

Chapter One

Introduction

This introduction elaborates the description of the research. There are some points discussed in this chapter. The background of the research includes the reasons why the researcher is interested in researching the topic. Identification and limitation of the study identify and limit the problem investigated. Then, the research question and the objective of the research describe the specific objects of the research. The significance of the research informs the benefits of this research, and the last is outlining of the research which shows what the researcher explained in each chapter.

Background of the Study

Due to variety of factors, today's work environment is becoming more complex and competitive. Most employers tend to retain, hire, and promote persons who are dependable, willing to work and learn, have positive attitude and effective communication. A survey by the National Association of Black Accountants (2006) investigated the need of professional development of college students. The result shows that many students believe that the acquiring of soft skills such as interpersonal, time management, communication, and networking are the keys of progression on their careers. Students should pay attention to the balance between hard skill and soft skill that they should have in order to be useful for themselves in the future career.

Unfortunately, today's students are excellent on their academic, but still lack of soft skill. British Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) protests this

problem. The association recently reported that many graduates lack of soft skills such as team working. It explained that candidates are academically excellent but lack in soft skills such as communication in numerical or verbal (AGR, 2007). This is very worrying because it is not good for students' career in the future. Students who were lack of soft skill would have difficulty in terms of communicating, interacting, cooperating, and problem solving. Waggoner (2002) stated that if the students only have hard skill, they just know what is correct or incorrect, but having lack of soft skills will not help us to know when we can use those hard skills.

To overcome those problems, Indonesian government has issued some policies by adding hard skill and soft skill in *Kurikulum Perguruan Tinggi*. Competence fulfillment becomes one of the tasks of universities. According to Fachrunnisa (2016), in the KKNi (*Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia*), it has been mandated that the curriculum of higher education should also include the ability of soft skills and hard skills. The students should not only competent in their field, but also must have strong character such as the ability to lead, communicate, empathy, conflict management, and others. Puskurbuk argued that the curriculum is expected to generate productive, creative, innovative, and effective human's resources through the competence strengthening the domain of attitude (spiritual and social), knowledge, and skills (as cited in Retnawati, Hadi, & Nugraha, 2016, p.34). The objective of this curriculum is to balance students' hard skills and soft skills in order to make students to be able to face any situation and condition for their career in the future.

The lecturers at university have some strategies to improve students' soft skills such as group work involving discussions and debates, delivering oral and poster presentations, role plays and dialogues, and writing. According to Tevdovska (2015), elements of soft skills were already existent in EFL study curricula, but the aims were to emphasize the importance of soft skills, at the same time increasing student awareness even more. Tevdovska also said that using appropriate learning strategies, it is expected that soft skills can be integrated into any kind of learning activity that creates human resources which are not only proficient in the ability of hard skills but also in soft skills. Therefore, some universities add certain programs to improve students' soft skills namely joining training or seminars, outbound, or some organizations in the university.

At Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY), especially at English Language Education Department (ELED), it provides a program to improve students' soft skill or called "Bridging Course for Soft Skill" for soft skill development. Also, the purpose of this program is to enhance students' soft skill such as leadership, teamwork, time management and many other skills. This Soft Skill Training program is usually conducted in one day each semester for each batch. This program includes many activities like outbound, games, and teamwork designed to develop student's soft skills.

In addition, the researcher has observed the students who have some advantages during joined Soft Skill Training program. Some students said that they become more creative in some cases, more confident to speak in front of public, and able to solve their own problem. However, the researcher also found

some students who complained about this soft skill training program. They said that they could not get anything from this program and only wasted their time. Besides, some students said that they join this program only for fulfilling the graduation requirements. If the students do not join this program, so they have to retake the program to complete the required series of Soft Skill Training repeatedly. What were conveyed by some students informally raised the researcher's concern to reveal the students' perception on this soft skill training program formally.

Based on the background above, the researcher is interested in taking the issue to research on the "Students' Perception on the Implementation of Soft Skill Training program at ELED of UMY". The researcher wanted to find out the students' perception on Soft Skill Training program because this program has some strength for the students. However, the students who do not give positive response to this program perceived some weaknesses for their soft skill. Therefore, based on the statements mentioned previously, the researcher was interested to take this issue by deeper review from the students in order to evaluate this program based on the students' perception.

