

Training need in communication skill among the students of UBKV, West Bengal

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Abstract: Today professionals have to compete with the world, holding two weapons namely technical skills and communication skills. Though the educational institutes are providing the technical skill but somewhere the emphasis on the communicational skill has taken a backseat. Research was thus conducted to study the level of communication skill and training need of the students of UBKV, West Bengal, desirable for job placement. Total 90 students were selected with the stratified random sampling technique using proportional allocation method. The educational institute was selected purposively. Data was collected through structured interview schedule using one-to-one physical interview method. Communication skill level and training need were taken as dependent variables whereas, various personal, communicational and socio psychological variables were taken as independent variable. The statistical tools like frequency, percentage, mean, coefficient of co relation etc. were used for analysis. The data was statistically analysed using the SPSS software. It has been found that majority of the respondents possess medium communication skill in both written and verbal skill. The study found that Age, income, aptitude and confidence have established negative and significant association with training need of the students however, committee membership was found to have positive and significant association with training need. The study recommends to encourage the students to read books/literature extensively instead of providing them small notes in order to improve their written communication skill. Lectures may be concluded with 10mins quiz to improve their verbal communication skill. Mock interviews or speech may be organized for the students during workshop to make them learn the mannerism of responding and for psychological preparedness. Vocabulary however would improve gradually with reading habit.

Keywords: Communication skills; Job placement; Soft skills; Verbal skill; Written skill

1. Introduction

The ability to communicate effectively has become the most crucial factor in determining a student's career. We still have an old educational system with a curriculum that solely places a strong emphasis on memorising and replication, despite the rising demand for communication skill mastery. Lack of emphasis given on logical thinking, creativity, and adaptability throughout the whole educational process which are considered most important by the employers.

The communication ability of today's graduates fall short of what companies are looking for. It's a matter of concern that many children struggle to learn, to read and write even after 10 to 12 years in school. It has been observed that in the current process of communicational skill teaching and learning, even many graduates remain very passive and lack basic orientation. Only a few exceptional students are found to have adequate writing and speaking ability. They are incapable of reading a book with correct pronunciation and following it independently. Spelling mistakes and grammatical mistakes are very common among all the students, even among students with high qualification. Correct use of English idioms and figures of speech is rare (A. V. Bharathi, 2016). According to the National Employability Report by Aspiring Minds, a provider of employability solutions, graduates' inability to find employment is mostly due to their lack of computer and English language proficiency. According to the report, out of 60,000 Indian graduates, 16 and 14 percent, respectively, could find work in the sales and customer service sectors. These positions need effective communication, cognitive abilities, and personality attributes like agreeableness and friendliness, as well as in the latter case, numerical aptitude. 36 percent of the graduates were qualified for clerical and secretarial occupations, which call for just minimal training. Only two percent of graduates can find work in corporate communication or content creation since the main qualifications are an extraordinary command of English and fundamental analytical abilities. Only three percent of people can find work as analysts, and only two percent overall. Entry-level positions tended to value a combination of educational background, critical job-related abilities, and soft skills. Employers in the retail sector are looking for candidates with a variety of skill sets, including academic credentials, communication skills, leadership abilities, collaboration skills, and past work experience, for their management positions Paulrajan's (2011). The book *Soft Skills - Enhancing Employability: Connecting Campus with Corporate* by Rao (2019), claims that the Indian educational system now places an excessive emphasis on facts and statistics, which inhibits children's ability to be creative, analytical, or logical. In this backdrop, research has been conducted with an objective to study “the training need in communication skill among the students of UBKV, West Bengal”, desirable for job placement.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted during June- Sept 2023 at Uttar Banga Krishi Viswavidyalaya as a part of M.Sc degree programme. This public university is located in the Cooch Behar district of West Bengal, enrolls students from all across the country. The researcher is student of this University thus, have purposefully chosen the academic institution due to the ease of data collection and accessibility of the necessary respondents. A stratified random sampling method using proportional allocation method was used to choose the respondents. Students from three faculties (The Faculty of Agriculture, Horticulture, and Technology) of UBKV were chosen as respondents. The total number

of students enrolled at the main campus in various degree programme was collected. As per available data total 128 students were in 4th year of B.Sc. degree programme (2020- 2023) enrolled in three different faculties namely, The faculty of Agriculture, The faculty Horticulture, and The faculty of Technology. 151 students pursuing M.Sc. degree programme (2021 and 2022 batch), and 193 students pursuing Ph.D. degree programme (2020, 2021, and 2022 batch). Initially it was planned to collect 20 percent student from each degree programme but as it was a part of M.Sc. degree programme there was a time constraint. Thus, total of 90 students *i.e* 19 percent of the total student population were taken as the respondent for the study. Number of students from each degree programme were selected using proportional allocation under stratified random sampling.

