



The Role of Lecturers in Soft Skill Development Strategies and Character Building in Higher Education

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Abstract

Background. Lecturers have a crucial role as supervisors and educators in forming independent character in all students. Lecturers are required to play a role in developing behavior, attitudes, competitiveness, and independent abilities in facing future challenges.

Aims. This paper aims to discuss the role of lecturers in developing soft skills and character formation in higher education.

Method. The method employed is a literature review from various sources, combined with the author's and lecturer's experience.

Result. Lecturers are required to play an essential role in encouraging student participation and assigning relevant assignments. The exemplary nature of lecturers can increase motivation to learn, encourage students to behave well, and help them achieve educational goals that align with the expected positive values. Lecturers with integrity will provide real-life examples of truth, honesty, and consistency between their actions and the values they adhere to.

Conclusion: To fulfill the role of lecturers in character formation, 10 types of soft skill development strategies need to be implemented in higher education learning.

Implementation. Strategic steps for lecturers in character formation and software improvement need to be applied to all universities, both public and private.

Keywords: soft skills, character, strategy, lecturer, role



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INTRODUCTION

Lecturers are role models for students; therefore, they become one of the role models whose behavior and attitudes will be emulated by all students. A lecturer's figure is able to set a good example in various aspects, such as discipline, work ethic, and integrity. Various other positive values. Thus, the student can learn from examples both on campus and in community life. Various positive aspects are evident in the competence of lecturers, which is a combination of positive attitudes.

Lecturers must create an interactive classroom atmosphere, provide constructive feedback, and design assignments that align with learning objectives and student needs, as per the expected targets. Lecturers can innovate in delivering material using methods agreed upon with students, as outlined in the Semester Presentation Plan (RPS). This can be achieved through case examples, discussion questions, and assignments that align with the learning contract.

The importance of lecturers providing constructive evaluations to students to support their development in achieving practical knowledge (Cecep T. Wijaya, 2023: 51). Constructive evaluations not only provide grades, but also provide input that helps students to understand their shortcomings and improve their abilities. Lecturers who provide constructive feedback can help students understand their mistakes and offer direction to enhance their academic skills, enabling them to continue developing and achieving higher education goals. The development of soft skills on campus is significant in equipping students to pursue their professional goals after graduation. Therefore, a strategy for developing soft skills is necessary in higher education.

According to the opinion of Warni Tune Sumar and Intan Abdul Razak (2016: 132). Soft skills development strategies in the higher education system can be implemented in various ways, including integrating soft skills in the curriculum, providing training and workshops, and encouraging student participation in extracurricular activities and group projects. In addition, according to I Made Wena's opinion. (2010:137). Mentoring and coaching are also crucial for supporting the effective and efficient development of soft skills.

The implementation of soft skills in higher education is essential for developing non-technical skills that complement hard skills, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. This is designed to help students prepare for challenges in the workplace and increase their chances of success in the future.

The formulation of soft skills in the curriculum involves determining and integrating personal and social skills (soft skills) into the educational curriculum, enabling students to develop these skills alongside technical skills (hard skills). The definition of Soft Skill, according to Widarto (2011: 88), is an interpersonal and intrapersonal skill that is important in interacting with others and managing oneself, for example, adaptation and creativity.

Soft skills as learning outcomes refer to the achievement of competencies related to interpersonal and social skills, as students are required to provide a rational and adaptable perspective (Abdul Majid, 2014: 101). These achievements include how individuals can

contribute effectively with others, as well as how they can cope with challenges and changes in the learning and work environment.

Soft skills are non-technical skills that are crucial for the success of graduates in the workforce. The ability to convey ideas and information effectively and persuasively is essential for interacting with colleagues, superiors, and clients. Soft skills have a strong correlation with colleagues and leaders who can facilitate collaboration and productivity. Soft skills can help individuals complete tasks more effectively, improve the quality of work, and achieve better results. The definition of performance, according to Kaswan (2013: 43), is an action that can be taken to meet expectations within predetermined targets.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Uhar Suharsaputra (2015: 255) revealed that lecturers are identical as educators in higher education but carry out research and community service. Summarizing in Uhar Suharsaputra's opinion that the variable of lecturer competence behaves with positive values, which must apply to the character of an educator. According to Robbins (2015: 127), Motivation is a process to explain a person's strength, perseverance, and direction in trying to achieve a goal.

