
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Faculty Perspectives on the Integration of Soft Skills in the Moroccan Higher Education Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

Soft skills are crucial for achieving professional success and fostering effective social interactions in society. These competencies are in high demand by employers seeking to hire recent graduates. This study aims to explore faculty members' perspectives on integrating soft skills into the Moroccan higher education curriculum. It emphasizes the importance of balancing the integration of soft skills with technical expertise to maximize effectiveness. A structured questionnaire was developed as the primary data collection tool and distributed via social media to university professors across various Moroccan institutions, including the Faculty of Sciences, the Higher School of Technology (EST), the National School of Applied Sciences (ENSAM), and the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences at Moulay Ismail University, as well as the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences and the National School of Applied Sciences at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University in Fez, and the Superior School of Education and Training (ESEF) at Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra. Out of fifty distributed questionnaires, a 50% response rate was achieved. The findings of the study indicate that Moroccan university professors maintain a favorable view of the importance of soft skills, recognizing that the integration of these abilities not only bolsters academic performance but also enhances students' social and academic integration, as well as their career prospects.

KEYWORDS

Soft Skills integration; Moroccan Higher Education; Academic Performance; Career Advancement; Hard Skills; and Curriculum

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1. Introduction

As higher education continues to evolve, there is a growing global emphasis—particularly in Morocco following the introduction of the 2030 ESRI Pact—on equipping students with not only academic knowledge but also essential soft skills.

The term 'soft skills' refers to a range of competencies, including communication, collaboration, critical thinking, adaptability, and leadership, among others (Robles, 2012). These skills are considered complementary to specialized, technical skills, which are focused on expertise in a specific discipline or profession. As employers increasingly prioritize candidates who possess a well-rounded blend of technical expertise and interpersonal intelligence, the need for higher education institutions to cultivate these competencies has become a central topic of debate and inquiry (Bridgstock, 2009).

Recent research highlights the growing importance of embedding soft skills into Moroccan higher education curricula to enhance graduate employability, especially following the introduction of the 2030 ESRI Pact. Studies show that skills, such as communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and critical thinking are crucial for success in the modern workforce (Aziz & Zaidoune, 2022; Elouaali et al., 2024).

Although opinions may differ on which specific competencies should be prioritized, both educators and employers recognize the value of these skills (Jabri, 2023). Effective strategies for integration include embedding non-academic development programs, providing ongoing pedagogical training, and using collaborative teaching methods, such as role-playing exercises and discussions (Jabri, 2023; Elouaali et al., 2024).

To support this integration, recommendations include developing soft skills curricula, training educators, and partnering with external organizations for skills certification (Riahi, 2022). Additionally, studies suggest that communication skills are closely linked with other soft skills, highlighting their central role in skill development (Riahi, 2022). Overall, these findings underscore the need for a comprehensive approach to soft skills education in Moroccan universities to better prepare graduates for the workforce.

For successful implementation, advocated strategies include designing targeted soft skills programs, refining educators' instructional methods, and collaborating with external agencies for accreditation (Riahi, 2022). Furthermore, studies demonstrate that communication skills are deeply intertwined with other critical soft skills, emphasizing their importance in the holistic development of key competencies (Riahi, 2022). These findings collectively highlight the urgency of developing a unified strategy for soft skills education within Moroccan universities, designed to equip graduates with the essential competencies needed to excel in the professional realm.

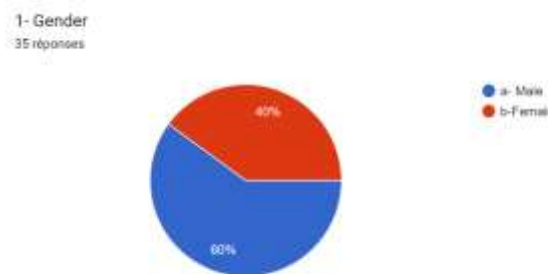
This paper seeks to enrich the current body of literature by examining Moroccan university professors' perspectives on the integration of soft skills within the national higher education curriculum. By exploring faculty experiences, preferences, and perceptions regarding the inclusion of soft skills in academic programs, this study aims to offer valuable insights that can inform both educational policy and pedagogical practices. Ultimately, the goal is to advocate for a more holistic approach to higher education—one that not only fosters technical proficiency but also cultivates the interpersonal and cognitive abilities crucial for success in a wide range of professional environments.

In conclusion, the integration of soft skills into Moroccan higher education curricula is crucial for enhancing graduate employability, improving workplace performance, and supporting long-term professional success. As Moroccan universities continue to evolve, adopting a holistic approach to education that balances technical expertise with essential soft skills will better prepare students for the challenges of the modern workforce.

