Literature Review

Sufficiently large number of research papers has been published in area of soft skills in last 20 years. The scholar classified them under six broad categories as reported below:

Concept, Definition and Scope

Dilber BAHÇECİ and Mustafa KURU (2008) in paper titled The Effect Of Portfolio Assessment On University Students’ Self Efficacy And Life Skills [11] find that portfolio assessment is more effective particularly on the development of the skills of problem solving, critical thinking and collaboration with peers but less effective on the development of communication skills.

S. Mangala Ethaiya Rani (2010) - An elaborate work titled “Need And Importance Of Soft Skills In Students” [41] attempts to provide entire range of elements and effects soft skills can have. It defines soft-skills in light of EQ (ability to deal with one's feelings and understand the feelings of others in any given situation) and academic intelligence/ cognitive capacities (IQ) with a humane understanding of issues; emphasising that soft-skills strengthen them from within and empower them to understand "Who They are" and how best they can come across as competent individuals in any given situation. Also Kerry Bunker and Michael Wakefield [26] conclude that, today's leaders need to manage the dynamic tension between a sense of urgency and realistic patience and between optimism and realism and openness.

Gopala Krishnan Sekharan Nair; Rozlan Abdul Rahim et al. (2012) Their paper Malaysian Graduates English Adequacy in the Job Sector [17] recommend that the future researchers should focus on the need for a new syllabus design which gives scope for the development of soft skills such as interpersonal skills, speaking skills and socializing skills.

Joan Marques, (2011) - “The resurgence of human values in today's organizations: pointers from the Buddha” [21] emphasize that scope of skills for personal leadership lie in awareness and application of social skills in leadership long known to us, and which may otherwise be brushed aside marking it ‘spiritual’ in nature.

General significance
Ayesha Saba; Babak Mahmood; Aroosa Khalid; Sumaira Aslam (2011) - *Perceived Effects of MBA Degree on Skills Development and Career Advancement: The Case of Pakistan* [4] have studied the MBA students in Pakistan and their analysis demonstrated that MBA degree has positive effect on career advancement because it sharpens different skills of students and it provides basis for better opportunities and MBA’s have diversified skills. However the Paper does not go to the detail on what exactly are those ‘diversified skills’

**T D Prasad and A K Tiwari, 2007** - Soft skill training has been connected with placement in most professional institutions, and the paper “*Relevance of Soft Skills Training in Management Education*” [46] gets in establishing the correlation among three factors: soft-skill training, performance in other subjects and placement.

Irena Grugulis and Dimitrinka Stoyanova (2011) - “Skill and Performance,” [18] question the general assumption that there is a link between skill and performance, saying the evidence is tenuous, and emphasise the need for better research designs.

Jane Andrews and Helen Higson, (2008) - “Graduate Employability, ‘Soft Skills’ Versus ‘Hard’ Business Knowledge: A European Study” [19] in reference to the Bologua Declaration (1999) picks up the question about the quality of the graduate labour market and the ability of graduates to meet the needs of employers. This paper analyses graduate and employer perspectives of graduate employability in four European countries (UK, Austria, Slovenia and Romania). Gopala Krishnan Sekharan Nair [17] bring out similar concern in context to Malaysia.

**Anju, A. (2009)** - *A Holistic Approach to Soft Skills Training* [3] recommends that recruitment components like Group Discussions (GDs) and interviews need to be redefined; more than being process of elimination / acceptance of one's competence, but to have a deeper meaning wherein a candidate displays his true inner potential.

Srivastava, Nivedita, Nair, Shreekumar K. (2010) - “Emotional Intelligence & Managerial Effectiveness: Role of Rational Emotive Behaviour” [43] validate the positive correlation (influence) of 2 variables: emotional intelligence and rational emotive behaviour, on managerial effectiveness based on study on 305 managers. Further, rational emotive behaviour was found to moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence and managerial effectiveness.
What about the costs of benefits of investing in soft-skills training?

Pine, Judith, Tingley, Judith C. (1993) in “ROI of soft-skills training” [36] and John W. Hunt, Yehuda Baruch, (2003) in “Developing Top Managers: the impact of Interpersonal skills” [22] look into the cost-benefit analysis of soft-skill training. These papers indicate that soft-skill trainer are beginning to link training programs to the operational results of the organization. Levels of Donald L. Kirkpatrick's evaluation model; Study conducted at Garrett Engine Division; Team-building course; Need for a causal relationship between skills and knowledge developed through training. Results indicate significant impact on some, but not all, of the competencies and skills under study

Stuart Rosenberg, Ronald Heimler, Elsa-Sofia Morote, (2012) - “Basic employability skills: a triangular design approach” [45] studied the three stakeholders: attitudes of three distinct groups – recent graduates, the faculty who taught them, and human resource managers who recruit them. The study revealed considerable differences in opinion among the three groups with regard to the skills needed for job performance, the skills received by college graduates, and the additional training needed.

