Original Article

Understanding of Soft Skills and its Contribution to Employability for Undergraduate Youth

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Abstract: Soft skills are subjective and non-technical, soft skills improve technical, career, and academic skills, increasing employability. Academics define soft skills as emotional intelligence and relationships to solve organizational issues and improve performance. Soft talents, according to that are attributes or motivations that distinguish people with similar education and experience. Every year many students complete their undergraduate studies and come in the market in search of the jobs. There is always an employment gap between a job seeker and a job provider. This study explored experience of undergraduate youth on ways of learning soft skills and its contribution to employability. The study followed the qualitative study design with interpretive paradigm that is ideal to investigate the significance that individuals or groups attribute to a social or human situation. Interpretive research paradigm helped to engage with my research participants in the natural setting which explored on what they do, say and believe. The study site was Trichandra Campus which is a constituent campus under Tribhuvan University. It is in Ghantaghar, Kathmandu, In order to collect data from respondent’s narrative inquiry and in-depth interview has been used for the study where primary data has been collect. An unstructured (open-ended) and semi structured interviews, conducted informal conversation and did phone calls during the narrative inquiry. The study collected the experiences, beliefs, emotions and stories of my participants. I took the video and audio and also kept a field notes to keep all the track of my participants. Later transcribe the field notes, audio and video to generate the stories for data analysis. This research focused on uncovering the voices of youths on understanding of soft skills and its way of learning. Further, they also explain the contribution of soft skills to the employability. Therefore the study helps to find out different ways of learning of soft skills which is very important as it contributes to employability among the youths.