2.Methodology

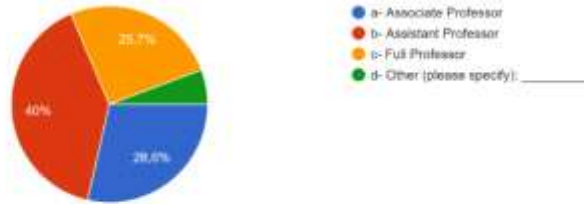
Soft skills play a pivotal role in achieving academic and professional success alongside facilitating effective social interactions within society. These competencies are increasingly demanded by employers seeking to recruit recent graduates. This study aims to investigate faculty members' perceptions regarding soft skills impediment in the Moroccan higher education curriculum. It underscores the necessity of a balanced integration of soft skills alongside technical expertise to ensure optimal effectiveness for university students' academic and professional growth. A structured google form questionnaire was developed as the primary data collection tool and distributed via social media to university professors across various Moroccan institutions, including the Faculty of Sciences, the Higher School of Technology (EST), the National School of Applied Sciences (ENSAM), and the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences at Moulay Ismail University, as well as the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences and the National School of Applied Sciences at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University in Fez, and the Superior School of Education and Training (ESEF) at Ibn Tofail University in Kenitra. Out of fifty distributed questionnaires, a 50% response rate was achieved. The findings of the study indicate that Moroccan university professors maintain a favorable view of the importance of soft skills, recognizing that the integration of these abilities not only bolsters academic performance but also enhances students' social and academic integration, as well as their career prospects.

2.1 Demographic Information



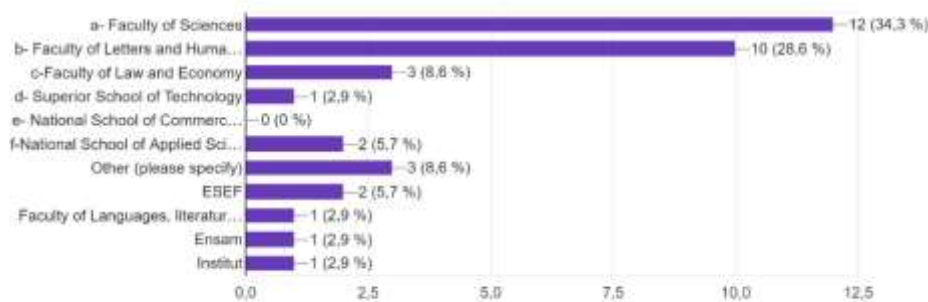
The data indicates that 60% of the respondents are male faculty members, while 40% are females.

1. What is your academic title?
35 réponses



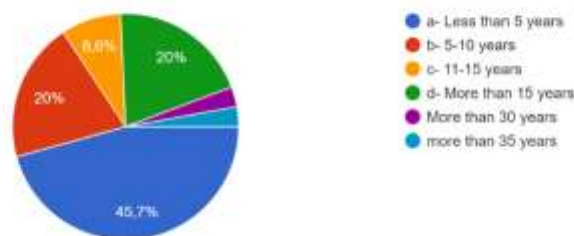
The distribution of academic ranks among the respondents is as follows: 40% are assistant professors, 28.6% are associate professors, and 25.7% are full professors.

2- Which faculty are you affiliated to?
35 réponses



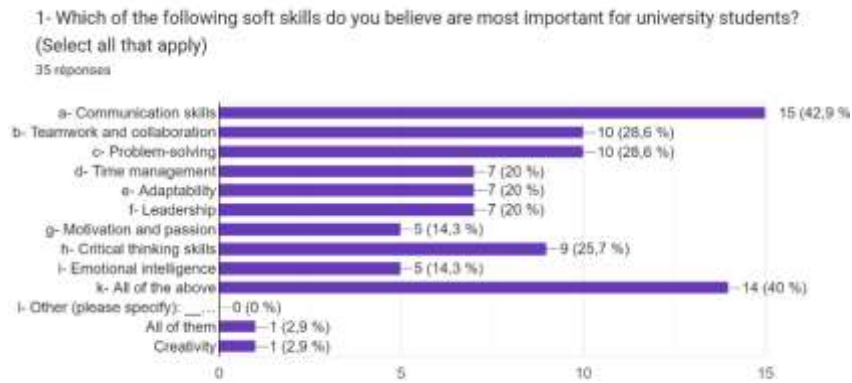
The respondents in this study are university professors from several public institutions. Specifically, they are affiliated with Moulay Ismail University, which includes the Faculty of Sciences, the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, the Higher School of Technology (FST), and the National School of Applied Sciences (ENSA). Additionally, respondents from Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University are from the National School of Applied Sciences (ENSA). For Ibn Tofail University, the respondents are from the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences and the Superior School of Education and Training (ESEF). Lastly, respondents from Hassan 1st University are affiliated with the Faculty of Sciences and Techniques (FST) in Settat.

3- The number of years of teaching experience:
35 réponses



The data reveals that 45.7% of respondents have less than five years of teaching experience, indicating a significant proportion of relatively new university professors. Meanwhile, an equal proportion (20%) of respondents have been teaching for more than fifteen years and between five to ten years, demonstrating a balanced representation of mid-career and highly experienced educators. Lastly, 8.6% of respondents fall within the range of eleven to fifteen years of teaching experience, suggesting a smaller group in this transitional stage of their academic careers.

2.2 The Understanding of Soft Skills



The survey results reveal a diverse perspective on which soft skills are deemed most crucial for students. A significant proportion, 42.9%, identify communication skills as the most critical, reflecting their foundational role in soft skill competencies. Meanwhile, 40% of respondents believe all the listed soft skills are equally important, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to skill development.

