

Investigating the Governance of Students' Soft Skills Development

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ABSTRACT

Students at the university level are required to have some capacity and quality to be useful in their life, and it is related to soft skills. Developing quality in Indonesia requires more effort and new ways or programs for teachers and lecturers. This study aimed at investigating the governance of students' soft skills development in IAIN Lhokseumawe. The research method applied in this research was descriptive qualitative. The subject of this research were four English lecturers and 80 students from four Faculties of IAIN Lhokseumawe. The data collection technique used in this research was Focus Group Discussion and observation. The data were analyzed qualitatively using three stages: data condensation, data display and conclusion drawing. The result of the governance of students' soft skills development was shown in three steps; planning, implementing and evaluating. It was shown that the lecturers had included soft skills in their lesson plans; the semester lesson plans had been implemented adequately included in the evaluation; the assessment done by the lecturers included students' soft skills, and the lecturer has set the types of evaluation in measuring or assessing the student soft skills.

Keywords: Soft skills, research and development, students and graduates' quality

First Received: 2 November 2022	Revised: 28 November 2022	Accepted: 15 December 2022
Final Proof Received: 19 December 2022	Published: 31 December 2022	
How to cite (in APA style): Nurlaila, & Fadhilah, N. (2022). Investigating the Governance of Students' Soft Skills Development. <i>ELITE Journal</i> , 4(2), 109-116.		

INTRODUCTION

Higher education Students are required to have some quality that could be used after they graduate. Since the students will mingle in the society which suitable with their background or not, they need to have some capacity and quality that be useful for their life. The process of getting some quality is included in the way or strategies used during lectures.

This study is more focused on developing student soft skills as it is the quality should be noted by lecturers and university, considering that these skills are very important for students in pursuing their careers after graduating according to the field they worked on while studying at a university. Teaching Soft Skills is a fundamental educational activity that must be started very early at primary school. Soft skills are the traits that make you a good employee, such as etiquette,

communication and listening, getting along with other people. Soft Skills are strategic to be successful in personal and professional lives then are essential for a candidate when he/she tries to obtain any kind of job.

The purpose of this research is to find out the governance of students' softskill development in IAIN Lhokseumawe. Improving soft skills is a fundamental educational activity that is better to be started very early at younger age or at primary school level. In university level, soft skills are not included in real curriculum but it can be taught by the lecturers in hidden way means that it is not taught specifically and can be seen in lesson plan but in fact its parts of lecturers activity in implementing the subjects. In this case, lecturer doesn't only teach the students to pass an exam, but he/she can help the students to train and give better understand their attitudes, to develop their skills then to find their ways in their professional life (Ciappei, 2015). Soft skills include certain abilities such as communication, problem-solving, self-motivation, decision-making, and time management skills.

This research hopefully can create a conception that can be referred to by policy makers of higher education level and the institution in order to broaden their horizons about the existence of community educational organizations. Meanwhile, practically, the results of this research are expected to be conducted and applied at the community in this case lecturers and students, government, and academics in responding wisely to the ways of developing soft skills for students' future career.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education today is a fundamental right in the value of human life. Education has a very important role to support human life because basically humans cannot be separated from education. The implementation and development of educational studies must also be adapted to the conditions and social situations that exist in the community, because education is like an experiment that will never end, as long as human life in this world. It is said so because education is part of human culture and civilization that continues to develop. This is in line with human nature that has creative and innovative potential. In this stage people need some skills to survive and at the end to enter the working world.

Education does not only play a role in creating the young generation as agents of change that bring about change, but the younger generation must be able to become agents of producers who are able to create real change. Education must be a protector not only in terms of formal

education but what is meant is education that is able to change the mindset of the nation's children and innovative education that encourages creativity and innovative power of the nation's children. The younger generation as agents of innovation who can make an important and significant contribution to implementing applicable sustainable development concepts.

For more than a decade, government has plans in education and has stated that the country needs to produce “smart and competitive” individuals who can compete successfully for jobs and other opportunities in an increasingly globalized economy. Consistent with this objective, the government envisages Indonesia’s education system becoming “internationally competitive” by 2025, and growing numbers of Indonesian universities entering the world’s top 500 universities. As the government's main partner in provide human resources, universities are required to play an active role to be able to produce a pass that have a competitive advantage in competition in the world.

There were some relevant researches which discussed about similar things with this research, they are: (1) Wijaya and Hariani (2012) conducted a research about Students' Soft Skill Development Effort in Dealing with the Working World, a case study in Economic-Social Education Department of Tarbiyah Faculty in IAIN Mataram. This research used qualitative approach with the interview as the instrument of collecting data. Based on the data analysis, the results showed that efforts to improve soft skills has been not maximized yet, some efforts exist such as conducting training, improving, develop and define training themes to attract attention of students to take part in soft skills training. There are obstacles from students’ side encountered in the effort to develop students’ soft skills namely; lack of participation, awareness, and discipline. And some obstacles from the organizers, namely; lack of socialization, infrastructure, funding, and limited time. To overcome these obstacles, some efforts are being conducted; (1) Socialization by sticking pamphlets of soft skills training to be held, (2) build the students’ awareness about how important it is to participate in soft skills training, (3) Collaborate with students who have attended training, (4) Advise students to join departmental organizations in increasing student awareness, and (5) Require students to be disciplined.

(2) Aly (2017) conducted research related the fact that learning in college (based on his observations), Indonesia's higher Education level places more emphasis on the hard-to-reach dimension skills rather than soft skills. This study resulted in two important conclusions. First, lecturers can use soft skills to develop the character of college graduates through student activities, with two alternative theories, namely: (1) value theory character education proposed

by Thomas Lickona or the Curriculum Center Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia; and (2) the theory of types of soft skills and their forms put forward by Sailah (2008), both personal and intra-personal or a combination of both skills.