Keywords: soft skills, employability, undergraduate youth

1. INTRODUCTION

The gap between the academia and industry can be seen through human capital. It explains that education and skill level directly influences individual’s income. Education is a tool that helps to develop the human’s power to change the behavior, attitude and thinking through the right use of Knowledge and skills [1]. Furthermore, it is stated that this helps in the overall development of a person through learning and gaining knowledge, skills and mindsets. In this sense, having a good education is much necessary to the people for getting employment and prosperity for the country. In line of employment and prosperity, the essence of education is vital in every country [2]. The importance of education cannot be limited to one single goal. It teaches us on how to think, how to work, how to make decisions and eventually have a meaningful life [3]. Many countries in the modern
society understood the essence of education after the world war as they could not receive something tangible from the war [4]. After World War II, many countries went in the track of development and most of the countries had understood that the key to development is education. When I say the key to development in education, I mean to say that with education we can develop different knowledge, skills and mindset. With utilization of these knowledge and skills we can progress in life. While talking about the skills, I found out that hard skills and soft skills as two basic skills [5]. The specific skills that are associated with knowledge that develops the expertise to put theory into practice are considered to be hard skills [6]. Similarly, soft skills are the human abilities or the individual commitment that is displayed by a person and which makes them different from other person with same academics and experience [7]. Moreover, soft skills is a psychological construct, behavior and non-cognitive intelligences. The most necessary soft skills that are needed by an individual are teamwork, flexibility, positive attitude and social skills. This demonstrates the importance of soft skill in any form of the organizations. Therefore, the learning of soft skill is something very crucial that has to be incorporated in the education. Nowadays, many parents are aware about the ways of learning and search the best institution for better learning [8]. When we talk about ways of learning, we remember education and the academic institutions. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) identified majorly three forms of which fall under formal, informal and non-formal education ways [9]. The different methods from where one can learn are formal, informal and non-formal ways [10]. Whatever the form of learning is, the major idea of education is sharing of learning to develop certain traits and behaviors in life. It is not just about the college degree but the real application of what has been learnt in life. Some of the ways include online learning through the use of audio and video through internet [11]. Many organizations conduct trainings and development course for its employees, interns, and volunteers to develop the soft skills. Further in formal system there are Project Based Learning (PBL), Problem Based Learning (PBL) which are also integrated to develop the soft skills of students [12]. One of the way by which one can learn is reflection. By reflecting our own action, behaviors and experience one can develop the learning life decision making, problem solving, presentation etc. Therefore, having certain sets of skill is always going to contribute for the better employment opportunities in the market. Having employment opportunity means generating productivity in terms of money and materials. This helps to fulfill the basic need of a person and a family. When there is employment opportunity for people, they retain in the country and also pay taxes and contribute to the economy of the country. Thus education helps a person to develop skills and generate employment [13]. Different forms of education help for better employment. It is stated that the employability is the capacity and willingness of a person to remain and be available in the job market. It is about how a person places him/herself with certain set of skills in the job market and move independently within the market. Having such abilities, traits and behaviors enables a person to select and secure the jobs. This demonstrates that the education is the key which provides the knowledge and skills. This knowledge and skill can contribute to better work force [14]. A better work force means converting the human potential to unlock the economy of a country. When we see the types of workforce it can be grouped into white-collar jobs (academically sound people on high paying jobs) and blue-collar jobs (Particularly low paying labor jobs). Typically, white-collar jobs need more education and more soft skills than compared to blue collar jobs. Therefore, soft skills are necessary for better jobs [15]. The key to development is the education from where soft skills can be developed and this soft skill can unlock the way for better job which enables countries growth. When economy is enabled, it can help eradicate the poverty and increase the quality of life [16]. This can also be connected through the Human Capital Theory (HCT) which states that knowledge promotes individual’s output that can increase the job performances and it creates job chances in labor market. Hence, it is vital that our education system must incorporate soft skills that can help in holistic development of individuals. When we talk about incorporation of soft skills for
the holistic development of individual we must be focused on how the learning of soft skill is taking place. For different individuals there are different ways of learning [17]. It is also known as Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligence. He also stated that every child is unique and has potential to learn new things. To summarize the ways of learning, the various ways involve visual learning, auditory learning, verbal learning, kinesthetic learning, interpersonal learning and intra personal learning [18]. Based on multiple intelligence, different other ways of learning includes PBL, PjBL, online practice, reflective practice has been introduced which are also called as new ways of learning. These ways of learning is definitely going to develop individuals with higher capability that has a better opportunity for employability [19]. Employability is the ability of a person to have the capacity and interest to engage in jobs and be active in the labor market. This is possible only when one person acquires skills, understanding, and experiences to move across the job market. Therefore, there lies a strong connection between the ways of learning of soft skills and its impact on employability as it develops the employability skills [20]. Similarly, in the relation between soft skills and employability the soft skills like self-awareness, creativity, problem solving and self-confidence has a direct impact. The graduates having soft skills get job opportunities due to which they can move across the job market [21].