Other soft skills are also highly valued, with 28.6% highlighting teamwork and collaboration as well as problem-solving. Similarly, 20% of respondents attribute importance to time management, adaptability, and leadership, showcasing these as essential traits for navigating academic and professional challenges. Critical thinking is acknowledged by 25.7% of respondents, while 14.3% emphasize motivation, passion, and emotional intelligence. Interestingly, creativity is least prioritized, receiving only 2.9%, suggesting it may be perceived as less immediately impactful compared to other skills.

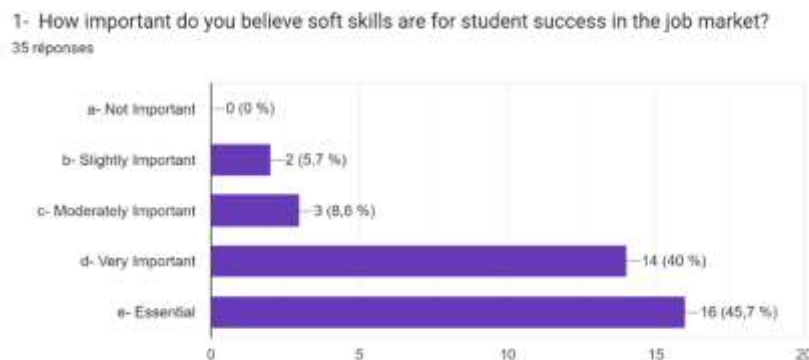
One respondent succinctly captured the importance of communication skills, stating:

"Communication skills are like the surface which proves that students have acquired soft skills competencies."

This statement underscores the pivotal role of communication as a visible indicator of a student's soft skill proficiency. Communication skills serve as the medium through which other competencies—such as teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking—are expressed and applied. Without strong communication abilities, even the most technically adept or emotionally intelligent individual may struggle to demonstrate their full potential in academic or professional settings.

These findings suggest that educational programs should emphasize communication as a cornerstone skill, while also fostering a balanced development of complementary soft skills. By doing so, students can build a well-rounded skill set that equips them for success in both academia and their future careers.

2.3 The Importance of Soft Skills



The survey results highlight the significant value attributed to soft skills in students' academic and professional development. A total of 45.7% of respondents believe that soft skills are essential, while 40% rate them as very important. This indicates that an

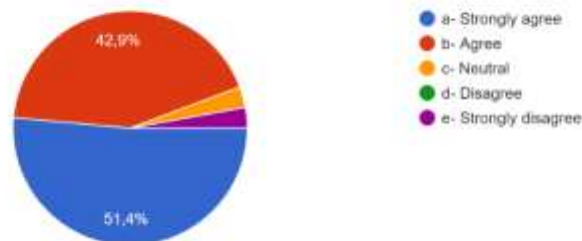
overwhelming majority (85.7%) recognize the critical role of soft skills. Additionally, 8.6% view them as moderately important, and only 5.7% consider them slightly important, showing minimal skepticism about their impact.

One respondent underscored the importance of soft skills with the following statement: "Soft skills mirror hard skills and hence allow graduate students to be swiftly chosen by recruiters."

This observation emphasizes the complementary relationship between soft and hard skills. While hard skills reflect technical expertise, soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and emotional intelligence enhance a graduate's ability to effectively apply their technical knowledge in real-world scenarios. Recruiters, therefore, prioritize candidates who demonstrate both, as soft skills often bridge the gap between competence and professional success.

These findings underline that educational institutions should integrate soft skills training into their curriculum, not only to bolster students' academic achievements but also to ensure their readiness for a competitive job market.

2- You believe that soft skills impact students' academic performance
35 réponses



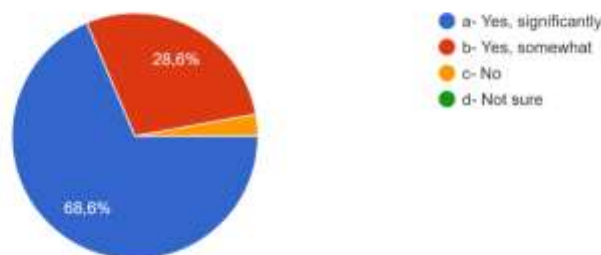
The majority of respondents strongly believe that soft skills play a crucial role in influencing students' academic performance. They argue that students who develop essential soft skills—such as teamwork, self-confidence, passion, and motivation in their chosen field of study—are more likely to achieve academic success and excel in their professional endeavors.

One respondent emphasized this viewpoint, stating:

"Students have become conscious that soft skills positively impact their academic growth."

This insight suggests that fostering soft skills is not only beneficial for students' academic journeys but also instrumental in preparing them for real-world challenges and career opportunities.

3- Do you think soft skills contribute to students' social integration?
35 réponses



All of my respondents believe that soft skills contribute significantly to students' social integration. One respondent explained: "Soft skills help students step out of their comfort zones and acquire the social skills that are essential for their social integration, academic progress, and professional growth."