The researcher also tries to find out the strengths and weaknesses based on students' perception on the implementation of Soft Skill Training program at ELED of UMY. The students probably have different opinions toward their implementation of this program. Some of the students probably feel to have the strengths of this program, and it can be concludes that this program is successful. On the other side, some of them might say that this program still has the

weaknesses which make this program unsuccessful. Therefore, the researcher was curious to find out the answers based on the students' perception toward Soft Skill Training program.

Identification and Limitation of the Problem

Based on the researcher's experience when joining Soft Skill Training program, the researcher identifies problems that are faced by ELED students on enhancing students' soft skills. There are some issues related to Soft Skill Training program at ELED of UMY. The issues can be related to the students' motivation toward the program, the effectiveness in implementation of Soft Skill Training program, or the impact of Soft Skill Training program toward the students' academic achievement. In addition, the strengths and the weaknesses of the program are also potential to be researched.

In this research, the researcher only focuses on finding out the implementation of Soft Skill Training program at ELED of UMY based on the students' perception. This research focuses to cover students' perception on strengths and weaknesses of Soft Skill Training program in order to evaluate and find out the issues that the students feel in joining Soft Skill Training program. The strengths are about the benefits of Soft Skill Training program and the impression from the students before and after joining this program. Then, the weaknesses are the problems faced by students in joining soft skill training and the students' dissatisfaction after joining this program. Bridging Course for Soft Skill is the soft skill training specially design for ELED students.

Research Questions

In this research, there are two research questions, they are:

1. What are the students' perceptions on the strengths of the implementation of Soft Skill Training program at ELED of UMY?
2. What are the students' perceptions on the weaknesses of the implementation of Soft Skill Training program at ELED of UMY?

Objectives of the Research

This research has two objectives, they are:

1. To investigate the students' perceptions on the strength of the implementation of Soft Skill Training program at ELED of UMY.
2. To investigate the students' perception on the weaknesses of the implementation Soft Skill Training program at ELED of UMY.

Significance of the Research

This research will be beneficial and give some advantages for particular people, such as the teachers, the students, other researchers, and the institution.

For teachers. This research can be used as a reference in considering whether or not this soft skill training program is appropriate to be implemented for improving their students' soft skills. It also will help the teachers to know about the strengths and weaknesses of the soft skill training program in this research. Therefore, this research can be used as a basis for the teacher to make their students aware about the strengths of joining soft skill training.

For students. This research provides information for students to know about the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of Soft Skill Training program. Then, this research can be as student instruction to know what students can get through this soft skill training program. To conclude, the provided information in this research can be useful for the students as their reflection in joining this soft skill training program.

For other researchers. Doing this research, other researchers can know the strengths and weaknesses of soft skill training namely Bridging Course for Soft Skill from this research. Also, the information of this research really helps the researchers to know deeper about the students' various perceptions in joining Soft Skill Training program to develop their soft skill. This research can be as the theoretical overview of further research on the implementation of Soft Skill Training program. Then, other researchers can understand about Soft Skill Training program wider. Therefore, by conducting this research, it can also encourage other researchers to conduct the researchers to the same area of this research.

For institution. The institution will realize about the strengths and the weaknesses of Soft Skill Training program. This research can also be as additional information to evaluate the weaknesses of this program in order to renew or update every aspect of this soft skill training program. Then, the institution will get some suggestions from students' perceptions.

Outline of the Research

This research is described into five chapters. The first chapter is about “Introduction”. The researcher explains about background of the study, identification and limitation of the problem, research questions, objectives of the research, significant of the research, and outline of the research. In the second chapter, the researcher explains about “Literature Review”. In literature review, the researcher presents some theories and concepts from many sources. In the third chapter, the researcher explains about “Methodology”. This chapter is divided into four points which explain about research design, setting and participant, data collection method, and data analysis. In the chapter four, the researcher explains about “Finding and Discussion”. This chapter reveals the findings of the research based on the answer of the research questions. In the last chapter, the researcher presents the “Conclusion and Recommendation”. The last chapter consists of the summary of the research and some recommendations for some people related to the research topic.