

NECESSARY SOFT SKILLS FOR STUDENTS MAJORING IN TOURISM MANAGEMENT AND TOUR GUIDING

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Abstract: *Soft skills play a very important role in the success of everyone's career, especially in the service industry. Based on the survey results with students and alumni majoring in Tourism Management and Tour guiding of the Faculty of Tourism, Hanoi Open University on students' perceptions of soft skills as well as their assessment of the need for soft skills while studying at university and at work. Accordingly, the paper mentions the soft skills that need to be equipped for students majoring in Tourism Management and Tour guiding in order to help them with the ability to combine professional skills and soft skills to adapt well to the employment criteria in the new working environment.*

Keywords: *Soft skills, students, soft skills to equip students, Tourism Management and Tour guiding*

I. Introduction

Since the 1980s, soft skills have been popular in countries around the world. In the process of working and researching, it has been shown that employees' skills are not enough to meet practical requirements. What employees often suffer from is the lack of creative application of what they have learned, as well as the ability to understand and establish relationships with colleagues and managers, etc. The term soft skills appears and research topics on soft skills in the profession as well as developing soft skills for employees in specific occupations are

increasingly interesting. Over the past two decades, a lot of research has been done to develop soft skills for students/employees: In 2002, the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) published "Employability Skills for Future". This work shows 8 important soft skills for employees, including: communication, teamwork, problem solving, creativity and risk taking, planning and organizing, self-management, lifelong learning and technology skills [7]. In 2007, in Portugal, Artur Ferreira da Silva, José Tribolet, Lecturer at Lisbon Technical University presented the presentation Developing soft skills in engineering studies-

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The experience of students' personal portfolio at the International Conference on Technical Education art. The article presents practical experience in 15 years of soft skills training for engineering students through extracurricular activities and practical sessions in the program called "Personal Portfolio". [8] In addition, some countries such as Malaysia, Singapore also provide soft skills frameworks to apply training to students.

In Vietnam, in recent years, the state as well as the Ministry of Education and Training have been increasingly interested in training soft skills for students. Section 3, Article 5, Circular No. 17/2021/TT-BGDĐT of the Ministry of Education and Training stipulates standards of training programs; program development, appraisal and issuance training of higher education qualifications: curriculum standards for higher education qualifications "must reflect the highly representative requirements of employers and other stakeholders". That is shown through the content of output standards including standards on hard skills and soft skills. The policy is brought down to universities, and requires them to develop an output standard for each different training major.

The Faculty of Tourism - Hanoi Open University was established under Decision No. 2653/TCCB-GD&DT dated December 1, 1993 of the Minister of Education and Training.

At the time of the study, the Faculty had 02 training majors in Tourism & Travel

Service Management with 02 majors in Tourism Management & Tour Guiding and Tourism & Hotel Management. The Faculty has greatly contributed to the training of high-quality tourism human resources for the industry with more than 10,000 students and learners of all types of training.

The motto of the Faculty is: "Real teaching, real learning, strict discipline". The commitment to the output standards of the Faculty includes: standard of knowledge, skills, and attitude. Ensuring standards of skills, especially soft skills for students, is one of the goals that the Faculty is particularly interested in. However, in fact, some necessary soft skills have not been equipped and students' ability to apply soft skills is still limited. This paper mentions soft skills that need to be equipped for students majoring in Tourism management and tour guiding

II. Literature review

2.1. Some basic concepts

2.1.1. Concept of skills

There are many concepts of skills introduced by researchers.

According to the dictionary of education, skills are: "the ability to perform the right action, in accordance with specific goals and conditions to perform that action whether it is a specific action or an intellectual one".[4]

According to Nguyen Quang Uan, Ngo Cong Hoan, Tran Quoc Thanh, and Tran Thi Quoc Minh, "skill is one aspect of human capacity to perform a job with results" [9].

With the above understanding, the concept of skills can be used as follows: Skill is the ability to effectively perform a certain action by applying previous knowledge and experiences to act accordingly. with the allowable conditions. Skill is not merely the technical aspect of the action, but also the expression of human capacity.

The skills that each person has is due to the process of learning and practicing. Skills include two groups, namely: Hard skills and soft skills [6].

2.1.2. Concept of soft skills

There are many different conceptions or definitions regarding soft skills, depending on the career field, context, and perspective of each person.

Soft skills are sociological terms used to refer to important skills in study and work, these skills are rarely equipped in schools, not related to professional knowledge, but mainly into the student's personality. Soft skills complement hard skills and are essential in career requirements and most activities in life. Thus, soft skills contribute to the success in study and work of each student after graduation. Soft skills are behavioral competencies and are known as human relations skills, or community skills, they include mastery of skills in communication, conflict resolution, negotiation, working effectively, problem solving, etc.