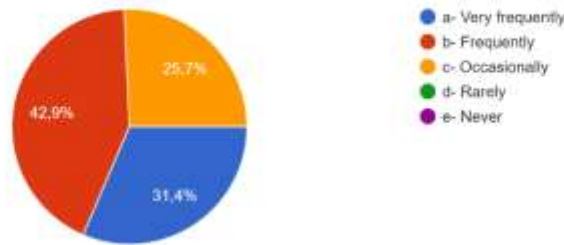
The data shows unanimous agreement among respondents that soft skills play a crucial role in students' ability to integrate socially, both within the academic environment and in their professional lives. Soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and emotional intelligence enable students to interact more effectively with peers, faculty, and potential employers. The quote from one respondent underscores the importance of these skills in encouraging students to engage outside their comfort zones, which is

essential for developing the social competencies necessary for success. These skills not only enhance students' social integration but also contribute to their academic and professional development, making them more adaptable and prepared for the demands of both higher education and the workforce.

This perspective highlights the interconnectedness of soft skills with other aspects of student development, reinforcing the argument that a holistic approach to education—one that nurtures both technical knowledge and interpersonal abilities—is crucial for preparing students to face the challenges of the modern world.

2.4 The Integration of Soft Skills in Higher Education Curriculum

1- How often do you incorporate soft skills training in your courses?
35 réponses



42.9% of respondents claim that they frequently incorporate soft skills training into their courses, while 31.4% indicated that they do so very frequently, and 25.7% noted that they incorporate soft skills occasionally.

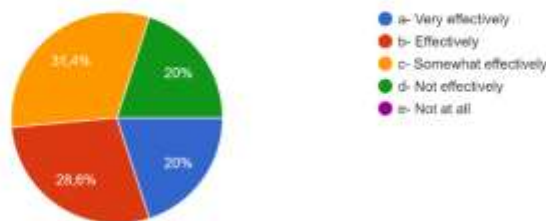
The data suggests that there is a considerable emphasis on the integration of soft skills in the courses of Moroccan university faculty members. 42.9% of respondents report incorporating soft skills training frequently, implying that a significant portion of faculty members see the value in regularly emphasizing these competencies within their teaching practices. A further 31.4% of respondents state that they do so very frequently, highlighting a strong commitment to integrating soft skills as a core component of their teaching. In contrast, 25.7% of faculty members incorporate soft skills occasionally, suggesting that, for some, these competencies are addressed sporadically or on an as-needed basis.

One of the respondents provided further insight into this practice, stating: "We have to include soft skills into our courses for an effective teaching and learning process and to boost students' personal development inside and outside the classroom."

This statement reflects a shared belief among faculty that integrating soft skills is essential for creating a well-rounded education. It emphasizes that soft skills are not only important for academic success but also for fostering students' personal development, both in academic settings and beyond the classroom environment. The integration of soft skills into the curriculum is seen as key to preparing students for real-world challenges, ensuring they are equipped with the essential interpersonal and cognitive skills needed for success in their professional lives.

Overall, this data shows that the majority of respondents recognize the importance of soft skills and understand their value in enhancing the overall educational experience. The varied frequency of integration suggests a need for more consistent strategies and perhaps further support to encourage widespread, frequent inclusion of soft skills across the curriculum.

2- How effectively are soft skills integrated into the current curriculum?
35 réponses



31.3% of respondents claimed that soft skills are effectively integrated into the current curriculum, 31.3% rated the integration as moderately effective, 18.8% indicated that they are very effectively integrated, and 18.8% stated that soft skills are not effectively integrated at all.

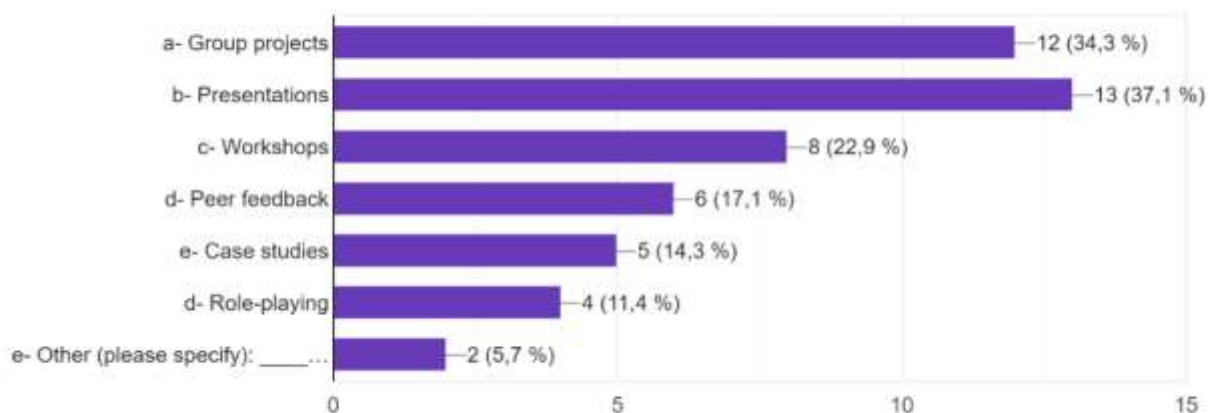
This data reveals varying opinions on the integration of soft skills in the current curriculum. A significant 31.3% of respondents believe that soft skills are effectively integrated, indicating that a portion of faculty members feel that current teaching practices adequately address soft skills development. An equal percentage (31.3%) rated the integration as moderately effective, suggesting a middle ground where soft skills are included but perhaps not with the intensity or focus required to yield optimal results.