Students who are given knowledge by lecturers to be applied to campus life and outside the campus. Referring to Robbins' opinion above, we can conclude that lecturers who arrive on time, provide clear and relevant assignments, and maintain excellent communication ethics with students can serve as a pertinent example for students.

The role of lecturers can help students to develop positive character, improve their learning abilities, and prepare them for future success. Lecturers apply examples of positive behavior and attitudes, assisting students to develop into individuals with integrity and competitiveness on both national and international scales.

Soft Skill Learning Strategies for the Higher Education System

There are several soft skill development strategies to create higher education learning in both State and Private Universities, namely:

1. Curriculum Integration. Universities can include soft skills in compulsory and non-credit courses, such as communication, leadership, and problem-solving courses. Book Review, Presentation, and Writing Skills courses that have been applied at the University of Indonesia.

2. Thematic Learning. Utilizing a thematic learning approach that incorporates soft skills across all courses.
3. Extracurricular Activities. Provide direction for students to organize student organizations such as clubs, sports teams, or group projects. This activity provides students with the opportunity to practice communication, teamwork, and leadership skills directly.
4. Internship and Practicum Programs. Integrate internship programs or fieldwork practices into the curriculum to provide real-world work experience and enhance accountable soft skills.
5. Training and Workshop. Organizing training and workshops must focus on developing soft skills, such as effective communication, as well as the individual's ability to influence others. This workshop can be enhanced by combining it with hands-on practice to make it more effective and efficient.
6. Mentoring and Coaching. Provide guidance and coaching to students to develop soft skills both individually and in groups. Mentors or coaches can provide feedback and suggestions that are relevant to the needs of the students.
7. Holistic Evaluation. Conducting evaluations does not only focus on academic scores, but also on developing students' soft skills.
8. Lecturer Commitment. Elfindri's opinion. (2012:77). Lecturers must possess the appropriate competencies to implement soft skill-based learning and have a mindset that supports the development of students' soft skills.
9. Collaboration with Industry. Foster cooperation with industry players to offer training, internships, or collaborative projects tailored to the needs of the workforce.
10. Character Development. Engage in activities that foster character development, including religious, social, and humanitarian endeavors.

By applying the above strategies, higher education can produce superior alumni who possess a unique character and specialized knowledge in their respective fields, as well as powerful soft skills, enabling them to solve problems within a company effectively.

Soft Skills as the Key to Graduate Success

Moeheriono (2014: 168) argues that something that can be done at a particular locus can have a positive impact. From the opinions of Kaswan and Moeheriono mentioned above

about performance, it can be concluded that performance is:

1. Real behavior in working according to the company's goals,
2. Can interact with the local environment.
3. Personal ability to deliver real work.
4. The result of a goal for the realization of on-target recognition.
5. The exact outcome of a company's or organization's policies.

The cause and effect of expectations and abuse must be sanctioned if necessary. Nicole Fallon's opinion. (2015: 144). Soft skills can help individuals secure better job opportunities, increase their chances of promotion, and advance to higher positions in their careers.

This time management focuses on machinery, buildings, money, and raw materials that are managed, used efficiently, and effectively to achieve organizational goals. Management is carried out through planning, organizing, resource management, communication, leadership, motivation, and controlling the implementation of tasks and the use of resources. It can be concluded that management is a measurable activity.

METHODS

The research method used is a literature review. Literature review is a term used to refer to a specific research methodology or research and development conducted to collect and evaluate research related to a particular topic of focus.

DISCUSSION

The role of lecturers in shaping the independent character of students is as follows:

1. Supervisor. Lecturers serve as supervisors to guide students through the learning process and foster their potential. Lecturers have a crucial role as academic and moral advisors for students. They not only teach, but also direct students in the process of learning, potential development, and future planning, both academic and career. The role of lecturers to guide students is as follows:
 - a. Lecturers help students plan their studies, choose appropriate courses, and provide guidance in completing academic tasks such as theses and dissertations.
 - b. Lecturers encourage students to develop their talents and interests through extracurricular activities, research, and field practice.

