CHAPTER 45

Importance of Soft Skills Development in Transforming Management Teachers: An Intelligent Framework for Sustainable Talent

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ABSTRACT

In the evolving landscape of management education, the role of teachers extends beyond subject expertise to encompass critical soft skills that foster effective teaching, leadership, and student engagement. This paper highlights the importance of soft skills development in transforming management teachers into catalysts of sustainable talent. While technical knowledge remains essential, competencies such as communication, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and teamwork are increasingly recognized as vital for enhancing teacher performance and institutional growth. The study aims to assess the current proficiency of management teachers in soft skills, identify skill gaps, and analyze their perceptions of structured training programs. By integrating insights from talent transformation and sustainable innovation frameworks, the paper proposes an intelligent need-assessment model for designing and implementing soft skills training. This framework emphasizes continuous improvement, aligning teacher development with the broader objectives of sustainability and excellence in higher education. Findings are expected to provide a roadmap for management institutes to reimagine teacher training strategies, ensuring that soft skills development not only enhances individual performance but also contributes to long-term talent sustainability in education.

Keywords: Soft skills; Teacher performance; Intelligent framework; Talent transformation; Sustainable education.

1.0 Introduction

Higher education institutions are under growing pressure to provide both academic excellence and holistic development in the current era of global competition and digital transformation. Graduates of management education in particular should be able to lead with vision, communicate clearly, and adjust to changing and unpredictable situations.

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In this regard, management institute instructors act as both educators and role models, influencing the attitudes, skills, and readiness for the workforce of aspiring managers. Historically, pedagogical knowledge, research output, and subject matter expertise have all been linked to teacher effectiveness. Even though these elements are still necessary, they are no longer enough on their own. Additionally, teachers need to exhibit strong soft skills, which have a direct impact on student learning outcomes, classroom engagement, and institutional credibility. These skills include communication, emotional intelligence, adaptability, leadership, teamwork, and conflict management.

A wider understanding that education nowadays is as much about developing interpersonal and human skills as it is about teaching technical knowledge is reflected in the increasing significance of these competencies. Soft skills are frequently described as behavioral, interpersonal, and non-technical qualities that allow people to communicate with others in a productive and peaceful manner. These abilities are essential for management educators in a number of ways. First of all, they make sure that complicated management ideas are conveyed in an interesting and understandable way by facilitating efficient knowledge transfer.

Second, teachers who possess soft skills are able to create cooperative learning settings where students are inspired, valued, and encouraged to engage. Third, teachers with soft skills are better able to handle difficulties, control classroom dynamics, and adapt to the various needs of their students in a world that is defined by VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity). According to recent studies by boosting stakeholder satisfaction, fortifying industry-academia ties, and assisting with accreditation procedures, educators with strong soft skills not only improve student performance but also make a substantial contribution to institutional growth. Soft skill development is therefore now essential to teachers' professional identities in management institutes rather than being an elective.

2.0 Problem Statement

Despite being widely accepted as essential, faculty development does not adequately incorporate the development of soft skills in management teachers. Interpersonal and behavioral skills are frequently neglected in favor of technical and pedagogical expertise in current models. When there is training, it is sporadic, unstructured, and infrequently assessed for long-term effects. As a result, teachers may be exceptionally knowledgeable about their subjects but struggle with engagement, communication, or handling conflict. Institutions' capacity to detect gaps, create specialized interventions, and monitor progress is hampered by the lack of structured frameworks and diagnostic tools. This paper proposes an Intelligent Need-Assessment Framework to address this issue and facilitate long-term talent transformation in management education.

3.0 Objectives

1. To evaluate the current proficiency levels of management teachers in key soft skills and identify existing gaps.
2. To explore teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards structured soft skills training programs.
3. To examine the relationship between soft skills development and teacher performance in management institutes.
4. To propose an Intelligent Need-Assessment Framework (INAF)for implementing sustainable soft skills training.

