

Transforming Youth Skills for the Future Through Community-Based Projects

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United Nations identifies transforming youth skills for the future of work as a topmost priority in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 with a particular focus on the sustainable development goal 04 – Quality Education. In line with this, developing youth skills is essential for achieving SDGs and catering to job market demands. The modern-day employer expects universities to produce graduates with soft skills such as self-confidence, communication skills, leadership, resilience, self-motivation, etc. This requirement demands many university courses to go beyond traditional classroom teaching and exam-based assessments to encourage students to learn by practically engaging in community projects. These projects enable students to develop many competencies, such as working under pressure, handling stress and managing conflicts, and dealing with diverse personality types that employers highly seek. This study is based on a set of community-based projects assigned to the Level 02 undergraduates of the Department of Human Resource Management, University of Kelaniya, under the subject of Managerial Skills Development with the objective of improving the aforementioned skills of students. The project required students to select any community activity related to the targets specified in SDG 04 in groups of 24 members each and undertake it on their own. Altogether six (06) projects were undertaken by the students. Upon completing the projects, students were asked to complete a questionnaire that obtained their responses on the level of different types of soft skills they improved. The objective of the survey was to identify the soft skills improved while undertaking the projects and thereby evaluate the significance of this project work. It is evident through the results in the form of descriptive statistics using the MS Excel software that these community project-based learning activity has extensively facilitated the learners to improve the soft skills demanded in the job market. Thus, this study contributes to furthering universities' teaching and learning activities to develop and prepare employment-ready graduates.

Keywords: *Community-based projects, Quality education, Skills, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Undergraduates, Youth*



Transforming Youth Skills for Future

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Transforming youth skills for future of work (catering to job market demands) a top priority in achieving SDGs 2030 (United Nations)



University courses to go beyond traditional classroom teaching and exam-based assessments

To empower students to learn by engaging in community projects

Develop competencies sought by employers



Results: Have extensively facilitated
 - soft skills development, aiding employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship
 - providing access to education for rural communities in effective learning environments

Purpose: To focus on the role of higher education institutes and youth in realizing SDG 04

Method

- Respondents - Undergraduates of Department of HRM, University of Kelaniya
- 06 community-based projects on SDG 04 targets
- Instrument - Questionnaire on lifelong learning
- Qualitative data - Project site on the upgrading of education facilities through the projects

HEIs can empower youth to work towards SDGs using simple teaching and learning activities + prepare employment-ready graduates