DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS IN TEACHING PAI

Albert¹, Arman Husni²

¹*Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing (STBA) Haji Agus Salim Bukittingi the student of S3 PAI UIN Sjech M Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi and natsir.albert12@gmail.com*

²*UIN Sjech M Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi and armanhusni@gmail.com*

Abstract

Soft skills have a significant role in the development of the student's overall personality, thereby potentially enhancing their career prospect. In the context of teaching and learning, soft skills can be exposed integrally through the process of teaching and learning Islamic religious beliefs and values (PAI). This is based on the paradigm that teaching PAI ideally does not merely focus on how to achieve a good grade in doing the test, but also guides them to internalize the virtues for their soft skills development (good heart). Moreover, being good at number crunching and scoring high skills in the subject are not the only criteria for success in professional and personal life. For this reason, integrating soft skills into teaching PAI would help students to build and improve their skills, especially in interaction and the effective use of Islamic values. This paper highlights some strategies for developing students' soft skills in teaching PAI. The discussion specifically is directed to the strategy of developing soft skills into personal skills in classroom technique.

Keywords: Developing, Soft skill, Teaching, PAI

1. Introduction

Education ideally must have a priority over developing soft skills without neglecting the significant role of hard skills or academic skills. Soft skills are self-developed, intinteractiveommunicative, human,d transferable skills. They include positive thinking, good interpersonal skills, communication skills, time management, self-confidence, and problem-solving, including analyzing a problem, setting goals, and thinking through both the long-term and short-term consequences of an action. Moreover, the literature suggests that hard skills contribute to only 15% of one's skills success while the remaining 85% is supported by soft skills. Ultimately, soft skills are believed would make the youth achieve a great chance to be successful in a competitive environment, and increase their employability potential.

One of the assumptions used in developing soft skills is putting academic mastery as a medium to develop soft skills. In this context, PAI learning and teaching can be placed as media of soft skills building. This fact is also affirmed by the perspective that the essence of PAI teaching, as the essence of all teachings, lies in values or morals.PAI learning and teaching involves the ways of cross-cultural and belief interaction, manners, etiquette, and self-confidence with its complexity. These aspects crucially relate to the soft skills dimension. Moreover, in teaching PAI, these values can be transmitted to the learners through classroom activities and instructional materials. Thus, this paper is aimed at exploring the particular ways in which soft skills underlie various aspects of PAI teaching. Specifically, it is directed to the strategy of integrating soft skills into learning activities in the classroom.

2. Results and Discussion

2.1. The Nature of Soft Skill

The concept of soft skills takes root from the concept of emotional intelligence. The

terminology of soft skills is used to distinguish them from the term hard skills. Hard skills refer to cognitive capacities (IQ) while soft skills belong to Emotional Intelligence. Hard skills are used for seeking a job while soft skills are useful to maintain it (Alwi, et. al,2019). In this concept, soft skills are imparted to find one's attitudes, values, motivation, beliefs, desires, willingness to share and embrace new ideas, goal orientation, flexibility, and various skills of communication, interaction, and manners so that he/she can adapt with different situations diligently and responsibility (Melser, N.A,2018)). Soft skills are divided into two main parts, which are one part involve developing attitudes and attributes, and the other part encompasses communication skills to express attitudes, ideas, and thoughts well in oral, written, and non-verbal areas. Thus, soft skills are life skills for oneself, and the community so that the existence of a person can be accepted by others. (Miswari, S.et.,2021)

Character education is aimed at fostering the development of ethical and responsible individuals by teaching them about the good values that people should apply. The learners are taught values of caring about other people, honesty, responsibility, and other important traits to make them upstanding citizens. Lickona (2003) describes character education as encompassing the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of morality. The cognitive dimension plays significant to lead learners to achieve moral awareness. Specifically, moral awareness is the learners' ability to use their intelligence to consider when a situation requires moral judgment, and then think carefully about what the right action is. A good character is also formed through internalizing the good and applying the good things. Ultimately, the learners are helped to understand the core values, commit to them, and apply them in their own lives.

Character education is also directed to guide children to have moral consideration and act it in their lives (Berkowitz, M.et.al,2000). Thus, character education contains three main purposes, which are: reinforcing and developing core values, correcting learners' behavior, and creating a harmonious relationship between family and society (Irwandi, 2014). Reinforcing and developing mean that character education in the school does not indoctrinate the learners with the dogmatic value, but it is a process that leads the learners to understand and reflect on the core value and apply it (Irwandi, 2014). Then, correcting the learners' behavior is directed to change the learners' behavior which is not suited to the core values as developed in the school. This process is meant as a pedagogical process, not to bring pressure on them. The last, character education in the school is employed through an association between parents and society to achieve the target of character education. When character education just occurs in the classroom, its objectives will be hard to be achieved since the character is built in a holistic process, not in a fragment of a certain period.