4.0 Literature Review

According to (Robles, 2012; Andrews & Higson, 2008), soft skills are non-technical competencies that allow people to collaborate in dynamic environments, communicate effectively, and adjust to change. Soft skills include interpersonal, cognitive, and intrapersonal qualities like communication, emotional intelligence, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving, in contrast to hard skills, which are quantifiable and task-specific (Andrews & Higson, 2008). Given their profound impact on student engagement and learning effectiveness, exploring the acquisition of these competencies among lecturers helps to solidify their essential role within the teaching profession. (Tang, Keow Ngang, 2018). Beyond subject matter and pedagogical proficiency, teacher performance encompasses the capacity to motivate, guide, and interact with students in an effective manner. According to studies, educators who possess greater interpersonal and emotional intelligence create more cooperative learning environments and enhance student performance (Goleman, 1998; Han & Kemple, 2006).

Effective conflict resolution, academic leadership, and stress management are all facilitated by soft skills like empathy and flexibility (Khan, Mohammad & Laurie, Law, 2015). The institutional role of management teachers is enhanced by their capacity to serve as role models for leadership, teamwork, and communication, all of which are directly aligned with the competencies expected of future managers (Rao, M. S, 2014). Soft skills have become more and more integrated into faculty development programs around the world as a component of continuous professional development (CPD). However, current models frequently ignore structured training for soft skills and place more emphasis on technical upskilling (Knight, P. T., & Yorke, M, 2003).

According to research, one-time interventions or ad hoc workshops don't have a lasting effect unless they are incorporated into regular, systematic training frameworks

(Carter, Mark & Francis, Rod, 2001). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India places a strong emphasis on the development of teachers holistically and calls on universities to incorporate capacity-building initiatives that go beyond conventional pedagogy to incorporate competencies related to flexibility, leadership, and innovation (Ministry of Education, 2020). Notwithstanding these directives, there is still a significant disconnect between institutional practice and policy vision.

The idea of sustainable talent transformation encompasses long-term institutional capacity-building as well as professional development that goes beyond individual growth. The role of teachers as change agents who not only impart knowledge but also develop graduates who are prepared for the future is emphasized by sustainable development frameworks, such as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education (UNESCO, 2017). According to this viewpoint, ongoing training in soft skills guarantees that educators develop into agents of institutional innovation and resilience. Systematic assessment procedures, flexible training approaches, and institutional tactics that support global education objectives are necessary for incorporating sustainability into teacher development (Tilbury, Daniella, 2011)
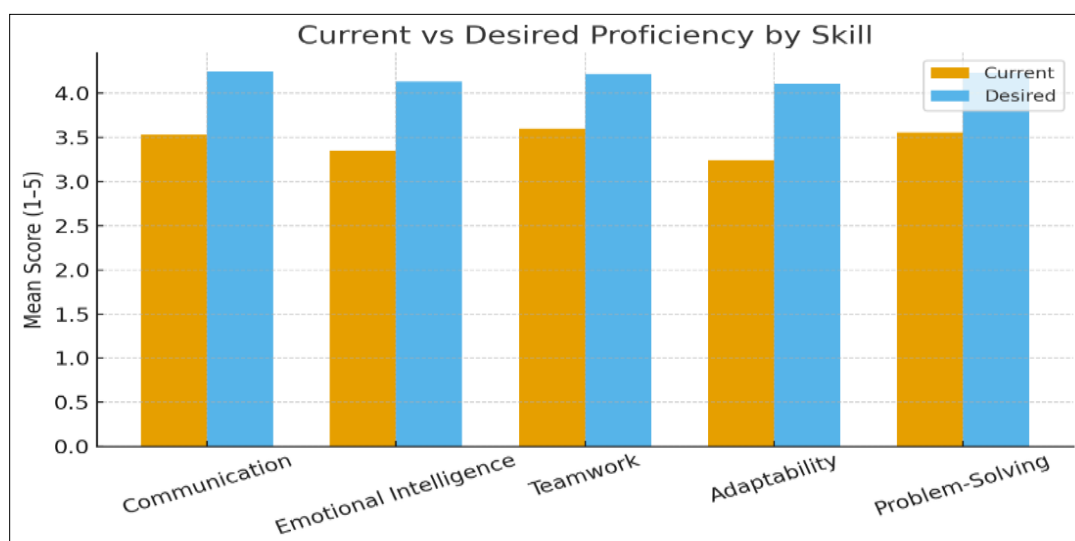
Even though earlier research has recognized the value of soft skills for educators, the majority of it is either student-centric (concentrating on employability skills) or restricted to general faculty development programs. Despite their critical role in forming tomorrow's business leaders, there is still a dearth of literature on management teachers as a separate category. Furthermore, although there are frameworks for developing soft skills, there aren't many clever need-assessment models that combine sustainability, development, and diagnostic aspects. By evaluating the present competence and attitudes of management instructors and by putting forth a methodical framework for long-term soft skills instruction in management schools, this study fills this knowledge gap.

