

# ***'LEARNING DUALITY'***

## ***Androgyny and Soft Skills***

**Dr. S. Duggal**

### **Abstract**

The theme of this paper is to strategies the “leaning of duality” through the incorporation of process of Androgynous and Soft Skills.

“Androgynous skills” are less understood and less explored and therefore totally ignored while formulating the structure of Human resources development in the organizations and Management education.

Knowledge is distilled exposure which has been accumulated over a period of time. It represents our current understanding of how the world works. Some knowledge has been recorded and some not yet recorded.

### ***This paper gives the message:***

- To identify the Androgynous skills.
- Create awareness about these skills.
- The Management education and Organizations should make conscious efforts to develop and train the individuals on these competencies and skills as part of their Curriculum and HR Development efforts.

### **KEY WORDS**

- Androgynous Skills, Soft Skills, HR Strategy, HR Training, HR Development, Agentic, Communion, Instrumental, Expressive

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

In today's competitive, global and

challenging world, Educators and Managers need to develop a balance between personal attitudes, emotions and expressions and those qualities that promote more effective work relationships in their human resources.

Human resources to be well groomed in the masculine dimensions of self-reliance and independent decision-making as well as in the feminine interpersonal skills of being trustful and open. Androgynous and soft skills encourage an individual and organization to encompass the entire range of human behavior, open-ended path to growth and development.

During the process of carrying out the study, effected on heterogeneous group of selected population, it was concluded and documented that approximately 7.3 % have heard about the Androgynous skills, and approximately 17 % of the above mentioned have some idea of what these actually are! Interestingly, these are the people who need the Androgynous skills the most.

Androgynous skills and Soft skills, in brief, are the key skills that are needed by any individual to get into a job/Profession, keep it, and advance successfully in career. When Human Resource recruiters turn down a candidate, they seldom give a reason for rejection. They are kind enough to conceal the actual drawbacks in the candidate.

**“While some of the Androgynous and soft skills are innate and they stem from childhood and family environment, there are major skills, which can be acquired through training and sheer practice.”**

Androgynous means of or for both the sexes. Androgynous person is one who combines masculine independence and feminine furtherance. Androgyny suggests that what we need is a fine blend of mix of behavior of both genders.

During the survey conducted on the Human Resource Executives in India, on the importance they give to Androgynous skills and soft skills over the hard skills (technical skills) the overwhelming majority gave a weightage of 80:20 in favor of Androgynous skills and the soft skills.

Reason for this in India, is the fact that technical excellence is no more a luxury. In India, approximately 30 lakh students graduate every year

and out of them approximately 6 lakh are Post graduates and Engineers. On a conservative estimate, based on the study, approximately 50 percent of them are first class, which implies that there is no dearth of technical talent. But there is definitely a lack of people with Androgynous skills, Soft skills and Attitude.

### **SOFT SKILLS:**

Based on the study it was concluded that organizations look for all or some of the following skills in prospective employees. The list has been pruned down for the sake of limiting it to "priority soft skills".

- a. **Punctuality:** Punctuality is one of the top priorities. The candidate who does not turn up on time is bound to cut a sorry figure and lose out in the long run.
- b. **Communication Skills:** This skill is acknowledged as the most important quality on which majority of hiring decisions are made. Good communication skills boost a candidate's confidence and contribute to success. As a matter of fact communication skills contribute to the manipulative abilities of human beings, which sometimes compensate for a lack of desired skill.
- c. **Flexibility:** 'Change' is the order of life. Adaptability to changes in life especially professional life, adds value to any employee and when it comes to promotions, Managers are on constant lookout for such resources.
- d. **Proper Attire:** Good turnout is a sure factor that gives identity. A suitable dress always has a positive impact on people's perception. It is good to be in tune with the dressing patterns of the fellow employees.
- e. **Goal Setting:** Successful people are those who have short term, medium term and long term goals. They account their work on a daily basis. The question "what are your immediate career goals?" is a frequently asked question. Goal setting provides employees with choices about their professional life and encourages them to take personal responsibility for it. Research shows that successful people are habituated to setting daily goals. This keeps them on their toes in terms of meeting the objectives.
- f. **Patience:** Often candidates are tested by Recruiters, by making them wait for longer hours just to check whether the candidate can balance temper in critical situations. A prospective candidate is expected to handle

situations like accepting criticism, asking for help, accepting compliments and work related suggestions and so on. Handling conflicts with superiors and co-workers is another challenge one has to master and stay cool when tempers flare.

- g. **Active Listening:** Knowing how to listen is as important as being able to articulate what one wants to say. It is the key to understanding tasks assigned and then being able to carry them out without supervision. Active listeners are the most sought after people in all organizations.
- h. **Self training for Employees:** A person is the best trainer of himself.
 

College/Institute and the work place/office is the best place to groom soft skills. The following can be practiced by self and train one self:

  - (i) **Work Ethic:** Enter College/Institute or the work place/office with the belief that you owe your employer a full day of diligent work.
  - (ii) **Courtesy:** Remember to use please, excuse me, may I help you and Thank you in dealing with colleagues, Superiors, customers and supervisors.
  - (iii) **Teamwork:** Share responsibilities, honor commitments, help others do their job and seek help when needed.
  - (iv) **Self Discipline:** Learn from experiences, ask questions, correct mistakes and have a positive attitude towards criticism.
  - (v) **Norms:** Dress up and groom yourself well. Watch and control your tone, body language, vocabulary and culture in tune with your College/Institute work place/office atmosphere.
  - (vi) **Language:** Speak, read and write standard English in a businesslike way.