Sample size in i^{th} strata = $n \times (N_i/N)$

where, **n** = Total sample size;

N_i = Total no. of students in a particular degree programme,

and **N** = Total no. of students

Training need in communication skill was taken as dependent variable whereas, various personal, communicational and socio psychological variables were the independent variables of the study. Further in order to study the Communication Skill, the sub components like Public speaking, Group discussion, Personal interview and Writing skill were also assessed. Sub components of Public speaking-like Design of Speech, Verbal Behaviour, Non-verbal Communication, Etiquettes in Public Speaking were also considered to assess the skill of Public speaking. Data was collected through structured interview schedule using one-to-one physical interview method. The statistical tools like frequency, percentage, mean, coefficient of co relation etc. were used to analyse the data and conclude the study. The data was statistically analyzed using the SPSS software.

3. Results and discussion

It has been found that students have felt requirement of training for improving their communication skill, comparatively more in order to perform better in Personal interviews followed by writing skills and Public Speaking. Though the students often get chance to take part in group discussion, as it's a part of evaluation system for many of the courses but hardly they get any opportunity to improve their one-to-one interview skills. Regarding writing skills students now a days prefer more audio visual lectures, available online, instead of reading books written by different authors probably this is the reason that their technical writing skill, grammar as well as vocabulary is comparatively poor in most of the cases.

Table 1: Distribution of students on the basis of their Training Need in major aspects of Communication Skill

Sl. No.	Aspects of Communication Skill	Highly Needed (4)	Moderately Needed (3)	Slightly Needed (2)	Least Needed (1)	Weighted Mean score
		Freq.	Freq.	Freq.	Freq.	
		(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	
1.	Public speaking	41 45.6	38 42.2	7 7.8	4 4.4	3.28
2.	Group discussion	19 21.1	29 32.2	22 24.4	20 22.2	2.52
3.	Personal interview	72 80.0	12 13.3	6 6.7	00 00	3.73
4.	Writing skill	58 64.4	22 24.4	8 8.9	2 2.2	3.51

Training need in public speaking skill is found to be moderate to highly preferred by the students. The following components may help to understand the specific requirements in order to address the public speaking: i) Design of Speech; ii) Verbal Behaviour; iii) Non-verbal Communication; iv) Etiquettes in Public Speaking.

Table 2: Distribution of students on the basis of Training Need in design of speech; sub component of public speaking

Sl. No.	Design of Speech	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Creative and attractive opening	76	84.44
2.	Clarification of purpose	44	48.89
3.	Sequencing body of the speech	76	84.44
4.	Supporting central theme with data, examples etc.	56	62.22
5.	Summarization of speech	70	33.33

Creative and attractive opening is the most preferred area where students have expressed their desire for training followed by sequencing the body of the speech and supporting central theme with data, examples etc. As they say “first impression last long” and to keep the interest of the audience

for a longer time, proper sequencing of the content complemented with a central theme and supported with data and example is very much require to make the speech interesting and a memorable one. It also creates a deep impact in the cognition of the audience. It makes it easier for the audience to accept, relate and trust the conveyed message.

Table 3: Distribution of students on the basis of Training Need in Verbal Behavior; sub component of public speaking

Sl. No.	Verbal Behavior	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Voice quality	30	33.33
2.	Volume (loudness)	23	25.56
3.	Speed of speaking	20	22.22
4.	Pauses	27	30
5.	Language	69	76.67
6.	Pronunciation	76	84.44
7.	Variety in speaking	28	31.11

Most of the times the public speaking needs to be in English in formal platforms. English is a foreign language for Indians, having its own rules for pronunciation, which is sometimes very peculiar and does not maintain any rule some of the times. Students find it difficult to be correct with pronunciation many of the times thus expressed their desire for some training to improve the same along with the technicality of the language to use it appropriately in different environment and with different audience.

