Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter elaborates background of the research, identification of the problem, limitation of the in problem, research question, purposes of the research, significances of the research, and outline of the research.

Background of the Research

Skills are very significant to support people's performances in today’s workplace and any activities that they do. Indeed, people should have two kinds of skills, namely hard skills and soft skills. Onabamiro, Onuka, Oyekanmi (2014) stated that “Hard skills are the specific skills to a particular career field of job while soft skills are skills and personal characters that are useful for performing any jobs” (p. 109). For example, teachers should have both hard skills and soft skills. Teachers’ hard skill is their knowledge, and their soft skill is teaching or delivering the knowledge.

Students nowadays learn soft skills and hard skills because both skills are needed in job market. Soft skills and hard skills should be balanced since both complement each other. In an educational field, students must possess soft skills because the soft skills play an important role in developing students’ personality. Rani (2010) maintained:

“soft skills are learned behavior that it needs training. Soft skills will enable students with a strong conceptual and practical framework to build, develop
and manage teams. Those soft skills play an important role in the development of the students’ overall personality in enhancing their career prospects” (p.1).

Sanyal (2013) added “soft skills are the occupational requirement of a job or many other activities” (p. 421).

Students who have soft skills would possess good quality of life because the soft skills make them ready for facing the challenges in the workplace. According to Rani (2010, p. 3) “soft skills will help the students increase their employability potential and face the challenges of the present time.” Soft skills should be taught and trained in an academic field before applied in daily life as Mai (2012) stated “students’ soft skills need to be developed to get them ready for the workplace” (p. 44).

Meanwhile, all lecturers at English Education Department (EED) of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (UMY) assess students’ soft skills because it is the regulation explained in a curriculum of the EED of UMY. Based on the curriculum of the EED of UMY, soft skills can be categorized into intrapersonal skill, extra personal skill, and interpersonal skill. The lecturers make a lesson plan of a course and also include some aspects soft skills in the lesson plan such as cooperative, committed, critical thinking, respectful, creativity, innovative, confident, responsible, teamwork,
independent learning, communication, problem solving and logical argument.

The lecturers’ lesson plan explains competencies and goal that should be achieved by students including the hard skills and soft skills related to the course. Furthermore, the lesson plan also mentions that 20 percent of the score is from the soft-skill assessment. It means that every student should have good soft skills because they are assessed at the EED of UMY.

Based on the researcher’s experience, the lecturers said that assessing soft skills of students is not easy because the great number of students and different soft skills which have to be assessed. However, assessing students’ discipline is easy because the lecturers can assess this soft skill by seeing documents such as a presence list showing whether or not the students ever skip the class.

In the classroom activity, the lecturers had some difficulties to assess students’ soft skills. It happened because too many students in classroom. Consequently, the lecturers should assess all soft skills that students have such as cooperative, committed, critical thinking, respectful, creativity, innovative, confident, responsible, teamwork, independent learning, communication, problem solving and logical argument. Therefore, it was difficult for the lecturers to assess students’ soft skills in the great number of students. Moreover, each subject course has different soft skills to assess. This is shown
in the lecturers’ lesson plan.

The challenge in assessing soft skills are supported some aspects such as competency of teacher in assessing soft skills. Asuru and Ogidi (2013) cited in Dorowuju and Onuka (2014) stated that “some of challenges of assessing soft skills include teacher incompetency, poor knowledge of test construction and lack of knowledge of how to properly assess soft skills.(p. 608 )

From those reasons, the researcher was interested in conducting a research on lecturers’ strategies in assessing students’ soft skills and the problems in assessing students’ soft skills at EED of UMY.

Identification of the Problem

Based on the issues that were explained in the background, the researcher finds some issues. Firstly, the lecturers should have competence of understanding their students’ soft skills. It was very important for the lecturers because it helped the lecturers understand the weaknesses and strengths of the students. Lecturers who grasped their students’ weaknesses and strengths can create good technique of teaching and the harmonic relationship between the students and the lecturers. Calfapietra (2000) as cited in T. Lee and T. Lee (2011) stated that “teacher must view their students as individuals and recognize them through their personal strength and weakness in learning” (p.141).