5.0 Research Methodology

- *Research Design:* This study adopts a descriptive and exploratory research design to investigate the role of soft skills in transforming management teachers into catalysts of sustainable talent. The descriptive design facilitates the assessment of current soft skills proficiency levels, while the exploratory component allows the identification of gaps and perceptions towards structured training. Both methods were employed to ensure triangulation and robustness of findings.
- *Population and sampling:* The population of the study comprised management teachers from accredited management institutes in Pune, given their role in shaping business leaders of the future.

- *Sampling technique and size:* Purposive sampling was employed to target teachers actively engaged in classroom teaching and curriculum development. A total of 120 teachers were approached, out of which 102 valid responses were obtained (response rate: 85%).

- *Data collection and methodology used:* The present study is based on primary data. Primary data is a type of data which are collected for the first time and are fresh in nature. For the purpose of data collection questionnaires technique was used. A Questionnaire is a tool of research that is used to get information by asking various question related to research.

- *Descriptive Statistics of Soft Skills Proficiency:* The survey of 102 management teachers revealed that current proficiency in soft skills remains moderate, with mean scores ranging between 3.3 and 3.6 on a 5-point scale. Desired proficiency levels, however, were consistently higher, clustering around 4.1 to 4.3. This demonstrates a universal recognition of the need for improvement.

  o Communication Skills: Current mean = 3.5; Desired mean = 4.3; Gap = 0.8
  o Emotional Intelligence: Current mean = 3.4; Desired mean = 4.2; Gap = 0.8
  o Teamwork: Current mean = 3.6; Desired mean = 4.2; Gap = 0.6
  o Adaptability: Current mean = 3.2; Desired mean = 4.1; Gap = 0.9 (largest gap)
  o Problem Solving: Current mean = 3.6; Desired mean = 4.2; Gap = 0.6

Figure 1: Grouped Bars Showing Current vs Desired Proficiency for Each Soft Skill, with "Gap" Highlighted Above the Bars
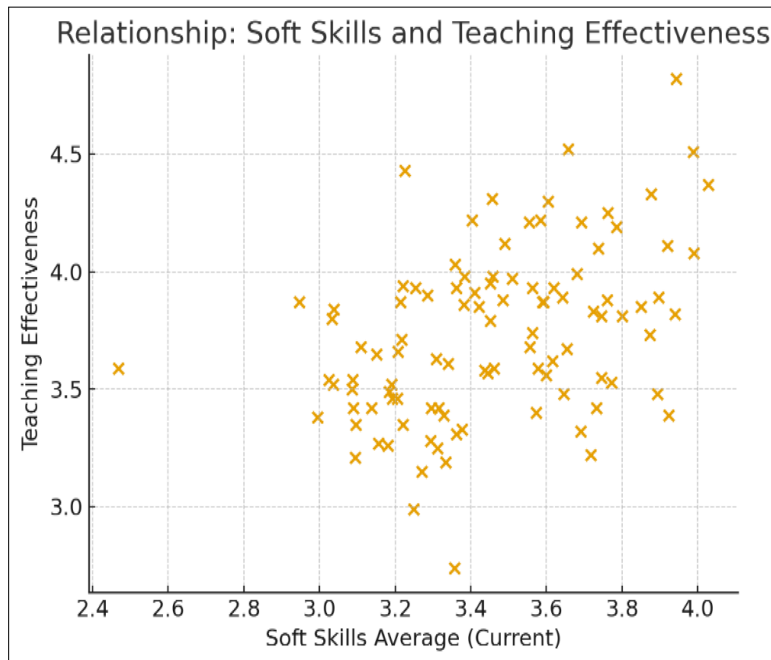
Teachers' perceptions and willingness: A substantial 78% of respondents indicated the need for formal soft skills training, while the average willingness score was 4.2/5, confirming teachers' openness to structured interventions. These findings emphasize that faculty not only recognize deficiencies but are also motivated to address them through systematic training programs. Correlation results highlighted strong positive associations:

- Soft Skills Average ↔ Teaching Effectiveness: *r = 0.62, p < 0.01*
- Soft Skills Average ↔ Student Engagement: *r = 0.57, p < 0.01*

These values confirm that enhanced soft skills directly improve teaching performance and classroom engagement.

Figure 2: Soft Skills Average (x-axis) vs Teaching Effectiveness (y-axis), with Trendline Indicating Positive Correlation
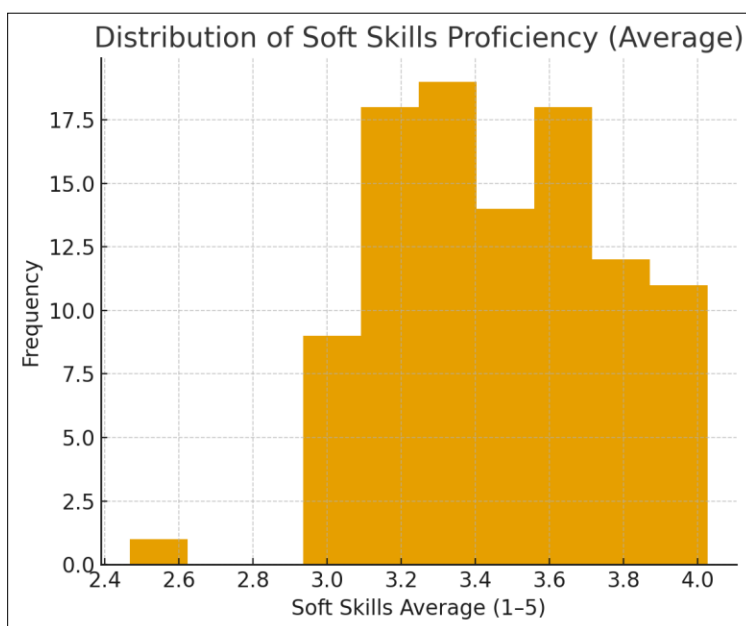

Regression Analysis: A multiple regression model was developed to predict Teaching Effectiveness based on individual soft skills, years of experience, and willingness to train. The model yielded a robust explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.49$), confirming that these factors collectively account for nearly half of the variance in teaching effectiveness. Key predictors included:

- Communication Skills ($\beta = 0.28, p < 0.01$)

- Emotional Intelligence ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.05$)
- Teamwork ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$)
- Experience and Willingness contributed positively but modestly.

Figure 3: Box Showing "Soft Skills" Feeding into "Teaching Effectiveness," with Arrows Labeled with β Weights. Secondary Arrows for "Experience" and "Willingness" Indicate Supportive Influence