According to Huynh Van Son, soft skills are understood as “skills that are not directly related to professional knowledge

but are more inclined to the mental aspect of each individual to ensure the process of adapting to others, to maintain a positive relationship and contribute to effective work performance” [5]. Thus, along with professional knowledge, soft skills play a very important role in the success of each person's career.

2.1.3. Classification of soft skills

In the world, there are many different views on the classification of soft skills. Sharma selected 7 types of soft skills, including: communication, thinking and problem solving, teamwork, lifelong learning and information management skills, entrepreneurship, ethics and understanding, and leadership skills. Each of these soft skills includes a few specific skills. Sharma classifies soft skills into two groups of factors: skills that each individual must have and skills that are good to have.

Many Vietnamese authors have offered a classification of soft skills. According to Phan Quoc Viet, there are 10 groups of necessary soft skills for Vietnamese employees and students, which are: learning and self-study, self-leadership and personal image, creative and adventurous thinking, planning and organizing work, listening, presenting, communicating and behaving, problem solving, teamwork, negotiation [6].

Synthesized from the authors' studies and actual research observations, soft skills are divided them into 11 essential soft skills for students majoring in travel management and tour guide (Figure 1):

Figure 1: 11 soft skills needed to be equipped for students majoring in Tourism management and tour guiding.



III. Research methodology

3.1. Theoretical research methods

- Methods of analysis and synthesis: used in the whole process of conducting research, synthesizing all collected data, conducting analysis and evaluation on the current state of soft skills development and key factors affecting soft skills of students majoring in Tourism management and Tour guiding, Faculty of Tourism - Hanoi Open University;

- Comparative method: using the data obtained during the survey to draw conclusions about the current situation and the need for soft skills training for students majoring in Tourism management and Tour guiding.

3.2. Practical research methods

- Qualitative research method: survey and descriptive statistics are used based on the following steps:

- Interviewed students majoring in Tourism Management and Tour guiding, Faculty of Tourism - Hanoi Open University to check the questionnaire and give the official one.

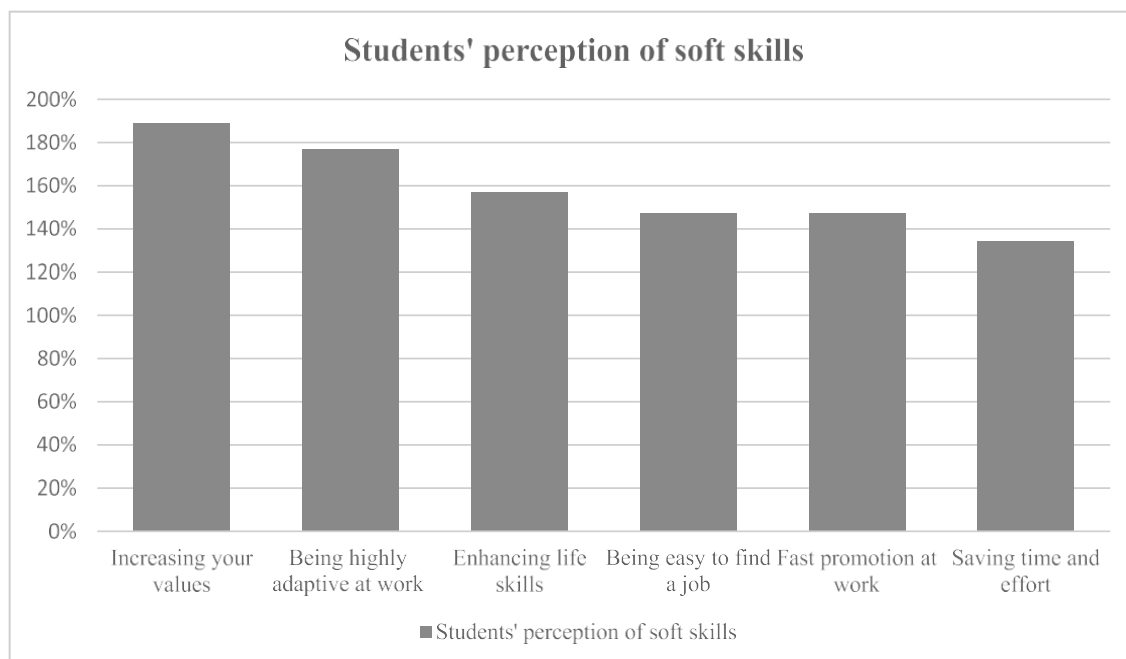
- Interview some lecturers/experts in soft skills training, psychology instructors, English language and professional trainers with integrated skills for consultation.

- Conduct online surveys.