On the other hand, 18.8% of respondents think that soft skills are very effectively integrated, showing that some faculty members feel that soft skills training is well-embedded in the curriculum. Conversely, an equal 18.8% of respondents argued that soft skills are not effectively integrated at all, highlighting a gap or deficiency in how these competencies are currently taught in Moroccan higher education institutions.

This distribution of responses indicates that there is a mixed perception regarding the integration of soft skills. While a significant portion of faculty members acknowledge the importance of soft skills, the effectiveness and depth of their integration into the curriculum remain subjects of debate.

3- Which methods do you use to teach soft skills? (Select all that apply)

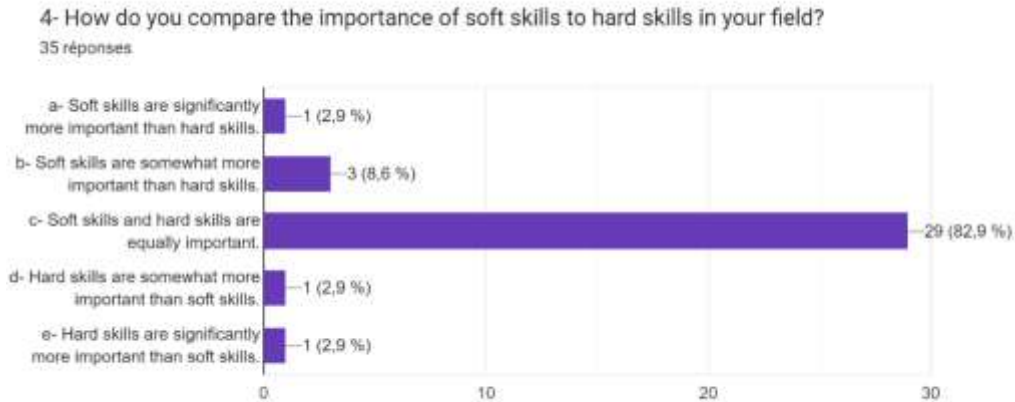
35 réponses



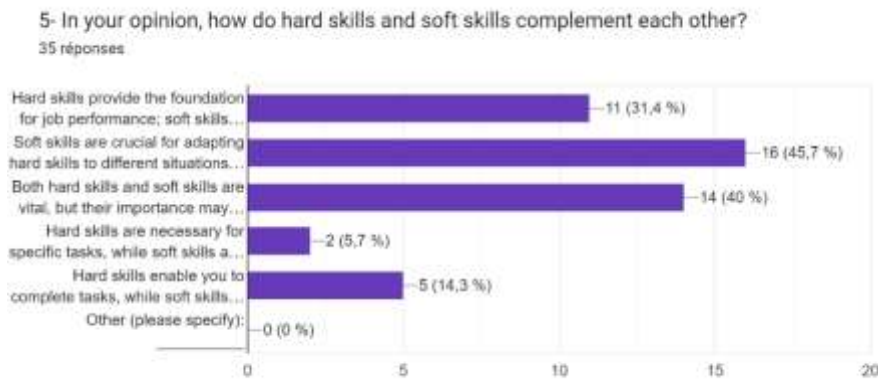
The majority of respondents believe that presentations are the most commonly used method for teaching soft skills, followed by group projects at 34.3%, workshops at 22.9%, peer feedback at 17.1%, case studies at 14.3%, and role-playing at 11.4%.

This graph illustrates the methods most frequently employed by faculty members to teach soft skills. According to the data, presentations are the most widely used method, with the majority of respondents selecting it as their preferred approach for soft skills development. Following presentations, group projects are the second most popular method, with 34.3% of respondents indicating they use them regularly. Workshops (22.9%) and peer feedback (17.1%) come next, while case studies (14.3%) and role-playing (11.4%) are less commonly used.

Respondents emphasized the significant role of presentations in promoting students' self-development and academic growth, as these exercises allow students to build confidence and improve their public speaking skills. Regarding group projects, faculty members noted that this method fosters teamwork, an essential skill for students' personal, academic, and professional growth. Group work helps students collaborate effectively, solving problems together and learning the value of shared responsibility in a team environment.



This graph shows the percentage of respondents who believe that soft skills and hard skills hold equal importance in the context of student education and career success. According to the data, 81.3% of respondents agree that both sets of skills are equally significant, highlighting the importance of a balanced approach to education that includes both technical knowledge (hard skills) and interpersonal or cognitive abilities (soft skills). This finding suggests a broad consensus among faculty members that preparing students with both technical expertise and essential personal skills is crucial for their overall success in the workforce.



The data reveals diverse perspectives on the significance of soft and hard skills in professional development. A significant portion (45.7%) of respondents believe that soft skills are crucial for adapting to different situations, highlighting their role in flexibility and resilience. Meanwhile, 40% of respondents emphasize the complementary nature of hard and soft skills, suggesting that their importance varies depending on the specific job role.

Additionally, 31.4% of respondents assert that hard skills provide the foundation for job performance, while soft skills drive effective communication and collaboration. This perspective underscores the idea that while technical expertise is necessary, interpersonal and communicative abilities are key to working productively in teams. Further, 14.3% of respondents indicate that hard skills enable task completion, whereas soft skills ensure effective engagement and influence over colleagues and clients. Lastly, 5.7% highlight the distinction between the two, suggesting that hard skills are necessary for task execution, while soft skills are vital for leadership and relationship-building.