Table 4: Distribution of students on basis of their Training Need in Non-Verbal Behaviour; sub component of public speaking

Sl. No.	Non-Verbal Behaviour	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Posture	29	32.22
2.	Use of gesture	50	55.56
3.	Eye contact	44	48.89
4.	Body movement	21	23.33
5.	Facial expression	83	92.22
6.	Level of energy	37	41.11
7.	Confidence	87	96.67
8.	Harmony between verbal and non-verbal	47	52.22

In case of non-verbal behaviour booming 92.22 percent students sought training, to gain confident as speaker during public speaking followed by facial expression. Confidence and maintenance of facial expression is directly proportional. Facial expression changes when a speaker is low in confidence. Confidence comes with knowledge of subject matter and exposure and real-life experience.

Table 5: Distribution of students on the basis of Training Need in Etiquettes in Public Speaking; sub component of public speaking

Sl. No.	Etiquettes in Public Speaking	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Physical position	65	72.22
2.	Salutation	29	32.22
3.	Use of Audio-visual aids	73	81.11
4.	Notes to be carried	22	24.44
5.	Way of consulting notes on podium	28	31.11

Use of audio-visual aids and physical positions are two sub components, emphasized for training by majority of the respondents. Communicational aids make the public speaking more attractive and easily understandable for the audience. Having knowledge of aids to be used w.r.t the type of the audience enhances the fidelity of the speaker too. However, handling those aids efficiently requires proper training. Physical posture during a public speaking also make difference in the perception of audience towards the speaker. Casual approach in case of formal public speaking may be considered as disrespectful at the same time too much formality in rural location can be distasteful to the rural audience. So, maintaining proper physical posture w.r.t to the location and audience need to be learned.

As far as group discussion is concern, it has been found that 93.33percent students sought training in **conflict resolution**, followed with 71.11 percent, seeking training in **initiation skill**. Students tends to get nervous or lose patience which results in poor performance in GD. Generally, in a group discussion, the initiator of the conversation is considered to be the leader and that initiated statement leads the entire group discussion as it gives direction to the discussion. This art of initiating a discussion needs motivation and skill, which can be embedded in the students through more practice.

Table 6: Distribution of students on the basis of Training Need in major component of Group-Discussion

Sl. No.	Group discussion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Initiation skills	64	71.11
2.	Technical knowledge	28	31.11
3.	Linking with others.	44	48.89
4.	Questioning skills	45	50
5.	Use of facts/data/cases	38	42.22
6.	Courtesies to enter into GD	30	33.33
7.	Conflict resolution	84	93.33
8.	Motivation to silent ones	59	65.56
9.	Articulation of summary	47	52.22
10.	Time management	24	26.67
11.	Guiding task achievement	18	20

Table 7: Distribution of students on the basis of Training Need in major component of Personal Interview

Sl. No.	Components of Personal interview	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Technical competence	20	22.22
2.	Writing resume	69	76.67
3.	Dress code	29	32.22
4.	Psychological preparation	84	93.33
5.	Physical preparation	18	20
6.	Knowledge about question regarding self (Self-knowledge)	18	20
7.	Frequently asked questions (FAQs)	14	15.56
8.	Knowledge about employees	13	14.44
9.	Organization	8	8.89
10.	Knowledge about courtesies/protocols	41	45.56
11.	Manner of responding	72	80
12.	Employers' expectations	58	64.44

Majority have sought training in psychological preparation followed with proper resume writing and insight into employer's expectation. Students confessed to suffer from anxiety before facing an interview and confident enough in writing resume. Moreover, they are confused about employers' expectation. Mock interviews, resume writing sessions as well as industrial attachment type

programs might be helpful for the students if conducted by the academic institutions before the completion of degree programme.

Table 8: Distribution of students on the basis of Training Need in major component of Writing Skill

Sl. No.	Writing skill	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Writing formal letter	55	61.11
2.	Writing of technical paper	86	95.56
3.	Writing reports	82	91.11
4.	Vocabulary	76	84.44
5.	Composition	42	46.67
6.	Grammar	33	36.67
7.	Organizing writing plans	66	73.33
8.	Style of giving references	38	42.22

Majority of the students sought training on writing technical paper followed with report writing and vocabulary. All these things are new and necessary for all the students pursuing their degree as they don't get an opportunity to learn these in school level. Vocabulary however, can be improved gradually by inculcating reading habit.