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Skills are the ability to do tasks to achieve goals. Soft skills are subjective and non-technical, soft skills improve technical, career, and academic skills, increasing employability. Academics define soft skills as emotional intelligence and relationships to solve organizational issues and improve performance. Soft talents, according to that are attributes or motivations that distinguish people with similar education and experience [22]. Soft skills result from traits, attitudes, behaviors, non-cognitive intelligences, and meta-competencies 'coming together'. The technical and vocational education emphasizes job-specific talents and hard skills. This applies job theories. That well-implemented soft skills benefit the organization [23]. Today's youth don't bother with school, because of this, they rarely learn job market competition. Youth unemployment is rising, adolescents need work-ready skills and knowledge. Schools emphasise knowledge over talent. A study demonstrates that soft skills deficits create Nepal's youth unemployment [24]. It emphasizes collegiate soft skills to support this notion. Soft skills—like any skill—require action and promote service orientation, risk-taking, and people management [25]. Soft skills are ideas, personality traits, attitudes, and actions that affect graduate employment [26]. This topic is tough to address because "soft skill" is always changing, problems may require soft abilities in one field but hard skills in another. Geography, culture, location, and hierarchy affect soft skills. Soft skills and case work help students in high-tech environments, it improve job performance, interactions, and prospects. Experimentation promotes soft skills in life, job, and social interaction [27]. Hard skills include education, employment experience, knowledge, typing, writing, and computers, 75% of long-term career performance is due to people skills and 25% to technical competence. Hard skills contribute 15% to success and soft skills 85% [28]. Education develops labor market-relevant abilities, qualifications, and credentials. Education's impact on people's lives has sparked debate over its design. The Nepali curriculum is structured, but school implementation is tough, affecting student skills and qualifications [29]. Educational systems, especially vocational training, place students in specific institutional contexts to help them transition to work. Educational gifts include hard or soft skills like reading, writing, and math [30]. Educational credentials may suggest 'trainability' which reflects a person's ability to learn new skills. Based on job rivalry theory, companies prioritize education since it promotes trainability. The comparison of school and job skills seems irrelevant and suggests they need more skills [31]. Skill influences learning for everyone, some people learn by seeing, doing, and hearing, students learned differently as a teacher. Visual, kinesthetic, and listening students were present. Learning by sight, sound, and touch [32]. Many think
teaching guarantees skill acquisition, but it doesn’t. Experience, stories, and training teach skills. Cooperative, project-based, mixed, and reflective learning can build soft skills. Cooperative learning teaches soft skills like respecting friends’ viewpoints, chatting, communicating, cooperating, and assisting others [33]. It promotes face-to-face collaboration, communication, and accountability. Self-esteem and social acceptance rise. This method promotes student self-confidence, teamwork, and accountability [34]. Employment is the ability to discover, produce, and keep rewarding employment and the information, skills, and personal attributes needed to move autonomously across the labor market. As a graduates job-search, it can escalate. These abilities prepared students for work. Numerous colleges promote students’ employability. Students entered the workforce with these skills [35]. Nepal’s secondary school curriculum promotes personal trait development, developing productive, skilled, and able-to-work citizens at the local, national, and worldwide levels, and creating and preparing human resources to modernize society and grow the nation Education fails to incorporate action plans into the classroom despite well-explained curricula [36]. Most complicated tasks require general skills, transferable skills include communication, problem-solving, curiosity, flexibility, purpose, perseverance, resilience, courage, and creativity. Industrialized nations prioritize teamwork, communication, self-management, analysis, and critical thinking [37]. Employers always think soft talents assist get jobs, despite educators’ support for soft skills, the argument focused on their value and incorporation into courses [38]. It is evaluated that educators’ and employers’ views on career and technical school graduates’ employability. Businesses and educators agree kids require teamwork, communication, and work ethics. In oder to show how training shapes skills,[39] contrasts cooperative education students. It investigated two job training groups and one incompetent student. Training made students happier. They were confident in their new skills [40]. The statistical test demonstrated significant differences between life skill course students and non-students. Students acquired stress management, empathy, and relationships in life skills. In the 1980s and 1990s a demand for highly skilled people increased who could exploit new technology in the workplace, particularly. Developing a talented worker requires technical and soft skills. Highly sought-after graduates earn well. The IT revolution matured around 2000, reducing need for ‘cognitive task employees’ [41].This sector requires diversified and skilled workers to tackle several problems. The world needs talented workers regardless of service. The conceptual framework articulates two major theories for socio-economic development of human. This visualizes how the way of learning helps to develop the knowledge and skill particularly the soft skills. Once we develop learning, one individual can contribute to better skills and increase the productivity for better jobs and better employment opportunity to enhance the socio-economic condition of human.
3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study follow the qualitative study design with interpretive paradigm that is ideal to investigate the significance that individuals or groups attribute to a social or human situation. Interpretive research paradigm helped to engage with my research participants in the natural setting which explored on what they do, say and believe. The study site was Trichandra Campus which is a constituent campus under Tribhuwan University. It is in Ghangetic, Kathmandu, it is the first and pioneer college established by King Tribhuwan and Prime Minister Chandra Sumsher.