R. de Villiers, (2010) - ‘The incorporation of soft skills into accounting curricula: preparing accounting graduates for their unpredictable futures’ [37] also touches the issue of stakeholders reviewing the needs of different stakeholders, possible barriers to change and the way in which academic faculty can contribute

Staffan Nilsson, (2010) - Findings of “Enhancing individual employability: the perspective of engineering graduates” [44] indicates that hard formal and technical vocational skills are considered to be of declining importance; and reminds that employability requires a balance: the responsibility for managing and developing one's employability lies with each individual.
The Nature of Soft-skill Learning and Training process

Dilber BAHÇECİ and Mustafa KURU (2008) in *The Effect Of Portfolio Assessment On University Students’ Self Efficacy And Life Skills* [11] finds out the difference between assessment of the learning process and traditional way of assessment which only focuses on the product (learning outcomes). Portfolio assessment considers students from different perspectives and particularly focuses on students’ affective characteristics. Therefore, in this study, studying on self-efficacy, peer and self assessment was crucial.

Ernest A. Pineteh (2012) - *Using virtual interactions to enhance the teaching of communication skills to information technology students* [13] reviews how synthesising virtual and other computer-assisted, and traditional classroom-based activities can enhance the teaching and learning of communication concepts; and indicates that traditional methods of teaching are still valuable given the differences in the learning styles and technological experiences of students.

Ernest A. Pineteh (2012) - *“Learning the soft skills of leadership”* [40] is a paper that challenges the role of training as a single methodology for the development of personal and interpersonal “soft skills” for leaders; and concludes that learning takes time and the learning of the complex personal and interpersonal skills of leadership takes even more time.

Trainer and Training Effectiveness

Ernest A. Pineteh (2012) - *“The differences between hard and soft skills and their relative impact on training transfer”* [10] have hypothesized that singular perspective of making no differentiation between hard (technical) and soft skills can actually hinder training transfer, and contends that development of a more robust and comprehensive model of training transfer must consider training content.

Ahmad Esa ; Jailani Mohd. Yunus ; Fadilah Mat Assain (2011) - *“The Implementation Of Generic Skills At Technical Schools: Comparative Analysis In Different Platform”* [2] discusses the ‘medium’ and the level of exposure best suited for absorbing the soft-skills; and elaborate three different platforms which are: co-curricular activities, workshop and class adopted a one.

Sahni, Latika (2011) - *“The Impact of Soft Skill Training Induction Programme on New Entrants”* [42] tests the MDP format of imparting soft-skill training as is done in real work-
place situations, and establishes the significant ‘impact on some, but not all’ of the competencies and skills under study

**Boyce, Gordon, Williams, Sarah, Kelly, Andrea, Yee, Helen (2001)** – “Fostering deep and elaborative learning and generic (soft) skill development: the strategic use of case studies in accounting education” [5], based on learning theory provide a framework to support the use of case studies as a tool to promote appropriate learning styles and thereby enhance generic skill development.

**Anju, A. (2009)** - “A Holistic Approach to Soft Skills Training” [3] emphasizes the need for a change in the conceptualization of soft skills training as it is practiced today in finishing schools and subsequently proposes an alternative approach rooted in a deeper personal sense of the trainer


**Kulkarni, D. G., Kalkundrikar, A. B. (2008)** - “Humour Quotient in Soft Skills Training”[27] call attention to trainee’s mindset, and elaborate on use of humour as one way trainers can align oneself with the trainees and develop a rapport.

**Jungsun (Sunny) Kim, Mehmet Erdem, JeoungWoo Byun, Hwayoung Jeong (2011)** - The idea of using technology to impart training is quite natural in today’s scenario. “Training soft skills via e-learning: international chain hotels” [24] suggest that learners who have higher extrinsic motivations in using e-learning will be more likely to use e-learning. However, the other variables (i.e. technology anxiety, self-efficacy, and intrinsic motivation) did not significantly affect the intention to use e-learning.