3.1. Association between the selected Independent Variables with the Training Needs of the Students

Age (-.338**), background of the student (-.777**), family income per annum (-.537**), confidence level (-.340**), soft skill training (-.340**) and educational qualification (-.348**) were found to be negatively (-.338**) and significantly associated at 0.01 level of probability with the training need of the students. It has been seen that with increase in age people get wiser and more experienced. Students coming from developed areas are more exposed to resources and media whereas, students belong to low family income are lacking resources, amenities and exposure to media. Thus, both area and family income play a role in communication skill of the people. Similarly, students with high confidence level found to have clarity in speech, conformity in content and stability in body language which impacts their communication skill. Moreover, exposure to any type of soft skill training orients the students with the basics of communication skill as well as the tricks to be a good

communicator. It has also been noticed that higher educational qualification boosts the confidence and provides and authority which positively impacts their soft skills.

Table 9: Association between the selected Independent Variables with the Training Need of the Students

Sl. No.	Independent variables	Training Need (r value)
1.	Age	-0.338**
2.	Background of the student	-0.777**
3.	Medium of schooling	0.563**
4.	Family income per annum	-0.537**
5.	ICT skill	0.089 NS
6.	Habit of information collection	0.141 NS
7.	Aptitude skill	-0.227*
8.	Confidence level	-0.340**
9.	Mother tongue	-0.142 NS
10.	Mass media usage	-0.068 NS
11.	Academic motivation	-0.190 NS
12.	Job preference	-0.160 NS
13.	Soft skill training	-0.345**
14.	Internship training	-0.139 NS
15.	Fathers' profession	-0.030 NS
16.	Mother profession	-0.192 NS
17.	Committee membership	0.310**
18.	Extracurricular activity participation	0.079 NS
19.	Interuniversity competition participation	0.121 NS
20.	Education qualification	-0.348**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level; NS-Non-significant

Aptitude skill and training need was found to be negatively (-.227*) and significantly correlated at 0.05 level of probability. Presence of natural ability to perform also known as aptitude skill reduces training need to a greater extent. Higher aptitude skill leads to higher adaptability to the surrounding and builds communication skill competency.

However, medium of schooling of the student (.563**) and committee membership (.310**) were found to be positively and significantly correlated at 0.01 level of probability with the training need of the students. Imparting education in regional language or mother tongue provides better understanding. However, English is being considered as the official language in almost all the formal institutions thus, students coming from school other than English medium require more grooming when it comes to communicating in English. Though, language is not something that defines our communication skill. Good Communication skill is beyond knowing a particular language its basically delivering your thoughts and ideas in the simplest, easiest and best understandable manner. Unfortunately, skill of communicating in English has been considered as the highest level of communication skill. Students associated with different committees interact with different people and bear various responsibility, eventually they realize their skills, capabilities and efficiency level thus found to seek training on communication skill.

Some independent variables like ICT skill, habit of information collection, mother tongue, mass media usage, academic motivation, job preference, internship training, fathers' profession, mother profession, extracurricular activity participation and interuniversity competition participation found not to have any significant association with the training need of the students. However, the result can't be generalized as the research has been done with a small sample.

4. Conclusion

Communication skill in an integral part of professional soft skill, much needed for personal as well as professional development. The study concludes that majority of the agricultural students sought training in both written and verbal communication skill. Specifically, they have sought for training in resume writing, psychological preparation, manner of responding, report writing and vocabulary. Age, family income, aptitude and confidence level were found to have negative association with the training need of the students. Membership in various committees and medium of schooling have positive and significant association with the training need.

5. Recommendation

Regular and extensive reading and listening is the first step to improve written and verbal communication. Students thus need to be motivated to read more books/literature instead of providing them small notes by their course instructors. The students must be encouraged to attend all the classes as well as practical and the participation should be of functional in nature. Which

may be concluded with mandatory 10 mins quiz after the class, to keep the students attentive during the lecture session.

The study recommends to organize trainings or workshops for students specifically on resume writing and report writing. Mock interviews and public speaking may be arranged for the student during the workshop to make them learn the mannerism of responding and much needed psychological preparation. Vocabulary however would gradually improve with regular reading habit.

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