

Are we forgetting about soft skills?

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

During the Youth Skills Summit 2020, hosted by *The Daily Star* to mark World Youth Skills Day, Mahfuz Anam, Editor and Publisher of *The Daily Star*, talked about the growing lack of empathy and ethics in our daily lives. "We must be efficient. We must earn more, but at the same time, we must become a person with values," he shared. The discussion highlighted that hard skills and values complement each other – there is no point in being highly skilled if we lack core values like honesty and compassion.

Hard or technical skills are teachable abilities that we learn in the classroom, on the job or from other training materials. Soft or interpersonal skills, on the other hand, are subjective abilities that relate to the way we connect to and interact with each other. They are a combination of people skills, social skills and communication skills that revolve around a person's emotional intelligence. Soft skills have little to do with our education and training and more to do with our character, relationships and personality. Although hard skills such as typing speed, machine operation and computer programming are crucial, the question is, are they the only skills we need to build a better future?

Even as we grapple with the coronavirus pandemic, we are experiencing unfair practices in the healthcare industry, hate crimes against minor communities, ongoing wars, environmental crisis and a multitude of other issues. The value of soft skills such as work ethic, effective communication and problem-solving, cannot be understated at this time.

Empathy, an important soft skill, is the ability to identify with another person by relating to their perspective and feelings. It can help us to negotiate better, work well in a team and become more compassionate leaders. Sadly, despite technology allowing us to connect increasingly with our peers, our society, as a whole, is becoming less empathetic.

As more of us are gaining access to the internet and social media, hate speech, bullying and threats are on the rise, because more often than not, we lack tolerance and respect for viewpoints and ideologies that differ from those of our own. Our reluctance to accept different opinions and ideas only shows that we



ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

still have a long way to go.

A sustainable world not just needs more successful doctors, engineers, businesspersons and professionals. It also needs people who care about their surroundings and those around them. For example, industrialists with good technical skills can help to increase our GDP, bring in foreign remittance and create more jobs, but if they lack empathy, they may increase industrial waste, contributing to the environmental crisis and global warming. Empathetic industrialists need to take precautions to protect the environment, while contributing to the economy.

While our GDP is increasing rapidly, problems like disparities between the rich

and the poor, violation of human rights, drug abuse and violence against women and children still persist. No matter what our profession may be, each of us have a responsibility towards the environment, caring about others, respecting others and contributing positively to the world. Ethics, the moral principles that govern the conducting of activities, play a crucial role in this regard.

In Deloitte Global's 2018 Millennial Survey, young workers indicated that the top four skills employers need to ensure long-term success are interpersonal skills, confidence, ethics/ integrity, and critical thinking.

In a developing nation like Bangla-

desh, technical knowledge is immensely important for the youth. However, in the chase to specialise in technical skills, our lack of attention to soft skills has made them more imperative, in this fast-changing world.

With the fourth industrial revolution knocking at the door, advanced technology will take over a large portion of our existing jobs. To sustain and survive in a world ruled by technology, the only tool we have is our human strengths, like tolerance, adaptability, flexibility, compassion and empathy, which differentiates us from machines. We need to utilise our inherent values to solve problems and build a brighter future for our race and our planet.



www.youthop.com

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

Global Peace Summit Turkey 2020 (Fully/ Partial/Self Funded)

Global Peace Summit Turkey 2020 (GPST) is providing opportunities to extraordinary young, competent and enthusiastic peacebuilders from 100+ countries. One, they develop the ideas and road maps moving closer to achieving sustainable development goals. Two, advocating for peace in their communities in order to counter extreme violence, hate and all forms of discrimination.

DEADLINE: Aug 30, 2020 | Conference



The Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust Blue Grants Fund 2020

The Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT) has launched its fourth call for proposals under the Blue Grants Fund (BGF). It is now inviting applications for funds through a competitive "Request for Proposals" process.

DEADLINE: Aug 10, 2020 | Grants

British Council Free Online Courses 2020

British Council is now accepting applications for the British Council free online courses. You will study free online courses from top UK Universities. The British Council courses allow students from every corner of the world to develop their English and discover British culture.

DEADLINE: Ongoing | Scholarships



Combatting unemployment with earnest efforts

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Gontobbo Youth Foundation (GYF) strives to alleviate unemployment for underprivileged communities through their activities. Founded in 2015 by Samaun Afraj Fahim, a student of BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology, the organisation has impacted the lives of 1 lakh people since their inception.

For their project, 'Bhalobashar Phuljhuri', the team distributes greeting cards, chocolates and roses to day labourers on Valentine's Day. "We also sell roses and use the money to help the underprivileged populace," added Fahim. The event was first organised in 2016, during which GYF members

distributed blankets to 2,000 people so far. They also conduct annual flood relief campaigns to help out affected families.

Currently, GYF finances their projects through monthly donations from their team members and from collections. "Few months ago, while collecting donations on the road, our volunteers were tired and we decided to leave. After observing our activities, a beggar dropped in a ten taka note from his bowl into ours. That small act of kindness was very empowering," recalled Fahim.

Their project, 'Sharing Happiness', is conducted during the month of Ramadan. In the last



GYF members and volunteers at their event, 'Sharing Happiness' in Hazaribagh. PHOTOS: COURTESY



A volunteer from the foundation distributes food packages at Adabor.

and volunteers provided a family with a sewing machine, and helped them rebuild their house. Through their event, 'This Winter – Thousands of Smiles', they

five years, the organisation distributed two sewing machines, four rickshaws and one van to help destitute communities. "Until now, we have distributed

new clothes to more than 2,000 disadvantaged children and provided iftar packages to 100 families," said Sadad Himel, a student of Stamford School and the President of GYF, Dhaka. This year, they provided iftar packages to over 200 people every day, along with care packages with groceries for Eid to 1,000 families. Recently, GYF provided month-long food and grocery packages to 660 families across four districts. They conducted their drives in Dhaka, Dinajpur, Bogura and Munshiganj, and organised different awareness campaigns to familiarise people with the impacts of coronavirus.

Their signature event, '2 Takar Hashi', encourages economic self-sufficiency for destitute families. "We aim to show that if people donate just BDT 2 every day, many struggling families

can become self-reliant," said Wasif Ahmed Rafat, a student of Green University and General Secretary of GYF, Dhaka. GYF distributes piggy banks among the registered participants throughout this event. The bank, called 'Shopno', stays with a participant for four months, after which GYF volunteers collect it. In 2018, the foundation helped out three families with the money collected from 108 banks.

Many have lost their jobs due to the ongoing pandemic. Subsequently, GYF members and volunteers intend to distribute 10,000 banks, to support 150 families in need. The foundation began the registration process in July and hopes to distribute all the banks by September. With the help of 270 moderators across 20 districts, they intend to help struggling families by the early months of 2021.