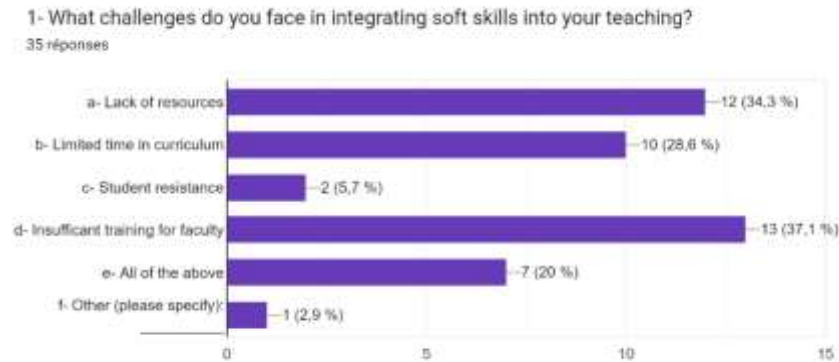
One respondent encapsulated this interplay by stating:

"Soft and hard skills are complementary since the former boost students' personal development and hence allow them to master the hard skills effectively."

This statement reflects the symbiotic relationship between soft and hard skills. Soft skills such as adaptability, communication, and teamwork enhance personal growth, fostering an environment where individuals can acquire and refine their technical abilities. In practice, soft skills often amplify the effectiveness of hard skills by ensuring they are applied thoughtfully and collaboratively.

The findings highlight the need for a balanced approach in education and professional training, where equal emphasis is placed on developing both soft and hard skills. By doing so, students and professionals are better equipped to meet the dynamic demands of the modern workplace and to thrive in roles that require both technical expertise and interpersonal excellence.

2.5 Challenges and Recommendations

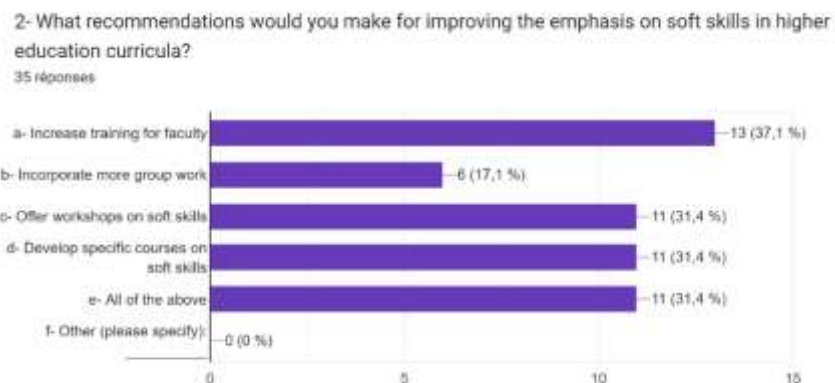


The findings highlight several challenges faced by university professors in incorporating soft skills into their teaching practices. A significant portion of respondents (37.1%) identified insufficient training for faculty as the primary obstacle, followed closely by a lack of resources (34.3%). Additionally, 28.6% pointed to limited time within the curriculum as a significant constraint, reflecting the difficulty of balancing technical content with skill-building activities.

Interestingly, 20% of respondents selected "all of the above," indicating that these issues are often interconnected and collectively hinder effective integration of soft skills into education. Student resistance to soft skills training was noted by 5.7% of respondents, while 2.9% mentioned other unspecified challenges, suggesting that individual circumstances or contextual factors may also play a role.

One respondent emphasized the importance of addressing these challenges, stating: "University professors are in dire need of continuous training to improve the incorporation of soft skills for a successful teaching process."

This statement highlights the critical role of professional development in equipping faculty with the tools and strategies necessary to integrate soft skills effectively. Continuous training programs can help professors better understand the value of soft skills, develop innovative teaching methodologies, and foster an environment where these skills can be nurtured alongside academic knowledge.



The data indicates several strategies proposed to enhance the integration of soft skills in academic settings. A significant 37.1% of respondents prioritize increasing training opportunities for university professors, emphasizing the need for faculty to be better equipped to teach and model soft skills effectively. Meanwhile, 31.4% of respondents highlight three key approaches: offering workshops on soft skills, developing specific courses dedicated to soft skills, and adopting all these measures collectively. This reflects a strong preference for a multifaceted approach that addresses the development of both faculty and students. Additionally,

17.1% of respondents advocate for incorporating more group work into the curriculum. Group work fosters collaboration, teamwork, and communication—key soft skills that are essential for academic and professional success.

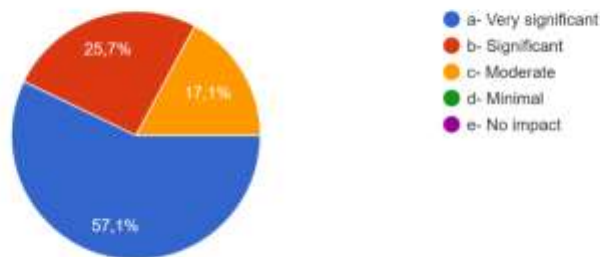
The results underscore the importance of faculty development in the successful integration of soft skills. Increasing training opportunities for professors is a foundational step, as faculty members serve as role models and primary facilitators for students' skill acquisition. Workshops and specialized courses on soft skills can provide both theoretical and practical frameworks for enhancing these competencies.