- c. Lecturers help students identify their potential and provide support to develop that potential. Lecturers also act as role models for students and provide moral guidance, helping them form good and responsible character.
 - d. Lecturers provide career guidance, help students prepare for the workforce, provide information about job opportunities, and help them build professional networks.
2. Educate. Lecturers educate students to think critically, take initiative, and accept responsibility for their actions. Lecturers help students develop their potential to carry out various learning and extra-curricular activities (Murni Eva Marlina Rumapea, 2015: 84). Referring to Murni Eva Marlina Rumapea's opinion, the role of lecturers in educating students can be explained as follows:
 - a. Lecturers help students avoid negative behaviors and develop positive attitudes.
 - b. Lecturers help students to have the ability to communicate, collaborate, and solve problems.
 - c. Lecturers are motivated to develop themselves. Lecturers maintain their personal and professional integrity, serving as a good example for students.
 - d. Lecturers support a conducive learning environment that is safe and motivates students to achieve.

Ways in which lecturers can encourage participation and assign relevant tasks to students, namely:

1. Encouraging Participation, including the following:
 - a. Create an Interactive Classroom Atmosphere. Lecturers can use various presentation methods.
 - b. Provide constructive. Lecturers can provide specific feedback to help students understand their strengths and areas for improvement.
 - c. Open and Accessible. Lecturers who are easily accessible to students can provide more personalized guidance and help overcome academic difficulties.
 - d. Promote Student-Oriented Learning. Lecturers can encourage students to take more initiative and be more independent and responsible in their learning process.
 - e. Creating an Inclusive Environment. Lecturers can ensure that all students feel comfortable and valued in class, so they are more courageous to participate.
2. Assign Relevant Tasks, namely:
 - a. Design Assignments That Fit Learning Objectives. Assignments should be designed to help students achieve the learning goals that have been set.

- b. Consider the Needs and Diversity of Students. Relevant assignments should take into account the student's background, interests, and abilities.
- c. Use Practical and Applied Tasks. Assignments may involve case studies, field projects, or assignments that require students to apply the knowledge they have learned.
- d. Provide feedback on tasks. Lecturers can provide constructive feedback to help students improve the quality of their work.
- e. Focus on Continuous Learning. Assignments can be designed to encourage students to continue learning and developing outside of the classroom.

By encouraging participation and assigning relevant assignments, lecturers can help students study more effectively, improve their understanding of the material, and achieve highly satisfying outcomes.

Sobry Sutikno's opinion. (2021: 91). Innovation in material delivery can include the use of interactive learning methods, technology, and approaches that are relevant to real life, such as case studies, simulations, and community service. The integration of Character Values can be explained below:

1. Case Example. Lecturers can use case examples illustrating the importance of honesty, responsibility, or empathy in a professional context.
2. Discussion Questions. Well-designed discussion questions can encourage students to think critically about character values that are relevant to the material.
3. Assignment. Challenging and creative assignments can encourage students to apply practical thinking.
4. Insertion. Values can be inserted explicitly or implicitly in the course material. For example, when discussing business ethics, lecturers can emphasize the importance of integrity and honesty.

Innovations in Material Delivery are as follows:

1. Interactive Learning Methods. Group discussions, role-playing, and simulations.
2. Technology. The use of videos, interactive presentations, and online platforms can improve the quality and effectiveness of learning.
3. Relevant Approach. Real-world case studies, community service, and collaborative projects can help students understand the relevance of the material to everyday life.

4. **Integration with Real Life.** Lecturers can relate lecture materials to relevant social, economic, and environmental issues, encouraging students to think critically and find solutions.
5. **Problem-Based Learning.** Starting learning with real problems faced by society can encourage students to actively seek solutions and apply character values in the problem-solving process.
6. **Concrete examples such as:**
 - a. **Communication Sciences.** Lecturers can get ethics from journalism and social media.
 - b. **Legal Sciences.** Lecturers can use case studies on corruption and human rights abuses to teach students about the importance of integrity and justice.
 - c. **Management Science.** Lecturers can teach students about the importance of corporate social responsibility and ethical leadership through simulations and case studies (Candra Wijaya et al., 2023: 78).

The integration of character values in lecture materials helps students develop good and responsible character, as well as innovation in the delivery of real-world material. By combining character values and innovation, lecturers can improve the quality of learning, encouraging students to reach their best potential.