Table 01: Demographic information of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudo Names</th>
<th>Subject of Study</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sushmita</td>
<td>Geology</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Khas,Arya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashish</td>
<td>Microbiology</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Khas Arya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anu</td>
<td>Microbiology</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Madheshi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yogendra</td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Dalit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikesh</td>
<td>Environment Science</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Janajati</td>
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In order to collect data from respondent’s narrative inquiry and in-depth interview has been used for the study where primary data has been collect. An unstructured (open-ended) and semi structured interviews, conducted informal conversation and did phone calls during the narrative inquiry. The study collected the experiences, beliefs, emotions and stories of my participants. I took the video and audio and also kept a field notes to keep all the track of my participants. Later transcribe the field notes, audio and video to generate the stories for data analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ashish: Less Learning Through Formal Education

Ashish is my participant, he earned a bachelor’s degree in microbiology from Tri-Chandra Campus. After the brief introduction, I asked about his school-learned soft skills. He said he attended an
average school and tried his best. I always sought academic and non-academic preparation. Always wanted to improve my soft skills, especially communication, audience engagement, and teamwork. It didn't happen in my school until class 10. He said he wasn't sure what to say when I started his interview. Later, I explained everything and he was ready. He says “I don’t know much about soft skill as I have not done any research about it”. I later told him to share his knowledge and feelings about you. Feeling comfortable, he shared in full. He states, “soft skills are the skills like communication, presentation, teamwork that helps to add value to human life.” He illustrates, “we care less about the person who is not a team player and can express well to the friends.” Later, I questioned how he learned soft skills. He responds fast. “Nowhere did I learn soft skills. My family, training institute, and elders taught me soft skills.” He said, “one can learn less soft skills from formal education as our formal institutions are not well equipped with resources.” He adds, “I have heard few other friends who are studying abroad have good skills as they mention that the teaching learning pedagogy was much different and advanced in countries like Canada, USA and Australia.” My question was whether he learned soft skills in school. Sharing begins. I attended a government school from 1 to 10 that prioritized curriculum completion. Most teachers made us repeat and remember paragraphs, so we focused on finishing the course book. I understood his reference to rote learning. I also asked how you learned communication, presentation, and teamwork in school. He couldn’t remember much but said, “The soft skill part is less focused in our formal education.” “Moral Science” taught me dos and don’ts. It taught us appropriate student behavior and attitude. I couldn’t remember many class activities, he adds. He recalls, “I had a few friends who were studying in class 10 and at one point of time they were sharing about the presentation, group discussion, drawings etc.” “My teacher divided science topics and had us prepare poster presentations in mini groups. Sometimes he requested us to draw books and more. We learned to communicate, present, contribute, and be creative this way.” From his sharing, I learned that public schools from kindergarten to Class 10 focus soft skill development little.