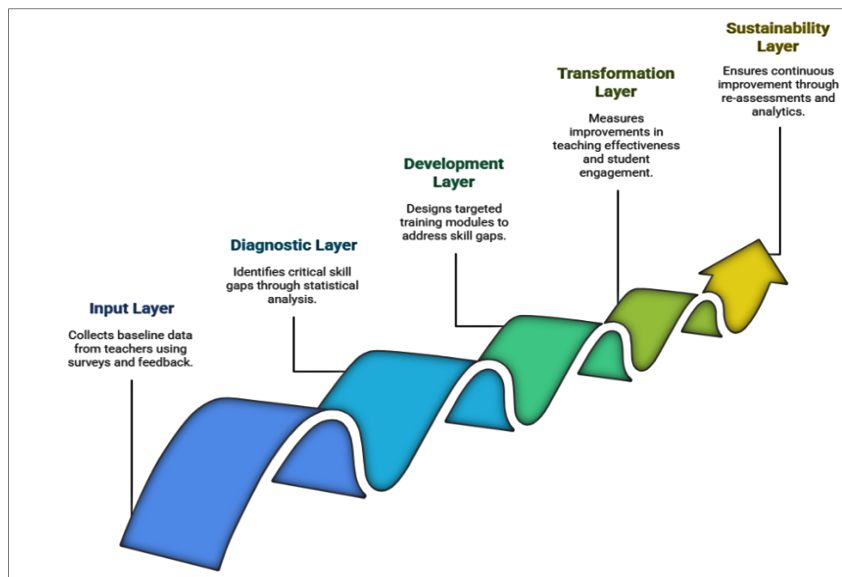## 6.0 The Intelligent Need-Assessment Framework

The study comes to the conclusion that a systematic, research-based strategy is needed to close the soft skill gaps among teachers. By combining diagnostic analytics, tailored interventions, and ongoing feedback, the suggested Intelligent Need-Assessment Framework (INAF), a flexible cyclical model, guarantees contextual and sustainable training in line with institutional excellence and turns teachers into long-term talent catalysts.

6.1 Framework Architecture: Intelligent Need-Assessment Framework (INAF)

The INAF is structured around five synergistic stages designed to ensure contextual, measurable, and sustainable soft skills development:

- *Input Layer (Baseline Profiling):*
  o Gathers demographic, experiential, and baseline soft skills data.
  o Utilizes surveys, self-assessments, and student feedback for accurate profiling.
- *Diagnostic Layer (Gap Identification):*
  o Applies statistical tools (descriptive, correlation, regression) to detect critical deficiencies.
  o Prioritizes high-impact competencies such as adaptability, communication, and emotional intelligence.
- *Development Layer (Targeted Interventions):*
  o Crafts tailored training modules focused on prioritized skills.
  o Incorporates workshops, simulations, role-plays, and peer-learning for practical application.
- *Transformation Layer (Performance Enhancement):*
  o Evaluates improvements in teaching effectiveness and student engagement.
  o Aligns outcomes with institutional excellence, accreditation benchmarks, and SDG-4 (Quality Education).
- *Sustainability Layer (Continuous Improvement):*
  o Embeds periodic re-assessment and AI-enabled analytics for iterative progress.
  o Institutionalizes soft skills training within long-term faculty development policies.

Figure 4: INAF-Framework Architecture for Enhancing Teacher Skills for Quality Education

7.0 Practical Implications

- Organizations should create tiered, structured programs that emphasize communication, emotional intelligence, teamwork, and flexibility. The tiers should be progressively higher to accommodate both new and seasoned educators.
- Soft skills should be integrated into leadership development, mentoring programs, and ongoing professional development rather than being offered as stand-alone workshops.
- Smart tools like peer-assessment platforms, simulation-based learning, and AI-driven feedback can improve training personalization.
- Teachers who actively exhibit collaboration, emotional intelligence, and innovation should be rewarded by administrators who cultivate this culture.
- To ensure alignment with institutional goals, regular diagnostics utilizing the Intelligent Need-Assessment Framework (INAF) should be used to measure training impact and identify gaps.

8.0 Conclusions

This study emphasizes that technical proficiency alone is not enough to promote excellence in the dynamic ecosystem of management education. The performance of teachers and the efficacy of institutions are greatly influenced by soft skills like communication, flexibility, teamwork, and emotional intelligence. An organized method for identifying gaps, building competencies, and maintaining talent transformation is provided by the proposed Intelligent Need-Assessment Framework (INAF). The framework connects institutional sustainability and personal development by bridging theory and practice. In the end, management instructors who possess strong soft skills act as catalysts for inclusive education, innovation, and sustained excellence in higher learning.

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