The emphasis on group work highlights the value of experiential learning. By working collaboratively on tasks, students not only practice problem-solving and interpersonal skills but also learn to navigate real-world dynamics, preparing them for professional environments.

2.6 Guidelines

1- What impact do you believe soft skills have on students' future employability?

35 réponses



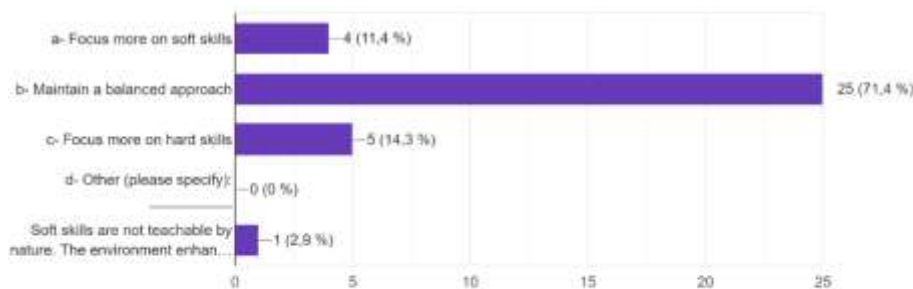
The survey results indicate that a majority of respondents (57.1%) consider soft skills to have a very significant impact on students' future employability. Additionally, 25.7% believe the impact is significant, reflecting a strong consensus on the importance of these skills in preparing students for the job market. Meanwhile, 17.1% rate the impact as moderate, suggesting that although they recognize the relevance of soft skills, they may place relatively greater emphasis on other factors, such as technical expertise or academic qualifications.

The data clearly underscores the critical role of soft skills in enhancing students' employability. With over 80% of respondents categorizing their impact as significant or very significant, it is evident that soft skills are seen as essential in bridging the gap between academic preparation and the demands of the professional world. These skills—such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and emotional intelligence—are increasingly valued by employers as they complement technical proficiency and enable graduates to thrive in diverse workplace environments.

The 17.1% of respondents who view the impact as moderate may reflect a perspective that prioritizes hard skills or domain-specific knowledge in securing employment. However, this could also suggest that soft skills are seen as one component of a broader set of competencies required for career success.

2- In your opinion, how should universities balance the teaching of hard skills and soft skills?

35 réponses



The survey results highlight diverse perspectives on how to approach the development of soft and hard skills in education. A significant majority (71.4%) of respondents advocate for maintaining a balanced approach, emphasizing the need to integrate both skill sets for comprehensive student development.

Meanwhile, 14.3% of respondents believe that focusing more on hard skills is essential, suggesting a preference for technical proficiency and domain-specific knowledge as the foundation for academic and professional success. Conversely, 11.4% prioritize focusing more on soft skills, indicating recognition of their growing importance in fostering effective communication, teamwork, and adaptability in the workplace.

Notably, 2.9% of respondents argue that soft skills are not teachable by nature, instead emphasizing that the environment plays a crucial role in enhancing these skills. This perspective implies that soft skills are better cultivated through real-world experiences and social interactions rather than formal instruction.

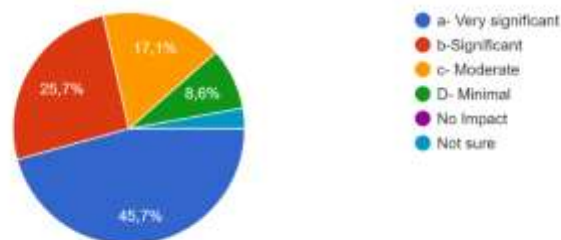
The strong preference for a balanced approach reflects a widespread understanding that neither hard skills nor soft skills alone are sufficient to prepare students for the complexities of modern careers. While hard skills are critical for task execution and problem-solving, soft skills enhance collaboration, leadership, and the ability to adapt to dynamic environments. This balanced view aligns with the demands of employers who increasingly seek well-rounded graduates equipped with both technical and interpersonal competencies.

The emphasis on hard skills by a subset of respondents may reflect the continued importance of technical expertise in certain fields, especially in STEM or specialized professions where technical proficiency is non-negotiable. On the other hand, the focus on soft skills highlights the growing recognition of their value in building professional relationships and thriving in roles that require emotional intelligence and effective communication.

The minority view that soft skills are not teachable and are shaped by the environment raises an interesting debate. While soft skills may indeed be influenced by personal experiences and contexts, structured educational initiatives such as group projects, internships, and mentorship programs can provide a conducive environment for their development.

4- How do you believe collaborations between universities and businesses contribute to the development of soft skills in students?

35 réponses



The survey results shed light on the perceived contribution of collaboration between universities and businesses in the development of soft skills in students. A significant 45.7% of respondents consider this collaboration to be very significant, emphasizing the importance of partnerships between educational institutions and the business sector in fostering essential soft skills.