**Ritu Narang (2012)** - Her work regarding effectiveness of training, “How do Management Students Perceive the Quality of Education in Public Institutions?” [38] studies five dimensions - Learning outcomes, Responsiveness, Physical facilities, Personality development and
Academics; and concludes that there were significant differences between perceptions and expectations of students with respect to all the five dimensions of the scale

**Louis Baron, Lucie Morin, (2010) -** “The impact of executive coaching on self-efficacy related to management soft-skills” [32] analyse three training methods: classroom seminars, action learning groups, and executive coaching. Results indicate controlling for pre-training self-efficacy and other training methods, the number of coaching sessions has a positive and significant relationship with post-training self-efficacy; and that utility judgment, affective organizational commitment, and work-environment support have positive and significant relationship with post-training self-efficacy

**Aaron W. Hughey, Kenneth J. Mussnug, (1997) -** Designing effective employee training programmes [1] describe the elements of a successful employee training programme; explains the distinction between training and education, along with a discussion of why “soft skills” training initiatives are less effective than skills-based approaches. discusses the critical role of the training manager in implementing a training programme, as well as important considerations when developing a strategic training plan. Finally, paper describes several key factors which determine how employee training programmes can best support company profitability

**Lisa Wake (2011)** – In paper Applying NLP tools and techniques in an FMCG environment [31] study application of Neuro-Linguistic Programming for soft skills training. This paper demonstrates that for NLP to be effectively applied it needs to be: paced to organisational needs; paced to stage of development; championed from within; delivered with credibility; and directly relevant to the workplace.

**Soft-skill Curriculum**

**Kunal Kamal Kumar ; Kamal Kishore Jain (2010) -** The paper ‘Reassessing the Curriculum-Competency Alignment in MBA Programs ‘ [30] seeks to assess the alignment between the focus of the MBA curricula and the managerial competencies required on the job, across two different nations: India and USA. The study found that there indeed is a misalignment between required course curriculum and managerial competencies across the three groups of business schools, and that there is no difference in the required curricula across different tiers of b-schools. It was also found that no correlation exists between average salary offerings and the required curricula.
Whether English and language should be covered in domain of soft-skills? S. Mangala Ethaiya Rani (2010) in Need And Importance Of Soft Skills In Students [41] press the idea that Soft skills along with grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary exercises will boost the confidence of students. “Malaysian Graduates English Adequacy in the Job Sector” [17] finds that the speaking, writing, social skills and overall English proficiency of new graduates were not adequate.

Florence Yean-Yng Ling, George Ofori and Sui Pheng Low (2000) - Importance of design consultants’ soft skills in design-build projects, [15] through a quantitative assessment identify fourteen attributes engineering professionals must possess to deal with clients effectively.

Muzio, Edward, Fisher, Deborah J. Thomas, R. Peters, Valerie (2007) - “Soft skills quantification (SSQ) for Project Manager Competencies” [33] referring to soft-skills as micro-social skills, suggests a model that allows soft skill quantification (SSQ), and its utility in predicting performance.

Cheryl L. Noll and Marilyn Wilkins (2002), - Critical Skills of IS Professionals: A Model for Curriculum Development [6] present inputs for making process of skill development more manageable and to create programs that more accurately reflect the demands of the marketplace through a curriculum revision process, on basis of rating the importance of each knowledge/skill area ‘three years from now’ for each of the staffing groups. They present a skills-matrix that can be used as a foundation for developing courses. This paper also describes a curriculum development model that can be used as a guide for curriculum revision.

Vasantha Kumara, S. A., Sahasranam, C. (2008) - An Empirical Study on Students' Soft Skills Inventory Test: Reliability and Non-Parametric Analysis [48] This study lay emphasis that soft skills trainers should design competency-based curriculum

Kumara, S. A., Sahasranam, C. (2009) - Is there specific soft-skills needed for potential entrepreneurs? “Entrepreneurial Characteristics among Business Management Students” [29] finds that it is important to continuously inventory the students' attitudes, skills and competencies for an entrepreneurial career and build a database of prospective entrepreneurs. Continuous student research and well-planned training program, along with creativity and innovation can help in creating a rich entrepreneurial culture among students.
Sector specific insights on soft-skill relevance

Peter M. Burns (1997) - The paper titled “Hard-skills, soft-skills: undervaluing hospitality’s ‘service with a smile’” [35] argues that hospitality gains profitable through value-added services provided by the highly developed social skills of its so-called ‘unskilled’ labour force. Authors look at ‘skill’ beyond the definition of what it means for Industrial sector under influence of ‘Fordism’

Florence Yean-Yng Ling, George Ofori and Sui Pheng Low (2000) - On the other hand, need for good soft-skills for architects has been highlighted in Importance of design consultants’ soft skills in design-build projects [15]. found that all the soft skills, which were operationalized into 14 attributes, are important factors that contractors look for when selecting consultants. It is, therefore, concluded that contextual performance is important and relevant.

V. K. Gokuladas (2010) - “Technical and non-technical education and the employability of engineering graduates: an Indian case study” [47] revealed that the performance of students in non-technical education was a stronger predictor of employability than was grade obtained in technical education. The findings will be of relevance to engineering colleges because they can be used in the formulation of a strategy to improve the employability of their students.

