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Differences OnThe Implementation Of Learning
Soft Skills At Colleges In Indonesia
(Case Study At 7 Colleges)

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Abstract

Lately, soft skills have been recognized as an important part of successes. Therefore soft skills lessons sought to be given as part of the educational process. Attempts to improve students' soft skill have been done formally and informally and the effort should be done continuously despite the difficulties in measuring their impact. This study observes the differences in the soft skills learning implementations at colleges in Indonesia, especially those who had received funding from the government for that purpose. This study further explores the implementation strategies and methods of soft skills learning. A total of 7 colleges from different regions were taken as samples. The findings from this study show that there are differences in soft skill learning implementation. Some of the colleges use a formal strategy while others use a less formal one. The formal implementation is indicated by using soft skills as a component of the final grade. Some colleges put a whole learning soft skills in the curriculum, while others specifically embedded at a particular subject. With an informal strategy, some colleges implement the soft skills learning through non-curricular activities.

Key word: soft skills, formal implementation, informal implementation, college differences, embedded

INTRODUCTION

A top-notch human resource is one which possesses both, the soft and hard skills. A research from Harvard University (2010) has shown that successful people in the world attribute 87.5 % of their success to their soft skills and only 12.5 % of their success to their hard skills.

In order to address the aforementioned issue, colleges should include both the hard and soft skills when formulating their curriculums. In reality, it is quite difficult to apply soft skills

learning. Various colleges apply their own methods to do it. This research examines the implementation of soft skills learning in 7 colleges, especially those which are given special grant from the government specifically to implement soft skills learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hard skills is described as a behavior or skills which are visible to the eye or are explicit (Suharti, 2005). According to another definition, hard skills are skills whose results are visible and immediate (Fachrunnisa, 2006). Hard skills elements can be seen from IQ, which is characterized by several indicators in various activities, such as in calculating, analysing, designing, knowledge absorbing, model making and critical thinking. Soft skills refer to indicators such as creativity, sensitivity, and intuition which are more directed towards personal qualities behind one's behaviour (Yakob, 1989; Donnelly 1991 from Suharti, 2005). According to Fachrunnisa (2006), a soft skill is the need for experience which awakens one's intuition and allows one to work more efficiently and more effectively. Soft skills are invisible and are not immediate. Examples of soft skills include: adaptability, communication, leadership, decision making capability, problem solving capability, and conflict resolution capability. Some other forms of soft skills are considered as personal qualities. These include responsibility, sociability, self-management, and integrity/honesty.

Soft Skills Attribute

Below are some forms of soft skills which are related to the success in workplace i.e. emotional quotient (Goleman, 1998), healthy lifestyle (Marchand, et al, 2005), and effective Communication (Cangelosi and Petersen, 1998). Soft skills attributes are found on individuals to different extents include their thinking habits, speaking, acting and attitude. These attributes can be changed when one is willing to condition himself with new habits. These

new habits will need to be constantly observed for 90 days straight (Aribowo, 2005). According to Patrick O' Brien (2010), soft skills attribute include communication skills, organization skills, leadership, logic, effort, group skills, and ethics.

Soft skills development can be done by using the following steps:

1. Identify the soft skills needed by a graduate. This can be done by gathering information from alumni or industries which employ graduates.
2. Build the development program which includes (1) written curriculum, which is done by introducing soft skills into the curriculum module, and use them as part of the grade for the module. (2) Hidden curriculum, this can be done informally through lecturer-student interactions with the lecturer as the role model. This could also be done through academic atmosphere. (3) Co-curriculum, this can be done by incorporating soft skill learning process in using internships, practical work, or industrial attachment activity. (4) Extra-curriculum, this can be done by including students' activities as avenues to train students with soft skills
3. Evaluate soft skills implementation, this can be done by clearly defining a suitable scale to gauge the soft skills which have been included in the major's curriculum.

Soft Skills Gauging Methods

Soft skills are more dominated by individual characteristic component, and as such, the scoring procedures can be different individually. Soft skills scoring is directed towards characteristics which are internal and which manifest from one's self such as affective dimension, motivation, attraction, or attitude. The gauging of such characteristics could be done in the following ways.

1. Self Report

Self report is a group of stimuli which consist of statements, questions or a list of self descriptions according to the individual himself. The gauging of soft skills using this method may result in a number of responses from an individual which show the level of soft skills attained. Some gauging instruments designs can be applied in the process such as likert model, guttman or semantic differentiation with some response type modification or sum of alternative response. Response type are generally more directed towards one's agreement (agree-disagree) towards a given statement, or could also be modified into evaluation (good-bad), potential (strong-weak) or behaviour frequency (often-rare) responses.

2. Checklist

A checklist is a type of an affective or behavioural gauge which includes a number of indicators which are mostly adjectives or behaviours. Checklist is more commonly

used to gauging over psychological aspects such as behaviours. In measuring soft skills, checklist is more accurate to be used to gauge the behavioural dimension of a student such as their presentation skills, ways of interacting with others, or problem solving strategies. Peer evaluation technique among students usually employ checklist.

