



## Dressed to Skill

*Excerpt from:*

Arulmani, G., & Nag-Arulmani, S. (2004).  
Career Counselling: A Handbook. New Delhi, India: Tata McGraw Hill.

### Skill Literacy and Work Experience

Skill literacy gaining work experience through internships and placements. Parents are a valuable network that can be used to plan internship programmes. In group situations, students could share their internship experiences with the rest of the class and this in turn disseminates careers information.

Here's a story...

Samuel, a 22 year old young man completed his B.Sc., specialising in Botony, Zoology and Chemistry. Since he didn't want to study any further, Samuel decided to apply for a job. Around the same time, *Azra* also completed a course in type-writing, learned to drive a car and did a short course in Public Relations. *Azra* got a job almost immediately. Samuel, after many months of sending his curriculum vitae to a number of companies and attending interviews, was still unemployed and quite frustrated.

*What was the difference between Agnes and Samuel ?*

*Azra* completed her graduation and entered the world of work with a *set of developed skills*. Samuel on the other hand, began his job search, as a raw and untrained graduate. At the job interview, *Azra's* knowledge of typing and skills related to Public Relations, placed her far ahead of an unskilled graduate. A follow up of these young people over say, the next five years, would reveal that while *Azra's* career would progress quite well, Samuel would continue to find himself in *low skill* employment situations, with poor prospects for advancement. This is the typical story of thousands of young people in our country today.

#### **Skill Literacy**

Skills refer to a person's ability to actually *do something*. When Samuel entered the world of work, his mastery over a specific set of work skill literacy was low. Countless of work, without the necessary the job market. A number of enhance students' knowledge of a provide them with work skills. contribute directly to the problems unemployment. Knowing the theory behind the subject that you are studying is often not enough. Learning to *apply* your knowledge is the key to landing a good job. Therefore, it is important that you acquire *skills* related to the career you are preparing to enter.

**Skill Literacy is  
closely linked to  
employability**

skills was next to nothing. His others like him enter the world skills to compete successfully in graduate courses in India today, set of subjects. But they fail to Low level of skill literacy could of underemployment and

#### **Does Skill Literacy training help?**

We interviewed approximately 244 owners of small - scale industries (potential employers) in an attempt to discover reasons for successful employment. The following interesting points emerged. Employers found applicants, who had "done other things" during their school and college years, far more attractive, than those who only had their graduation certificates to show. "Other things" included participating in literary activities, being a part of a club, social service activities, NCC, Scouts and Guides... anything that addressed skills development. Applicants who were involved in a sport and those who pursued a hobby



stood well ahead of those who had spent all their time “studying”! Skills such as cutting, drawing, marking, drilling, ability to handle a lathe machine, etc, are linked to technical jobs. Typing skills, public relations, filing, office maintenance, skills related to accounts etc., are linked to non-technical jobs. Applicants, who had these skills, were given a job with little hesitation.

### *Develop your Skill Literacy*

The time to develop skill literacy is not just before you apply for a job: it develops over time. You need to create opportunities to enhance your skill literacy. Here are three ideas:

- *Cultivate a hobby seriously:* It is distressing to hear a number of young people say these days that they do not have a hobby. Most of them are so busy studying that there just doesn't seem to be enough time to pursue a hobby. But hobbies are important. Base your relaxation and most develop skills. 

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| <p><b>The Indian employer today is not looking only for fancy degrees.</b></p> |
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 These are days when marks remember marks are not all hobbies on your interest and soon become a source of importantly, hobbies help
- *Learn to use tools:* Screwdrivers, spanners, hammers, pliers...are all part of our everyday lives. It is commonly believed that learning to use tools falls in the male domain only. Not true at all. Boys and girls, all of us need to become familiar with the use of instruments, machines and tools that help make life easier.
- *Look for work experience opportunities:* Working as a volunteer in an organisation, goes a long way in introducing you to basic work skills. Handling the telephone, office manners, dealing with waste (especially in a factory), understanding office routine...are all aspects of skill literacy. If you can say to an interview panel, 'I've worked as a volunteer, in such and such organisation,' you immediately communicate the message that you have been exposed to work-related skills.

The Indian employer today is not looking only for fancy degrees. In fact, more often than not, fancy degrees do not impart the skills necessary to put into practice what the degree has taught you. Develop your skill literacy from today, and you will find you are far ahead when you are in the race to enter a prestigious institute for further education, and when you send your job applications. Enhancing your skill literacy will empower you to break through and soar into the skies of fruitful employment.