**Let’s redefine soft skills**

[Shagufta Gul](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/shagufta-gul/" \o "More Articles by Shagufta Gul)

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Mam I can’t type but can give you the hand written answer was the response of a student of last semester doing his engineering degree from a university of information technology. The response left me wonderingin fact, as computer literacy is something assumed to be mandatory skill for all university students and specifically the ones being students in IT .Interestingly the way the intervieweewas responding to the questions during interview that was kind of robotic and reflected as if answers are memorized. In another event a training we came across a student leader of typical style ,who didn’t seem willing to take any directives by the facilitator as during a presentation he just stepped in and took the rostrum totally ignoring the presence of the training and justified that he was using his freedom of expression .It was clearly evident that the faculty did support him as a role model leader who was questioning but it was also obvious that may be non of the mentors guided him towards the use of this right and the solution of the issues highlighted by him.A future leader may be with his tunnel vision, which will be reflected of course in decision making and his overall approach towards society andif I am not wrong such attitudes and behaviors are visible on media irrespective of the age group and genders.

Such situations leave one brooding that what is being imparted actually in our higher educational institutions to the future leaders? What are the missing links? Is it a total fault of the student or somewhere the faculty is also responsible for this misguided behaviors and misperceptions? Or there is anover dose of guidance in the name of Discipline and all the efforts are focused on minimizing the interaction between boys and girls? Thedeteriorating results of CSS are usually criticized and discussed attributed to the in efficiency of young, are students really incapable or there is ageneration gap between the aspirant and the paper checkers who are mostly the faculty members of our Public Universities influenced by the traditional teaching and learning trained on prohibition of questioning and critical thinking bringing forward the might is right philosophy? Is there any researchor collaborationbetween demand and supply when it comes to the number of graduates from different disciplines passing out yearly in bulks? Currently as per data available on HEC website for 2017 -18 , in 186 HEC recognized universities 881963 male students and 698905 female students are enrolled in public and private universities across Pakistan so are there any specific plans for this bulk to be accommodated in local markets ? The number of faculty members is around 15, 80868 bothmale andfemale including Non PHD 13693 female nonPh.D and 3524 PhDsand Male nonPhd19089male non PhD and PHD 11090 With such a huge human resource involved in both teaching and learning are the skills and capacity of the academia is in alignment with the demand of 21st century soft skills? Or a revamp is needed, as the students are a reflection of the mentors who are dealing them and it seems that at times it is more about the learning and reproducing of academic content instead of refining the soft skills.

Educational institutions need to promote intercultural cross, cultural interactions, along with minimum restrictions on cross gender studies

What are soft skills? Soft skills often known as “people skills”, these skills refer to the abilities required to interact amicably with others. They are personal attributes that affect your interaction and relationships with others.Soft skills are linked to emotional intelligence, but also include skills such as communication and listening, conflict resolution, positive relationships, collaboration and cooperation, likeability, civility and openness to feedback. Unfortunately the academia even at the higher education level is focusing more on hard skills and academic excellence with a class centric approach.

The development of these skills starts very much from home .Pakistani society is more of patriarchal style with the idea of might is right .Atypical house having an adult or two or guardian with all the decision making and dictating powers ,resultantly curtailing the thought process of the dominated ones .The imposed decision making not only hampers the critical thinking and decision making but also curtails the self awareness converting it into self negation.The child having many such skills stops nurturing and responding to the flashes of these attributes under the forced guidance.At School the dictatorship continues further in the similar manner where the teaching authority has the certificate to be always right and deviation from the instructions is almost a sin. There comes the college and university the dream of everystudent where he/she may enjoy the a bit freedom to explore the hidden potentials however ,they forget that the mentors are from the sameplanet brought up in the same might is right environment and they ultimately end up facing similar restrictions which started off from home . The semestersystem introduced and Bs programs in universities have the dual potential .On one side they keep the young people engaged in constant learning for high grades but in the mean time the learning closes as the semesteris closed.Whatever is the system there is hardly any emphasis on the preparationtowards the soft skills called the life skills which ultimately matter as the student enters his/ her practical life .The presentation skills ,interaction with new people ,responding to certain questions,agreeing to disagreement ,tolerating the difference of opinion plus care with both verbal and non verbal communication etc are the area’s most of our universities hardly take into consideration. The faculty members as the members of the society equally lack these skills as they are also in a race with time and schedules plus they themselves are victim and product of the might is right idea. Resultantly concerns and issues are raised and discussed generously as it has become our nationalbehavior, but there would hardly be any talk to find out the solution .The youth and even the old engaged on social media expressing their freedom of expression are a true reflection of the attitudes of the mentors and the society they are living in.

Education for skill development and effective civic engagement and system of education no matter it’s at primary secondary or higher level education, hashardly been a priority which is very much visible in a segmented set ups of the society, no matter it’s the faculty or it’s the youth .The National Curriculum does talk about the skill development at the school level but its

At university level again the confusion prevails with the idea of might is right and a closed box approach .The first and most important step is a rigorous program for Faculty skill development (all levels of education and specially higher education as the student enters the practical professional life .The need to unlearn to learn the 21st century skills lessons is the key as they are dealing with a huge bulk aforementioned .Self awareness.Educational institutions need to promote intercultural cross cultural interactions along with minimum restrictions on cross gender studies .Faculty needs to be real mentor instead of just remaining restricted to power point presentations and grades .Believe me the teacher always retains a key position no matter it’s a kindergarten or the highest level of studies Also soft skill development can be taken as aregular course with practical activities and realistic evaluation and that needs to continue for both the faculty members and the students.It’s never too late to start off .