Secondly, the issue was the lecturers’ strategies in assessing students’ soft skills. Every lecturer has strategies in assessing students’ soft skills.
Lecturers assess students’ soft skills based on the soft skills mentioned in the curriculum, namely intrapersonal skill, interpersonal skill, and extra personal skill. Lecturer’s strategies are useful to identify students’ soft skills.

Lastly, the researcher identified problems faced by the lecturers in assessing students’ soft skills. Based on the researcher’s experience, some of lecturers got difficulties in assessing students’ soft skills. One of the difficulties was that the lecturers should assess too many students.

**Limitation of the Problem**

Based on the identified issues, the researcher limited the problems. First, the researcher wanted to explore lecturers’ strategies in assessing students’ soft skills at the EED of UMY. There are some categories of soft skills, but the researcher focused on five soft skills that the lecturers assessed. They are communication skill, critical thinking skill, creativity skill, teamwork skill, and responsibility skill. The researcher focused on the five soft skills because most of lecturers at the EED of UMY assess those soft skills as written on their lesson plan.

Second, the researcher focused on the problems faced by the lecturers in assessing students’ soft skills because some of lecturers got difficulties in assessing soft skills of students. The researcher found lecturers’ in assessing communication skill, critical thinking skill, creativity skill, teamwork skill, and responsibility skill.
Research Question

In this case, the researcher conducted research to explore the lecturers’
strategies and problems in assessing students’ soft skills. Therefore, the
researcher formulated two research questions written as follows:

1. What are lecturers’ strategies in assessing students’ soft skills at the EED of
   UMY?
2. What are the problems faced by the lecturers in assessing students’ soft skills at
   the EED of UMY?

Purposes of the Research

1. To explore lecturers’ strategies in assessing students’ soft skills at the EED of
   UMY.
2. To identify the problems faced by the lecturers in assessing students’ soft skills at
   the EED of UMY.

Significances of the Research

The researcher mentioned several benefits of the research; they are:

For the researcher. This research makes the researcher gain new knowledge
of the variety of strategies that are usually used by the lecturers in assessing students’
soft skills. It is very useful for the researcher who wants to be a teacher in the future
since those strategies can be applied to assess soft skills of students when the
researcher becomes a teacher.
For the students. This research helps students know the strategies to improve their soft skills. This research also gives the students knowledge of lecturers’ strategies in assessing students’ soft skills and problems usually faced by the lecturers in assessing students’ soft skills.

For lecturers. There are benefits that this research may give for the lecturers, especially lecturers at the EED of UMY. This research gives some references for the lecturers about strategies in assessing students’ soft skills that can be applied in the classroom during teaching process or assessing students’ soft skills. Therefore, lecturers may know each soft skill of students.

For the next researchers. This research can become a reference for the next researchers, especially for students of the EED of UMY, who want to conduct the research on the strategies in assessing students’ soft skills.

Outline of the Research

This research consists of five chapters. Chapter one is an introduction of this research that explains background, identification of the problem, limitation of the problem. Besides that, this chapter also provides research questions, purposes of the research, and significances of the research.

Chapter two discusses some points related to the literature review. It explores soft skills, assessing students’ soft skills, and lecturers’ strategies in
assessing students’ soft skills.

Chapter three focuses on the research methodology. There are six points in chapter three, namely research design, research participants, research setting, data collection method, technique of data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter four presents findings and discussion. The findings are presented based on the data collected from interviews and link them to the theories mentioned in chapter two.

Chapter five presents the conclusion and suggestion of this research. The conclusion summarizes the whole research, while the suggestion of this research is given to lecturers, students, the researcher, and the next researcher.