IV. Results and discussion

4.1. Students' perception of soft skills

Figure 1: Students' perception of soft skills



Through the actual survey, it shows that students majoring in Tourism management and Tour guiding are aware of the importance of soft skills training. Surveyed students believe that soft skills training helps increase self-worth (77.1%), have high adaptability in work (72.2%), enhance life bravery (64.1%), make it easy to apply for jobs and quickly advance in career. work (60%), saving time and effort is (37.1%). However, in addition to the given options, students have not added the role of soft skills, for example soft skills are an important factor to help them be more convenient when participating in cultural activities, movements, help them with teamwork skills, problem solving skills, communication skills and time management skills., etc. It can be seen that students have not really realized that the process of training and accumulating soft

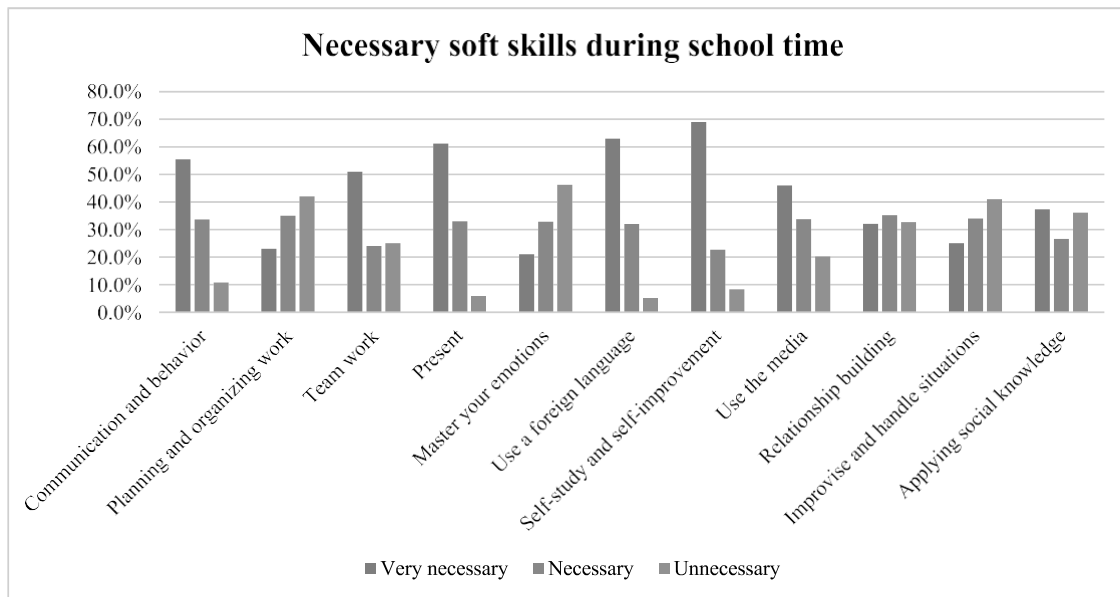
skills when studying at university is very important, it is indispensable when they graduate and start work.

4.2. Student assessment of the necessary soft skills during school time

The soft skills needed by students during their time studying at the university are shown in Figure 2 (next page).

The survey shows that: Self-study and personal capacity improvement are rated necessary by students to the highest degree, because learning and self-study are essential for each person. Learning and self-study help students have an interest in learning, a passion for scientific research, forming a scientific lifestyle, training the will to strive, constantly advancing on the learning path.

Figure 2: Necessary soft skills during school time



The survey shows that using a foreign language is also highly appreciated by students, ranking second after self-study and personal capacity improvement. To become a professional guide, having a second language is important. The tour guide is the person who connects everyone in the group, so it is important to understand their language and convey it in the best way.

Presentation is also a soft skill that students appreciate in terms of necessity, because this is one of the important soft skills. Presentation skills help students to know how to speak, present a certain problem in front of the crowd; have the ability to argue, exchange and convey information effectively to convince listeners; contribute to the development of communication skills in various communication environments with different audiences; make themselves more confident when communicating.