While students from Indian Institutes of Management, and Indian Institutes of Technology and other good Educational Institutes are in great demand in the job market, companies today see it as a bonus if the candidate is well groomed and has qualities that can make him or her a perfect brand ambassador for the company.

In a competitive market, that extra edge can make all the difference. For instance, when a company cannot decide between two equally talented candidates, the students are invited to a dinner or to a cafe to judge the better candidate based on his / her ease at handling situations. The candidate who is chosen is the one who carries himself or herself

better and is comfortable at and around the table.

### **ANDROGYNOUS SKILLS:**

The interrelationships between masculine and feminine behavior can be shown by examining the long-accepted functions of management: i.e. planning, organizing, co-ordinating, staffing, motivating, directing and controlling.

Effective Managers need to acquire and value both **instrumental (masculine) and expressive (feminine) behaviors**. The process of awareness and inculcating the same has to start at the Institute and the College level and carried forward to the Workplace.

### **Androgynous skills as per the School of thought of “Instrumental and Expressive” include:**

- Selectively express feelings of love, fear, anger, pain, joy, loneliness and dependency when required.
- Personalize experience rather than rely on objectivity and rationality.
- Build support systems.
- Learn how to fail at a task without feeling that one has failed as a man or woman.
- Value an identity that is not so totally defined by work.
- Listen empathetically and actively. Be able to intellectualize and generalize. Respond directly with ‘We’ statements.

However, this list suggests behaviors women need to cultivate in order to be Androgynous:

- (i) Be powerful and forthright and have a direct visible impact on others.
- (ii) Be entrepreneurial.
- (iii) State own needs and refuse to back down.
- (iv) Recognize equal importance of accomplishing the task as well as being concerned about relationships.
- (v) Build support systems.

In attempting to define and measure Androgyny, **there is another school of Bakan (1966), differing tendencies between/in men and women, which he popularly called as Agency and Communion.**

**By Agentic, Bakan seems to be referring** to self-assertive qualities, theme, in which the self as the doer is emphasized.

**By Communion, Bakan refers to union, receptivity and altruism.** Both characteristics may be present in either men or women. They may overlap or fuse as well. Bakan’s concern, however, is often with the integration of these traits between

individuals (as in marriage) rather than within the individual. However, he does suggest that women tend to have both agentic and communion qualities more frequently than do men.

**Agentic Competencies :** These are capabilities the self has which reflect a forceful active self, reaching out attempting to achieve a goal, but not necessarily by competition. There is a sense of striving with the self as agent. The adjectives which are associated with the Agentic are, ambitious, adventurous, curious, persevering, clear thinking, determined, individualistic, industrious, energetic, independent, intelligent, outspoken, assertive, self confident, calm, active, capable, forceful, courageous, efficient, enterprising, rational, initiative, organized, sharp witted.

**Communion Competencies:** These are capabilities which are effective in interaction with others. There is an other-referent quality to them, having to do with reliability and sensitivity. The adjectives which are associated with Communion are, dependable, tactful, sensitive, conscientious, affectionate, understanding, kind, appreciative, adaptable, warm, responsible, cooperative, helpful, imaginative, original, considerate, discreet, fair-minded, reasonable, thoughtful, friendly, praising, good-natured, sympathetic, reliable.

### **The Way Forward**

The way forward to ensure that the Institutes and the Organizations contribute towards furtherance of these qualities is with non-class-room ‘experimental’ learning, initiatives that cater to the nature of Androgynous skills and soft skills training and the different learning styles of participants.

- (i) **One of the initiatives is the program**, which can be described as a creative approach to learning Androgynous and Soft Skills is ‘Learning by doing’. Here, students/ Employees are required to visit Government bodies (Municipal Corporations, Railways, Police Department, Hospitals, Post Offices, PDS Shops, Public Bus/Transport Services and the place wherever the services are scarce and people demanding the services are more) and observe their functioning and provide tips to enhance operations. This coaches them on key Androgynous and soft skills, like teamwork and dealing with people of different genders, apart from administration and professional proficiency.
- (ii) **Other approaches used in honing** Androgynous skills and soft skills include

workshops, games, movies and celebrity interactions.

- (iii) **Another experiential initiative** is the Center for Development of Corporate Citizenship program, which aims to sensitize students/employees by exposing them to the issues that our country is grappling with. This program requires students to assist NGOs hands – on, by evaluating their initiatives and providing different approaches of solving the problem. It is an attempt to make them aware of the dilemma faced by people at the grass-root level. Key skills mastered by this program would include group dynamics, decision making, ability to understand perceptions of diverse groups drawn from heterogeneous fields, genders, age and motivation of people belonging to diverse social strata.
- (iv) **Similarly workshops can be conducted** on corporate etiquette. Benefits of power dressing, grooming, dining etiquette and much more can be taught.

- (v) **The institute need to institutionalize the process of learning these competencies & skills** which have been ignored. The study concludes, that neither sufficient training has been conducted by accordingly reworking and re-engineering the management education curriculum and the in house training programs of the organizations with focus on these issues nor they have been spoken to the students/employees at length, who are the ultimate future human resources for the country and organizations.

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