with the competitive work environment. Since colleges play an imperative role in equipping students with such skills, the curriculum can be designed in such a way that it meets the demands of corporate sectors. As 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone', serves as a wonderful source for the readers to explore the soft skills, introducing Harry Potter's novels in the curriculum can help the students acquire the soft skills required for the industry remarkably and interestingly.

Conclusion

Thus, the characters in "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone" involve a variety of behavioural attitudes which will help students understand the values of positive skills and hone them to meet the demands of the employers who hire them. Introducing this novel to Engineering students will positively lend a hand in equipping them with relevant skills needed for their workplace. It can be rightly said that the exclusive characteristics which are called as soft skills can be acquired through Literature

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