3. Performance Measurement

Some soft skills are related to actual relational ability such as effective communication, problem solving, creative thinking or critical thinking and as such, gauging using self report lose relevance at some point. The accurate design to measure this component can be achieved by using performance check. Performance check is a check against the process or result of an individual's work at a given task. The scoring is done by the lecturers depending on a predetermined rubric. A rubric is a measuring guide which entails performance criteria. The scoring could be carried out when the subject is working or could also be done on the work quality of the given task.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research studies the implementation of soft skills learning in various colleges. The colleges involved are those which are already applying soft skills learning. This research is done through descriptive analysis method. In short, the variables used in this research are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 - Operationalization of variable

Concept	Variables	Indicators
Comparison of soft skills implementation at various colleges	Steps taken to apply soft skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preliminary survey - Soft skills attribute deciding process - Implementation method - Soft skills learning evaluation - Success indicator used
	Variety in soft skills learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applied soft skills attributes - Grading weight age - Learning methods (formal, informal, co or extra-curriculum) - Employed evaluation method - Employed gauging method

FINDING

The collected data show that all colleges observed are using systematic implementation steps. These steps include preliminary survey, soft skills attribute determination, implementation method determination, evaluation method determination and success measuring indicator determination. However, there are some differences in the content of these steps. For example, some colleges involve students at the soft skills attribute step, while others do not. Some colleges also involve experts while others do not. This condition leads to the development of different soft skills attribute at various colleges.

The evaluation of soft skills learning has been done in all colleges, but the progress of its execution is different. Some from the 7 samples have fixed evaluation procedures or even built success indicators, while some others have not decided on their evaluation procedures. This finding is also supported by some lecturers' confessions on their unfamiliarity with the

soft skills implementation evaluation.

Soft skills attribute applied by colleges are generally focused on attributes as predicted by O' Brien (2010), which are communication skills, organizational skills, leadership, logic, effort group skills, and ethics. These attributes are embedded on core modules. Observations during this study find that communication skills is the most commonly taught attribute while effort is the least. Table 2 shows the amount of core modules which have soft skills attribute embedded in them.

Table 2 - In how many subject the soft skills attribute embedded

No	Soft SkillsAttribute	Number of core subject embedded on
1	Communication Skills	17
2	Organization Skills	12
3	Leadership	11
4	Logic	5
5	Effort	4
6	Group Skills	11
7	Ethics	13

Soft skills attributes receive different treatment. Some colleges treat these attributes as a portion of the final marks with weight ranging from 5% to 10%. On the other hand, some colleges treat them only as additional material and hence are not included in the calculation for the final grade. Soft skills implementation evaluation is carried out differently in colleges depending on the module, ranging from informal to formal. The formal evaluation of soft skills learning implementation tend to include soft skills attribute in the final grade while informal evaluation does not. Check list technique is the measurement technique used by colleges with formal soft skill learning while the self report technique is more common for colleges with informal soft skill learning.

Some colleges carry out soft skills learning through extra curricular activities by using two methods. First, soft skills attributes are taught implicitly through students activities. Second, soft skills attributes are taught explicitly at some activities. The result will be a point credit which can be collected cumulatively, and which the collection of some amount of points will be a requirement for graduation.

DISCUSSION

Implementation softskills learning on Higher Education needs to be done systematically through synergy between all the potentials within the college. In addition, policy makers and the ones who implement the program must have a common vision to develop soft skills for students. This will lead to a supportive environment for the soft skill learning. An example of supportive environment is the implementation of soft skill learning at Marketing Management Master Program in University of Indonesia. Soft skills courses are compulsory (non-credit) and are given

in a workshop, namely Presentation and Writing Skills, and Book Review. Character building course that has been started recently at Bina Nusantara University (Sobandi, 2009) is another example.

The variety in formal and informal soft skills learning implementation show that soft skill learning needs to be integrated in academic and non-academic activities. In academic activities, the content of soft skills learning need to be developed in various teaching activities, methods and models. In non-academic activities, a programmed guidance for extra-curricular activities could be established in the form of legalisation and college policy. A survey that is carried out by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (2002) on 457 companies' leaders in the US concludes that social interaction skills (soft skills) is needed if one wants to achieve success. The learning process is not simply a transfer of knowledge in the subject, but it was also identified as a conscious effort by the educators to help students' developing their potential to become graduates with good quality and skills.

The measurement for soft skills implementation differ depending on the module that is taken. Darmiyati Zuchdi (2010) states that when a lecturer delivers a comprehension reading syllabus, a lecturer is delivering values, especially obedience, honesty, responsibility and respect for others. The level of soft skills implementation success will be seen clearly from the differences of obedience and responsibility level. On another note this success could be seen in the improvement of students attitude during the learning process. The observable indicators include teamwork ability, contribution level, tolerance level among colleagues such as refraining self from cutting others' speech. The measurement of soft skills learning success would be better when a combination of qualitative and quantitative data is used. This could be due to characteristics of soft skills itself which content can be both easily observable and not easily observable.

Communication skills is the common applied attribute. Communication skills has been applied in all chosen core modules. This is due to the fact that educational process in colleges is undergoing a shift from content-based education to competency-based one. The education process also shifted from teacher-centered to student-centered learning process. Therefore, communication skills becomes a prime importance for students to learn.

Some colleges can apply soft skills learning using different strategies, formal or informal, implicit (embedded on a subject) or explicit (as a separate subject), and co-curricular or extra-curricular. Even so, its evaluation still has to be done to compare the achievement and the desired result. Mostly of 7 colleges has been using informal strategy.

CONCLUSION

1. In general, colleges have a large extent to apply soft skills in a systematic way, having a definite plan as well as its execution guide.
 2. Colleges use similar steps in applying soft skills learning, even though there are differences in the contents of each step.
 3. The implementation of soft skills learning is still mostly informal, extra-curricular and embedded at specific subjects.
 4. Communication skills, organization skills, leadership, logic, effort, group skills, and ethics are soft skills attributes in some material modules. Communication skills is the common attribute in the core modules.
- <http://successskill.blogspot.com/2010/10/harvard-university-research.html>, accessed on August, 26th 2012.

Soft skills implementation methods in some core modules material in some colleges have no definitive guide as they depend more on each lecturer's creativity. Soft skills evaluation methods exist in general, but mostly are not systematic yet. Soft skills gauging indicators in some modules at various colleges are generally gauged quantitatively and qualitatively.

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