(3) Muhmin (2018) has done a library research about the importance of soft skill development in university. In this research he concluded that the application of curriculum and learning methods based on soft skills is a must for university students, as the relevance of providing workforce needs as required by working world in the era of globalization. The key to successful learning based on soft skills is to pay attention to student-based teaching materials and methods, in addition to having commitment from the university, then lecturer competence to deliver this method must be grade 4 and 5 (scale 1-5). Lecturer as the spearhead, must be able to change the mindset of the learning system, namely: 1) knowledge is result of study construction or transformation; 2) learning is a process of searching and constructing (shaping) the active and specific knowledge; and 3) teaching is carrying out various strategies that can help students to study better.

METHOD

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative method. It was assumed that this method in accordance with finding out the governance system of developing soft skills at university. The setting are all faculties of IAIN Lhokseumawe and first semester students become the research subject. Specifically, it was oriented to English Students who took English Subject at State of Islamic Institute of Lhokseumawe. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and observation were utilized as data collection techniques to find out the information of governance system used to develop students' soft skill. Observation were done to all four Faculties of IAIN Lhokseumawe. The aim of conducting observation was to know ways of teaching soft skills conducted by the lecturers in teaching learning process especially in English Class. FGD was directed to English subject lecturers from those four faculties to meet the research needs. It was conducted to know lecturers' need in teaching English subject and their ways of teaching whether had included soft skills or not. Observation was also done only to cross check both information obtained from FGD.

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's (2014: 23) stated that qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of people. It tends to be purposive rather than random. In this research, the researcher only focuses on some respondents from one institution which was chosen purposively

and examined deeply by using those three ways of collecting data namely questionnaire, FGD and observation. They are methods of improving the immediate analysis task being carried out, advancing the sophistication of later analyses, and deepening the confidence you have in the final conclusions (Miles, Huberman and Saldana: 2014:279).

The data were analyzed in using qualitative concept of data analysis. All of the data obtained from three ways of collecting data mentioned, were analyzed qualitatively. Those data were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldana's model; they are data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Descriptive analysis ways were used to analyze the data in this research to get to know any kinds of information of governance system of developing students' soft skills.

RESEARCH RESULT

The result of the FGD conducted with English Subject lecturers which divided into three parts, namely planning, implementing and evaluating.

In the planning part, it consists of four descriptions; the first one is about whether the semester lesson plans (RPS) that the lecturers make have included soft skills. The second was about the lecturers have included any kinds soft skills in their RPS, the lecturers need more elaboration on more specific kinds of soft skills. The third one was about the lecturers need any reinforcement on the application of those soft skills to be presented at every meeting. The last one in the planning part should be included if those soft skills appropriate to answer students' needs for their future career development

In the implementing part, it consists of eight parts should be included in teaching learning process; namely about the way the lecturers applied soft skills that had been written in the semester lesson plan. The time the lecturers applied soft skills should be separated any kinds of activities; in pre-teaching, while teaching or post teaching sessions. Related to the kinds of soft skills the lecturers need to be applied most were the one that mostly by the students to face their future career. Those were in accordance with the quotation that was quoted from an article published by LinkedIn, there are five soft skills needed in 2022, namely: creativity, persuasion/persuade, collaboration/cooperation, adaptation and time management. The lecturers were suggested to apply those all soft skills were included in the teaching learning process for English courses. Those soft skills suggested by LinkedIn can be used in turns in every sessions. Related to kinds of skills should be dominantly applied in implementing those step to

the students, most of the lecturers believed that there were no specific soft skills that should be dominant used, all of them should be applied in accordance with the need of the students and the condition of the class. Those soft skills should be taught directly as teaching materials, they were included or parts of affective skills. The last information obtained from the result of FGD was that about whether soft skills should be trained by special trainers. All of the respondents said it was a must for the university to conduct such training to develop students' soft skills. This is also as one of some ways of solving problems of having lack of soft skills of graduated students facing nowadays.

In the evaluating part, it consists of only three statements namely about: (1) whether the soft skills that written in the semester lesson plans had been implemented properly included in the evaluation. (2) the way the lecturers assessed the success of student soft skills, and (3) about the types of evaluation mostly they applied in measuring or assessing the student soft skills. The result shown that (1) most of the respondents had implemented the semester lesson plans properly included in the evaluation. (2) the assessment done by the lecturers was included students' soft skills, and (3) the lecturer had set the types of evaluation in measuring or assessing the student soft skills.

In short, it can be said the result of FGD shown that there are some ways of developing students' soft skill at university level namely via hardware and software product. The RPS (Semester Lesson Plans) of English subject was developed to have uniform form at every faculty, the materials presented focussed on general English with focused on four language skills which were also supported by language components and included the topics or materials related to introduce soft skills. What make them different is the specific materials as additional material that should be reflected to their own major that could be possible to focus on English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The materials about English for Islamics Studies (EIS) also included since the topics mostly containing soft skills. Another reason to include the Islamic content materials that it matches with the vision and mission of the institution.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the lecturers should apply this result of research, to modify the model of teaching-learning process which the topics given, to always included soft skills in their daily teaching both in the materials and also in the explanation, to give model in every session of meetings so that it would be followed by the students, to do themselves first every good thing

then ask the students to do, to show good ways of communication not only in class but also outside class. It can also be applied in other subjects by doing any modification specific with the characteristics of the subject itself. The lecturers to have high creativity in creating or developing the instructional materials for each meeting can use the result of development in this research as the sample. Soft skills not only be applied in English subject but it can also be applied in other subject.

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