Vasantha Kumara, S. A., Sahasranam, C. (2008) - “An Empirical Study on Students’ Soft Skills Inventory Test: Reliability and Non-Parametric Analysis” [48] indicate that measurement and recording of students’ creative and innovative talents along with soft skills, is the responsibility of the institute even in engineering and technical institutions. The findings show that it is possible to tune, shape and develop creativity and soft skills among all students with well-planned training programs.

Cheryl L. Noll and Marilyn Wilkins (2002), - “Critical Skills of IS Professionals: A Model for Curriculum Development” [6] stress that so-called ‘soft skills’ such as teamwork and collaboration, planning and leading projects, presentation delivery, and writing skills will be critical for success in the Information Systems profession. Muzio, Edward et al [33] also opine that ‘Soft’ skills, are universally recognized as being critical to successful Project Management.
Boyce, Gordon, Williams, Sarah, Kelly, Andrea, Yee, Helen (2001) - *Fostering deep and elaborative learning and generic (soft) skill development: the strategic use of case studies in accounting education* [5] indicate that the typical learning styles of accounting students are not suited to the acquisition of generic (soft) skills. In this paper, learning theory is used to provide a framework to support the use of case studies as a tool to promote appropriate learning styles and thereby enhance generic skill development.

Many authors have highlighted the need and significance of soft-skills and proved the ‘universality’ of this body of knowledge: notable ones are

**Healthcare Industry:**

Elizabeth A. Jenner (1998) – *A case study analysis of nurses’ roles, education and training needs associated with patient-focused care* [5] A case study analysis of a trust hospital piloting patient-focused care (PFC) on two wards was undertaken with a view to determining the education and training needs of registered nurses. The impact of PFC on the roles of the nurses was examined and nurses’ perceptions of their training needs, and the extent to which these have been met was explored.

**Hotels hospitality and foodservice;**

Christine Lundberg, Lena Mossberg (2008) - *Learning by sharing: waiters’ and bartenders’ experiences of service encounters,* [7], the study seeks to understand how education, vocational training and informal training affect front liners' experiences of critical service encounters. Findings show that there are three categories of skills that are central to employees when dealing with critical service encounters: technical (‘hard’), social (‘soft’) and aesthetic (appearance) skills. These skills are mainly learnt by formal education (technical), informal information sharing among employees (social) and interaction with guests (aesthetic).

**Information Technology**

Faheem Ahmed, Luiz Fernando Capretz, Salah Bouktif, Piers Campbell, (2012) *Soft skills requirements in software development jobs: a cross-cultural empirical study* [14]: This paper finds that in the cases of designer, programmer and tester, substantial similarity exists for the requirements of soft skills, whereas only in the case of system analyst is dissimilarity present.
across different cultures. It was concluded that cultural difference does not have a major impact on the choice of soft skills requirements in hiring new employee in the case of the software development profession.

**Project Management, Engineering and real-estate industry**

George Cowie (2003) - *The importance of people skills for project managers* [16] demonstrates how project managers can achieve greater success if trained in people skills. Project management is an important skill for businesses to have – particularly companies whose business rests on delivering projects. Project managers are trained in the technical aspects of project management such as setting objectives; critical path analysis; work breakdown structures; resource allocation and risk management. However, the success of a project often rests on the understanding of related people and management issues, rather than technical issues.

Staffan Nilsson, (2010) *Enhancing individual employability: the perspective of engineering graduates,* [44] indicate that hard formal and technical vocational skills are considered to be of declining importance. Generally, these skills are considered less important in relation to one's individual employability compared to different forms of soft skills and personal attributes. The meaning of employability is typically viewed relationally and contextually and is associated with the specific place in which one works. The responsibility for managing and developing one's employability lies with each individual.

**Direct selling and Retail sector**

Joyce Koe Hwee Nga, Soo Wai Mun (Nadiah Soo), (2011) *The influence of MLM companies and agent attributes on the willingness to undertake multilevel marketing as a career option among youth* [23] Direct selling industry generally endorses and recommends a system of personal development and entrepreneurial skill education for its agents so that they gradually grow themselves and the business. The findings of this study indicate that MLM company and agent attributes have a significant influence on the willingness to undertake MLM as a career option and that this can be one answer to unemployment among youth.

Dennis Nickson, Chris Warhurst, Eli Dutton, (2005) - *The importance of attitude and appearance in the service encounter in retail and hospitality* [9] suggests that employers in the
retail and hospitality industries are not generally looking for “hard” technical skills in their frontline personnel, but “soft” skills. Such “soft” skills encompass attitude and, appearance – what we term “aesthetic skills” – and the latter is often underappreciated in academic and policy-making debates.