Implementation of Soft Skills in Higher Education

K. (2022: 89). He argues that Soft Skills are essential to be applied to Higher Education so that they can produce competent graduates in their respective fields. According to the author, these categories can be explained, among others:

1. **Strengthen Hard Skills.** Soft skills are invaluable for students to apply their hard skills effectively and efficiently in various situations, including teamwork and projects.
2. **Preparing Graduates for the World of Work.** Nowadays, the world of work highly values soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and structured leadership. Graduates with strong soft skills are more adaptable and likely to succeed in the future in a highly competitive environment.
3. **Build individual Character.** Soft skills such as very high integrity will be appreciated in academic and professional environments, to form character
Students become more ethical and responsible in all aspects.

How to Implement Soft Skills in Higher Education, namely:

1. **Through the semester learning plan.** Incorporate soft skills into existing courses, such as

- individual assignments, group assignments, presentations, and case studies.
2. Practice soft skills. Use active learning methods, such as class discussions, simulations, and role-playing,
 3. Student Activities. Involve students in skills such as student organizations, projects, and other activities.
 4. Programs for Internships. Allow students to convey their knowledge to gain experience in the real world of work.
 5. Development Self. Lead student to develop their soft skills through Self-development activities, such as career guidance and counseling. By integrating soft skills into the curriculum and extracurricular activities, higher education can equip alumni with the personal skills that enhance their competitiveness in the job market, enabling them to thrive in the global era.

Formulation of Soft Skills in the Curriculum

The role of soft skills in a comprehensive curriculum is to integrate them, preparing students to meet the demands of an increasingly complex world of work and social life. Soft skills can help students to:

1. Communicate effectively. Help students express opinions and ideas, listen well, and negotiate effectively.
2. Work well together. Help students to build relationships, manage conflicts, and achieve common goals.
3. Troubleshooting. Help students to think critically, analyze situations, and find creative solutions.
4. Become a leader. Help students to inspire, motivate, and direct others to positive goals.

Examples of Soft Skill Formulation That Can Be Developed through:

1. Communication Skills. Active listening, public speaking, writing effectively, and negotiating.
2. Cooperation Skills. Work in a team, manage conflicts, and build positive relationships.
3. Problem-Solving Skills. Think critically, analyze situations, and look for innovative solutions.
4. Leadership Skills. Inspire, motivate and direct others.
5. Creativeness. Creating new, critical ideas to build and provide solutions to these

problems.

With soft skill planning in the curriculum, students can develop into better individuals in the future (Yulia Rizki Ramadhani et al., 2022: 67).

Soft Skills as Learning Outcomes

Nofrion's opinion. (2016: 66). Effective learning strategies utilize communication to convey ideas and information clearly, listen actively, and participate in discussions. Being able to adapt to changes in the environment and new challenges is a key task for students to adapt to existing changes. Lecturers must have an affective commitment to encourage students to make extra changes in managing these emotions for the needs of society. Students' abilities contribute to their future success. This is inseparable from the affective commitment of a lecturer to his students.

According to James L. Gibson, et al (2012: 160) affective commitment has several dimensions, namely: students' willingness to study extra, feel proud in campus life, feel happy about the university, feel proud of the assignments given by lecturers, students will spend their study time at the university, the level of students' concern for campus accreditation, having an emotional bond with all lecturers teaching courses, Higher education values are by the perception of values that students follow.

Various benefits obtained for lecturers and students in increasing constructive evaluation, namely:

1. Constructive Evaluation. Lecturers not only provide final grades but also offer specific and constructive feedback on student performance.
2. Quality Improvement. Constructive evaluation encourages students to continually improve their academic quality.
3. A Means of Learning. Evaluation can be a valuable learning tool for students, helping them identify areas for improvement and learn from their mistakes.
4. Encourage Development. By providing constructive feedback, lecturers help students in the process of self-development and improve their academic abilities.
5. Tips for Lecturers. Lecturers can use a variety of evaluation methods, such as assignments, presentations, exams, and group discussions, to get comprehensive information about student performance. Lecturers can also provide clear, specific, and targeted feedback to help students understand what needs improvement.

6. Benefits for Students. Constructive evaluations help students understand their strengths and weaknesses, provide them with opportunities to learn and grow, and increase their confidence in academic abilities.

COCLUSION

Character development strategies and character building: by Formulating Soft Skills in the Curriculum:

1. Project-Based Learning. Through projects that involve collaboration and communication, students can develop practical soft skills.
2. Discussion and Debate. This activity can enhance communication skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities.
3. Active Learning Model. Activities such as group learning, group discussions, and presentations can enhance student engagement and foster the development of soft skills.

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