**Nikesha: Technology Enhanced Learning**

Nikesha is an undergraduate in environment science from Tri- Chandra campus. He is originally from Kalayia and now staying in Kirtipur. He is working as a part time science teacher in one of the private school and supports class 6-10. He is also preparing for Public Service Commission (PSC) also known as Lok Sewa Aayog. He wanted to serve the country and is trying to compete in PSC. My experience on use of technology in the class started in 2009 when I joined my undergraduate studies in India. Before that, I never knew that technology can be used in classes. I used to hear audio and visual classes when schools and colleges used to open admission. The real use of laptops, audio books, videos, google classroom was initiated for the first time in my undergraduate. I also used e-learning platforms to learn a lot of things. According to Nitesh, ‘soft skills are the skills like speaking, writing qualities. These are skills rather than one’s field and are extra to studying. It is also learning achieved from life’. When I asked him where did you learn soft skills from? He adds, “From everywhere”. Nikesha explains, ‘the only thing is we must know that there are teachings and learning in different step of life.’ I was very curious to learn such idea and wanted to learn more. He further adds, ‘one can learn from community and its surroundings, school and colleges, from seniors like teachers, politicians’. He says, ‘There are different activities in school where one can learn different soft skills.’ He states, “We call this time an era of science and technology where there is fast internet service and millions of ways to get connected to billions of people. We have mobile phones in our hand and that too is smart nowadays. So, we have this opportunity to connect to internet. Further, the use of internet has been popular in Nepali market. So, the use of technology has been a boon to this generation. In such a generation, there can be two options, first is to use it to waste money and time where we as a youths use it to kill the time and such action do not add any value to self.” Second
option is to use it in a better way. I like this conversation and I ask how a youth can use technology and internet in a better way. He further adds, “Internet ma jasto video ni paincha” which means all kind of videos are available in internet. He further adds, “internet is the key to vast ocean of knowledge. It depends what kind of knowledge you want to get. We can always surf videos that is of our interest.” Quickly, I added- what kind of videos do you see and where? He said that there are numerous platforms nowadays. Initially, Google was the platform from where we used to search things but now we use different websites from where we can learn. He states, “I am a big fan of motivational speech and motivational speaker. Every day I use to listen to the speech of Mr. Sandeep Maheshwari, Mr, Sujit Lalwani from India.” He has been following these speakers from long time. Further, He tells, I use to listen to Steve Jobs, Jack Ma etc. I asked him if he learns from such big people. He says ‘No’. He adds, “we can learn from small to big people.” He said he has learnt leadership skills and people management skills looking at many people. He says, “I am always fascinated by the way how the conductor of the bus manages the people.” He explains with the increase in use of mobile phones and laptops which are connected to websites like YouTube has helped to learn presentation skills, communication skills, storytelling skills and so on. Therefore, he believes that advanced technology has made such learning possible.

Sushmita: ECA based Learning from School to College

Sushmita is an undergraduate student from Tri- Chandra Campus. She finished her bachelor’s degree in Geology. She is from Gulmi, Nepal. She was also a member of Youth Red-Cross member and worked for 1 year as a member. Later she developed an aspiration to lead the team. She was elected as a secretary of the Youth Red Cross in Tri- Chandra College and led the team for 1 more year. After her quick introduction, she was ready to share her experience. I asked her about the soft skills. She understood soft skills like social skills that included communication and ability to convince others. She feels, “a person has no soft skills then a person lags behind.” Upon further inquiry, on how she learns the soft skills she explains number of ways from where one can learn the soft skills. Out of nowhere she speaks “Extracurricular activities” So, I was much interested to know on learning the soft skills through extracurricular activities. I experienced a mixed feeling on learning of soft skills in school and colleges through ECA. I went to a school where ECA was a less priority. That hard feeling still exists because I wonder I would have been a different person now if school use to prioritize soft skills. In my college days, there were enough activities that helped promoted my soft skills. So I agree with the narrative that ECA helps to develop soft skills. “School is the first place after home from where we start to learn a lot through formal education”, says Sushmita. She explains that the school where she studied used to conduct a lot of programs in the school. She remembered that there used to be individual activities and team activities so she feels,” Jatidherai program, tetidherai exposure”. She feels that higher the program, more choices the students get to participate. She remembered that she used to participate in many program in different class. Even teachers also encouraged the students to take part in many activities. Her school used to conduct morning assembly where students had to step up and run the assembly by leading quiz, quotes and news of the day. Seniors used to do it and we used to follow therefore such skills are transferable from seniors to the juniors. There used to be many sports of which volleyball was one of it. She believes, “ECA like volleyball also builds skills.” She adds, “I still remember the day when my teacher motivated her to join the volleyball.” She learnt a little but this added a hope that at least she could try. This has helped her to be more confident. Even in school she used to be house vice-captain followed by house captain. She says, “This changed my nature and made me more outgoing.” Later she started to explain about her higher school. She adds, high school was annoying because there used to be farewell and welcome events only and “my major focus was to study science which needed more time and commitment”. In Bachelors, she decided to step up and lead for herself. She believes, ‘Leadership is the key to each
and every problem.’ She wanted to work in a team and lead the team as she believed “Team work builds the dream work.” She says, ‘Soon after I join Bachelors, I use to follow seniors and I use to learn from them’. She used to learn from the senior brothers and sisters. She adds that she had to understand self-skill and ask for support wherever necessary. She says, ‘I learnt the volunteerism spirit from my mentors and seniors’. In the first year, it was more about exploration and following the seniors. After that she used to be member of youth red cross and volunteer. She explains, ‘during volunteering I learnt many skills and more importantly I learnt to work in team and be confident.’ She also used to seek support from the seniors and senior asked me to be little political and tactful so it has been a platform for her to practice her leadership skills.

