

Critical Core Skills Profiling in the Singaporean Workforce

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Abstract : Soft skills, core competencies, and generic competencies are exchangeable terminologies often used to represent a similar concept. In the Singapore context, such skills are currently being referred to as Critical Core Skills (CCS). In 2019, SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) reviewed the Generic Skills and Competencies (GSC) framework that was first introduced in 2016, culminating in the development of the Critical Core Skills (CCS) framework comprising 16 soft skills classified into three clusters. The CCS framework is part of the Skills Framework, and whose stated purpose is to create a common skills language for individuals, employers and training providers. It is also developed with the objectives of building deep skills for a lean workforce, enhance business competitiveness and support employment and employability. This further helps to facilitate skills recognition and support the design of training programs for skills and career development. According to SSG, every job role requires a set of technical skills and a set of Critical Core Skills to perform well at work, whereby technical skills refer to skills required to perform key tasks of the job. There has been an increasing emphasis on soft skills for the future of work. A recent study involving approximately 80 organizations across 28 sectors in Singapore revealed that more enterprises are beginning to recognize that soft skills support their employees' performance and business competitiveness. Though CCS is of high importance for the development of the workforce's employability, there is little attention paid to the CCS use and profiling across occupations. A better understanding of how CCS is distributed across the economy will thus significantly enhance SSG's career guidance services as well as training providers' services to graduates and workers and guide organizations in their hiring for soft skills. This CCS profiling study sought to understand how CCS is demanded in different occupations. To achieve its research objectives, this study adopted a quantitative method to measure CCS use across different occupations in the Singaporean workforce. Based on the CCS framework developed by SSG, the research team adopted a formative approach to developing the CCS profiling tool to measure the importance of and self-efficacy in the use of CCS among the Singaporean workforce. Drawing on the survey results from 2500 participants, this study managed to profile them into seven occupation groups based on the different patterns of importance and confidence levels of the use of CCS. Each occupation group is labeled according to the most salient and demanded CCS. In the meantime, the CCS in each occupation group, which may need some further strengthening, were also identified. The profiling of CCS use has significant implications for different stakeholders, e.g., employers could leverage the profiling results to hire the staff with the soft skills demanded by the job.

Keywords : employability, skills profiling, skills measurement, soft skills

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