A further 25.7% of respondents view the contribution as significant, indicating a strong recognition of its value but perhaps with slightly less emphasis compared to the majority. Meanwhile, 17.1% categorize the contribution as moderate, suggesting that while they acknowledge its role, they may place greater emphasis on other methods of skill development. Finally, 8.6% perceive the collaboration as minimal, indicating that they see limited impact or believe that other factors might play a more prominent role in enhancing soft skills.

The data demonstrates a strong consensus on the positive impact of university-business collaboration on students' soft skill development. With 71.4% of respondents (those who consider the collaboration to be "very significant" or "significant") recognizing its importance, it's clear that such partnerships are seen as essential for providing students with real-world exposure and experiences that cultivate critical interpersonal skills like communication, teamwork, and adaptability.

The moderate (17.1%) and minimal (8.6%) responses may suggest that some respondents either believe there are more effective ways to develop soft skills or that the quality of the collaboration may vary depending on the details of the partnership. This could reflect concerns about the depth and structure of these collaborative initiatives, which might not always offer the level of engagement or skill-building opportunities required for impactful learning.

3. Discussion

The findings of this study can be classified into four major categories namely, understanding soft skills, their relevance for students' academic and professional growth, their integration into the Moroccan higher education curriculum, and guidelines for their development.

Soft skills are essential for expressing and applying other competencies, such as teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking. Among these, communication emerges as the cornerstone, enabling individuals to collaborate, share ideas, and succeed in academic and professional contexts. Without strong communication skills, even the most technically skilled or emotionally intelligent individuals may struggle to demonstrate their abilities effectively. This study highlights the need for educational programs to prioritize communication as a foundational skill while fostering the development of complementary soft skills. Adopting a holistic approach ensures that students are prepared to achieve success not only in their academic endeavors but also in their future careers.

Soft skills significantly complement hard skills, creating a balance between technical expertise and interpersonal abilities. While hard skills are necessary for task execution and problem-solving, soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and emotional intelligence enhance a graduate's capacity to apply knowledge in real-world scenarios. The study reveals that 81.3% of respondents consider both skill sets equally important for student success.

This perspective aligns with the needs of modern employers, who increasingly prioritize candidates with a combination of technical proficiency and interpersonal excellence. Furthermore, respondents emphasized that students with well-developed soft skills—including teamwork, self-confidence, and motivation—are more likely to excel academically. These skills also facilitate social integration, enabling students to interact effectively with peers, faculty, and potential employers. By developing these abilities, students gain the confidence and adaptability required to thrive in diverse academic and professional environments.

Integrating soft skills into higher education curricula is crucial for preparing students to meet real-world challenges. Faculty members highlighted the effectiveness of experiential learning activities, such as presentations and group projects, in fostering these competencies. Presentations help students build confidence and improve public speaking skills, while group projects encourage teamwork, problem-solving, and shared responsibility. These methods not only contribute to academic success but also prepare students for collaborative professional settings.

The study also underscores the importance of university-business collaborations in soft skills development. With 71.4% of respondents recognizing their significance, these partnerships provide students with practical exposure and opportunities to cultivate interpersonal skills. Initiatives like internships, mentorship programs, and industry-led projects bridge the gap between academic preparation and workplace demands, ensuring that graduates are better equipped to excel in their professional careers.

The findings offer actionable insights into how educational institutions can enhance soft skills development:

- **Integrating Soft Skills into Curricula:** Courses and modules should explicitly focus on skills like communication, teamwork, and adaptability, alongside technical education.
- **Emphasizing Experiential Learning:** Structured activities such as group projects, presentations, and internships provide practical opportunities to develop and apply soft skills.
- **Fostering University-Business Partnerships:** Collaborating with industry allows students to gain real-world experience and mentorship, effectively linking academic learning with workplace expectations.
- **Balancing Hard and Soft Skills:** Educational programs must place equal emphasis on technical knowledge and interpersonal abilities, reflecting the needs of today's job market.
- **Continuous Assessment and Feedback:** Institutions should implement mechanisms for evaluating and refining students' soft skills through peer reviews, self-assessments, and instructor feedback.

Soft skills are indispensable for academic and professional success, serving as a bridge between technical knowledge and its real-world application. Communication skills, in particular, are critical for effectively expressing and applying other competencies. The findings of this study underscore the importance of a balanced approach to education—one that integrates both soft and hard skills through experiential learning and university-business collaboration. By implementing structured strategies, educational institutions can prepare students to navigate the complexities of the modern world, ensuring they are equipped to succeed in their personal and professional lives.

4. Conclusions

This study highlights the crucial role of soft skills in shaping both academic success and professional growth. Soft skills, particularly communication, form the foundation for expressing key competencies like teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating soft skills into educational curricula to ensure students are well-prepared for future careers. A balanced approach that combines soft and hard skills is essential for meeting the evolving demands of the modern job market. Through experiential learning activities, such as group projects and internships, students can develop the confidence and adaptability necessary for success in diverse environments. Additionally, university-business collaborations are key to providing practical exposure and bridging the gap between academic knowledge and professional expectations. By adopting strategies that

prioritize soft skills development, educational institutions can equip students with the competencies needed to thrive in their personal and professional lives.

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