Anu: Trainings, Workshops and Internships Develop Soft Skills

Anu was born in Biratnagar and brought up in Kathmandu. She is living with her parents in Kathmandu. She just completed her bachelor’s degree in Microbiology. Recently, she is doing internship in one of the hospitals in Lalitpur. She is doing internship because she feels that doing internship helps her to develop her technical skills that are needed to become a good microbiologist. Despite, internship she is also engaged in other organization like Nepal scout, Red-cross society, Microbiology Association of Nepal etc. as a volunteer or as a member. Her future aspiration is to become a good microbiologist by developing the necessary skills and doing higher education and research in the field of microbiology. I come from a technical academic background where I use to get a lot of opportunity to participate in internships, workshops and training during my college days and even after my college was over. It has created a platform for me to have a skill in hand and furthermore, a better platform to practice my people management skills, problem solving skill and innovation. Knowing her aspiration I asked her what kind of skill did she want to develop? Immediately she replies all those kinds of skills that is needed to become a good microbiologist. Coming from the background of biotechnology, I could feel her that she is just talking about skills in hand which are core technical skills like using the materials in labs, doing research, following the protocol of doing tests etc. I feel I need to push a little more and I asked her if she was talking about just technical skills. She said “Yes” these are the skills that are required for me to be a microbiologist. I reframed my question and asked if she could be better only with technical skills. She paused for 4-5 seconds and she said “not really”. I asked her what the skills that are required for you to complement your own technical skills. She explains, ‘I need politeness, punctuality and interpersonal skills like good communication skills, working in teams, people management, problem solving.’ Upon further inquiry about the essence of these skills in microbiology field, she reflects that these soft skills include the behavior to achieve the goals in life. She says, “Goal hunu parcha ani tesaanusar plan banayera kam garnu parcha.” It means that setting a goal in life and developing a plan to achieve it as a skill that is required to be successful. This shows that she has learnt some sort of goal setting in her life. In my view, she is clear on her life goal and sets goal so as to achieve it. She adds her experiences and stories on how she was able to develop the soft skill in her life. She tells,” We can learn from experience of people around them”. She adds, in my school days and college days, I use to be engaged in a lot of trainings and workshops where I used to interact with people and learn different skills. She adds, there used to be a lot of community visits where we had to travel to different communities, health posts, and primary health centers (PHC) and do camps in the village. In doing so, I and my friends used to be in different groups. Sometimes, the task would be simple whereas the task used to be difficult. We used to set the goals, set the objective and do the planning. I felt that the communities used to respond in different ways. I feel, “some communities were very welcoming and some were little rigid.” In easy communities the interaction with the people used to be very fruitful. We were able to know the knowledge and mindset of the people as well. She further adds, “I was really fascinated by the way people talk. They can express their feeling in an empowered tone and
they do not hide anything from others. They are genuine and down to earth”. She explains, in a remote village in Lalitpur the whole community was a Tamang community. They were there for a three days residential camp to a health post. She explains, ‘The health assistant was a local person and he assigned different house to a group of three students. We had to stay in their house for 2 night and three days. During the day, all the team used to meet in the health post to arrange for the camp whereas at the evening and morning we had to interact with the family and the community.’ She adds, ‘since, I belong from the Madhesh community who was raised in Kathmandu; it was hard for me to understand the culture and language of the people. Even the family used to be shy and they used to talk very less. The first day was very hard to pass. In the evening and during the dinner we hardly talked for 5 minute.’ She elaborated, ‘the next day they served us a good tea and some roti. During the breakfast, entire family was around us and they were so positive and they wanted to talk. There was a grandmother who was very old and a boy who was studying in class 10.’ After a pause she continues, ‘I and my friends talked about 2 hours with the grandmother. We were so impressed how she talked and how she managed her family where the economy was not that strong. I was really impressed with her communication and her leadership.’ At that time, I wished ‘I could have those soft skills.’ Looking at the village and listening to the stories of the people I felt it was very hard to live in a hilly reason where weather, geography, economy and many things used to be a challenge. At the end of the community visit I realized that it takes a hard work and a lot of perseverance and commitment to start and have a good living. She states, ‘The entire community visit added a lens to my life that despite everything we have to develop the attitude to live a good life and I think these are called the life skills. These life skills are developed from the combination of the soft skills. I loved how community and people can teach the skills with their life experiences.’