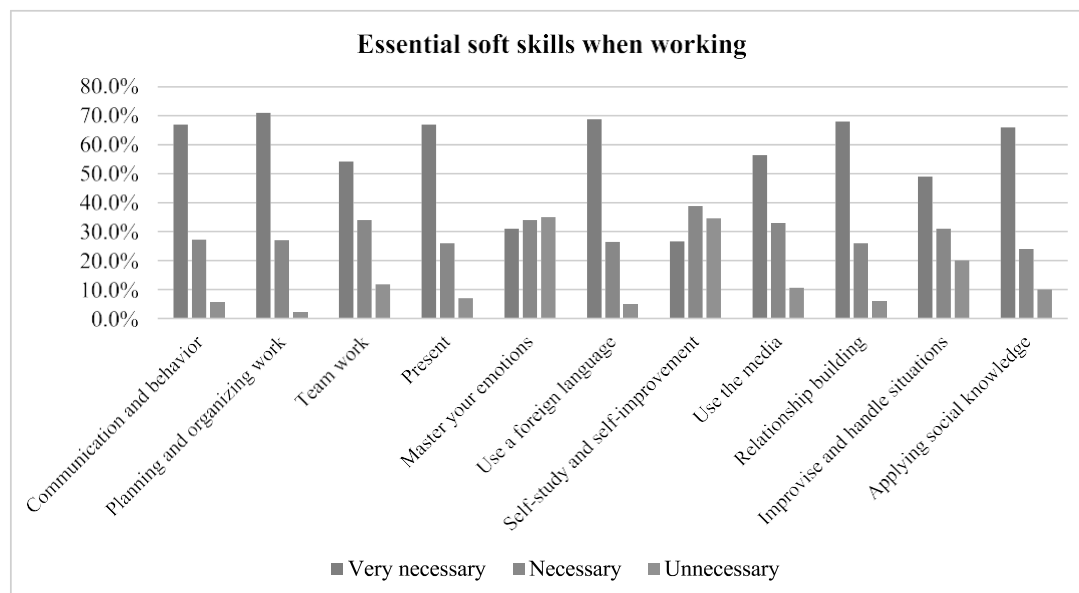
Besides communication, teamwork is also considered by students as necessary soft skills while studying at the university. For a tour guide, the first job is to know how to communicate, because the nature

of their job is to contact and guide visitors directly about the place where they guide guests. help the tour guide improvise to unexpected situations in the fastest, most effective and most satisfactory way. Nowadays, when science and technology is more and more developing, teamwork is a very necessary soft skill. Simply because no one is perfect, teamwork focuses on each person's strengths and complements each other. Moreover, no one can afford everything. Teamwork helps students have good coordination ability; there is multi-dimensional interaction in a team so that they can complete their tasks better by helping other members; improve the ability to interact among members in a group, in order to promote work efficiency and develop their own potential.

It is also shown that students majoring in Tourism management and Tour guiding think that planning and organizing, controlling emotions, using media, building relationships, improvising and handling situations and applying social knowledge are not really necessary for students.

4.3. *Student assessment of necessary soft skills in the workplace*

Figure 3: Essential soft skills when working



It can be learnt that: The majority of surveyed students believe that planning and organizing is an unnecessary soft skill for students while studying, but essential when working. Planning helps students define their own and organizational goals. For students, planning and organizing will help them: better cope with uncertain situations that may occur during study and work; better orient themselves to opportunities and challenges; minimize duplication and waste for individuals in the process of performing work; Planning will help to build clear goals and have a roadmap to achieve the set goals.

It is stated that communication and behavior, presentation, using foreign languages, relationship building and application of social knowledge are also the soft skills that are highly appreciated when going to work. Connecting and maintaining relationships with visitors or friends is also an art. With a tour guide, building relationships helps to create new opportunities, bring more jobs to him and his company, and building relationships

will help him have more partners, more jobs, more customers, etc. Applying social knowledge is also an indispensable requirement for a tour guide. To become a good tour guide first, it is necessary to equip himself with a treasure of knowledge about literature, art, history and geography so that he can provide visitors with many additional useful messages. Applying social knowledge is an important factor in helping each individual develop more.

Teamwork and the use of media are also soft skills that students consider necessary in the working process. In the field of tourism in general and tour guiding in particular, the use of communication and promotion tools is one of the essential requirements to help improve work efficiency. Active travel businesses are applying technology to develop their business, marketing, destination management, enhancing the guest experience and advertising their tours on many websites, visitors can book tours, hotels directly via the internet. Therefore, it is required that tour guides

must know how to use media to connect, entertain, and retain visitors.

In general, most soft skills have different ranks during studying at university and working. In particular, having soft skills for self-study and personal capacity improvement is rated much lower by students than when going to university. It shows that students initially have a basic identification of the role of soft skills in different environments.

V. Conclusion

Based on reliable research and survey implementation, it is shown that the majority of students majoring in Tourism management and Tour guiding have the perception of the importance of soft skills for their study and future work.

The survey also shows that the most necessary soft skills while studying at the school include: learning and self-study, presentation, foreign languages, the next group includes: communication, teamwork, etc. The most essential soft skills assessed by students when working are: planning and organizing; communication, presentation; foreign languages, building relationships, and applying social knowledge. The final group consists of teamwork and using media. In general, it is necessary to equip students with necessary soft skills to help them confidently integrate and develop in the future, especially to meet the skill standards specified in the Mutual Recognition Agreement on Tourism Professional Standards (MRA-TP) of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) [2]. That is the basic foundation to improve the quality of training in order to approach the level of ASEAN-4 countries.

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