Yogendra: Learning is a Continuous Process

Yogendra just completed his undergraduate from Tri-Chandra campus. He was fascinated to science thus had this aspiration to study science. He chose physics as his major subject. He was born in Dailekh, which lie in western part of Nepal. Later, his family migrated to Bardiya and carried on with their small family business. He represents marginalized community of the western part. He was sent to a small public school in his own locality from where he was able to complete his schooling. Later, he had to migrate to Kathmandu and he joined plus two. After successfully competing plus two he wanted to do his bachelor’s in physics and joined Tri-Chandra College. He also volunteered in Shikshya Nepal which is one of the organization where he used to work with school and children. Recently, he is teaching in one of the public school in Dang. He is supporting mathematics to the students of class six to class 10. He aspires to complete higher education in science and technology in near future. While working in development sector for more than seven years, I have seen a value called as “continuous learning” in multiple organizations. I too agree that learning in life is a continuous process. We learn through a lot of ways as there is not a single way. I have learnt many things including soft skills through a continuous process. It requires a lot of practice to have certain improvements in skill sets. We can learn from child to an old man, from a poor to a rich man and so on. So I have a similar experience to my participant. My participant explains soft skill as a separate entity rather than the subjective teaching and learning. Yogendra quotes,” Padhai bhandha bahirako skills nai soft skills ho” which means the skills outside the core course is soft skills. He was able to locate few skills like communication, leadership, presentation, creative thinking and time management. Upon the inquiry, on different ways of learning he feels “learning is a continuous process and it never ends.” He explains few key ways of learning. He says, “Pariwar ani sati haru bata dherai sikna sakinchu” which means one can learn from the family background followed by friends circle. He adds there is a provision of teaching and learning through formal education so schooling is another place from where one can learn. He further adds that one can also learn from understanding self which he termed as ‘self-
awareness. He tries to explain about how learning happened in a family. He says there are different type of family some of them may be open and some of them may be strict. He says, “a family where there is freedom, a child can have good exposure and develop certain set of skills.” If a family is strict, the access of a child is limited and there will not be any exposure so there is high chance that the development of soft skill is compromised. For example, “if a child likes painting but the family demotivates the child then the creativity will be limited.” Further, he explains that he learnt time management skill from his family. His family used to wake him up every morning which eventually turned into the habit. Having ample amount of time will help to identify and invest the time in a right way. It helped him to do yoga, meditation and finish homework in time. Therefore family shapes the child and he felt “jasto bani basalyo testai hudo rahecha”. He also reflects that he learnt flexibility and adaptability from his mom and dad as they had to migrate from one place to other for their family business. He quotes, “dherai choti thau sarda mila sakne chemata bodho rahecha”. It means adaptability increases when we frequently change the place. This made him feel that flexibility as a skill to adapt to changing situations in the life. Yogendra feels that the second home to the learning is the school. He continues with his story. In school days, I had a lot of friends. I know I also developed skills in school and college particularly with friends. He further speaks I remember a project in my plus two where we were developing a project on hydraulic press. There were times where I thought that the project will not be complete but having a group of friends who can support us and motive us can help us achieve things in life. He adds, “That was the time when Yogendra learnt about the team work.” I learnt on how can we seek and ask support in life whenever needed, he states. He says, “I feel the extracurricular activities in school and college is useless.” Later I understand the essence of extracurricular activities (ECA) in school, plus two and in colleges. I used to take part in quiz, handwriting competitions, debate competitions etc. in the school. I feel that was the first point where one learns to engage him or herself beyond academic course. Now I am clear “one can learn communication skills, problem solving skills and collaboration skills from those activities.” He believed that such skills are key to development of students. He felt that such activities helped him to push his limits and act beyond the comfort zone. He believes if one has to develop soft skills it is more likely to be achieved through ECA activities rather than the book. Further, the formal education included certain group activities, projects, presentations etc. In his college, he felt that he had to do new things and also meet new people which can help to explore the nature of an individual. He explains there used to be practical in the college and this practical used to be in teams/groups where one has to include graphical representation, charts, paper works. This helped to develop presentation skills and also oral communication skills. Further, working with team helped us to develop delegation skills, planning skills and team work.

5. Conclusion

Education in the present day is changing, education has been a central pillar for decent jobs. To guarantee the overall growth of a person integration of the soft skills has been a key. In this 21st century, the basic 4C’s play a crucial role in the job market. Every year a lot of Nepalese youths complete their undergraduate and they seek for the best job available but there is a gap. Working in recruitment for last five years taught me that the students emerge in job market with limited soft skills and this has frustrated the youths. Even in college placements, many youths could not secure their seat in the jobs. This happens because students are either unaware or the skills necessary are not developed at all. In this study, I was able to find out that the students have their ways to learn the soft skills. It was not limited to one but they discussed multiple ways like integration of ICT, project based learning, reflective practices, internships and seminars and so on. They also explained the learning of soft skills starts from the family, community and from the role models. Many participants were able to explain that the soft skill backs the employment opportunities in the market. Prior work
experience can be added benefit. Participant was also able to explain the necessary soft skills needed for the jobs. Though students focus more on hard skills, it is clear that soft skills is something that compliments hard skills and brings out best in students to ensure employment opportunities. Additionally, there is a growing demand of soft skills or 21st century skills in such a case the ways of learning has to be adapted and innovated. This can contribute to higher job opportunities. This study was only able to find out the ways on how five of my participants learnt the soft skills in their life. They also explain their understanding on the contribution of soft skills to the employability. Here, the ways of learning and its contribution of employability were interpreted from the students’ perception. By conducting further research, the ways of learning and the contribution can also be seen from the employers and academic perspectives.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

My study is mainly focused on student’s understanding and learning the ways of soft skills and how they describe contribution of soft skills to employability. In today’s teaching and learning activities the learning of soft skills is very much important. However, many institutions and curriculum prioritize less about the integration of soft skills in the daily content. Many students know the importance of the soft skills but they have limited knowledge on the ways of learning soft skills. Furthermore, most of the students can connect the contribution of soft skills to the employability. However, they feel that academic institution prioritize hard skills rather than soft skill. So, the development of soft skills from basic level to the undergraduate level is very much limited. The insight of this research will be useful for the policy development in all three governments including the Curriculum development centers, development and research organizations school’s administration, college administration and others related stakeholders who directly or indirectly work in skills with youths. All three level of government including the curriculum development center and the organization that work in education and skills may use this insight for making and implementing policies in different level and organization. Such insight can be useful to design the ways to implement the soft skills and also tailor the soft skills upon the availability of the jobs in respective places. The finding of this study may be useful for the researcher in the development sectors who wants to work in soft skills and employability. They can further investigate the ways of learning and find out the contributions of soft skill necessary for the growth of students. The school and college administration which looks after the implementation of curriculum in schools and in colleges can use this insight to develop a balance in providing the skills through various ways. This can help students learn the soft skill part which can balance the theory. The colleges can also integrate the new ways of adding such curriculum in college routine. They can also contextualize the necessary soft skills as per need and the interest of the student and connect it to the job market.

REFERENCES