The effort of character-building in the field of psychology. Theories of cognitive development are purposed to explain how children develop, and thus, how to teach them appropriately in the frame of students' development. Piaget proposed a theory about cognitive development whthatmploys in four stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational (Ojose, B,2008). Sensorimotor occurs from birth through ages 18-24 months. The last three stages connect to the discussion on moral development. In the preoperational stage (ages 2-7), the main emphasis is the mastery of motor development skills. The preoperational stage is a bridge between the sensorimotor stage and the concrete operational stage. When they are in 7-12 years, they move into the concrete stage which is indicated by their ability to think about a situation logically and concretely. They can also see things based on others' perspectives instead of only seeing things from their point of view. Then, children achieve

the formal operation stage when they are 12 years and older. Through this stage, they can think things abstractly.

Furthermore, Piaget's cognitive development theory is elaborated by Kohlberg becoming a theory of moral reasoning (Ojose, B,2008). This theory is grouped into three different levels: pre-conventional morality, conventional morality, and post-conventional morality. Through the stage of pre-conventional morality, learners will obey rules to avoid punishment. The stage of conventional morality also deals with self-interest. Students adapt themselves to rules to get something they want. Then, the stage of conventional morality occurs when children enter middle school. Through this level, learners obey rules because they want to be accepted in their community so they want to achieve an image as a "good boy or girl".

The last stage is achieved by learners when they are in high school. Through this stage, they act upon what they think is the right thing to do, without considering the opinions of others. Then, to move from one stage to another, everyone goes through the stages sequentially without skipping any stage. Learners do not automatically move from one stage to the next as they mature. Moreover, learners cannot understand moral reasoning more than one stage ahead of their own. For instance, a person in the first stage can understand second-stage reasoning but nothing beyond that. Therefore, teachers should present moral arguments that are only one stage ahead of a learner's present level of reasoning to stimulate movement to higher stages.

To apply character education in the process of teaching and learning, it is important to formulate core values that become pillars of character. Values that are acted by a person in his/her behavior become a real character. Thus, there is no person's behavior that is free from a value. Regarding core values, Lickona (2003) proposes ten core values as underpinnings of character. The first value is wisdom. This value leads people to decide a thing logically, that is, what thing is good for themselves and others. A wise man will know the way to behave proportionally, and how to have tolerance for differences. The second is justice, which reto relates to how to respect the rights of other people. The next value is for the itude. It is the ability to overcome the problem with the right thing. Having fortitude could avoid teenagers to do suicide, for instance, when they do not know how else to deal with their overwhelming emotions. The fourth value is self-control which is the ability to manage emotion proportionally in to not give in to overbearing feelings or temptations. The fifth virtues love in terms of the willingness to sacrifice for the good of others. Love can be shown in many forms such as empathy, compassion, kindness, generosity, service, loyalty, patriotism, and forgiveness.

The sixth value is having a positive attitude. Those who have a positive attitude will getotsucceedce of success and be valuable to others. Hard work becomes the seventh value. Hard work is applied through taking initiative, being diligent, setting goals, and being resourceful. The eighth essential value is integrity. This value involves the unity between what is believed and what is done. Gratitude is the ninth virtue. It entails a person's mentality to accept satisfactorily for what already has and be happy with everything that he/she is blessed to have in his/her life. The final virtue is humility which is a person's ability to accept his/her imperfections and appreciate others' special qualities. These ten essential virtues can be the reference values in character education.

Another view on core values is proposed by Agustian (2009) who formulates seven main values: honesty, responsibility, vision, discipline, cooperation, justice, and caring. Teachers can also consider the values for character education as proposed by Indonesia Heritage Foundation (IHF), which are: 1. love Allah, and all His creations, 2. Self-reliance and responsibility, 3. honesty

and wisdom, 4. Respect and courtesy, 5. Empathy, caring, and cooperation, 6. Confidence, creativity, and enthusiasm, 7. Leadership and justice, 8. Kindness and humility, and 9. tolerance, peacefulness, and unity (Megawangi, 2004).

Nevertheless, the core values are not restricted to certain values as purposed by the experts. There are so many values in human life that can be identified as an essentvaluesalue. In Islam, for instance, there are the most popular values which can be identified from the Prophet Muhammad himself (may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him). These values are formulated into four divisions: Siddiq ddiq(truthfulness), amaranthanah (good commitment/trustworthiness), (3) fathoonah (sound intellect), and (4) tabligh (conveying). These values are just some essential values, not the total values. In short, all values represent what character education stands for, and thus, all activities should be directed to achieve such values.

Character education should be implemented by referring to certain principles. (Bleazby, J,2020) propose six main principles which can be a guide in implementing character education in school. The first principle is that character education should be integrated into all subjects. Character education does not demand a separate subject. This principle can be applied through: 1. Encouraging teachers to design a lesson that can relate the core values to the content being taught. For instance, in reading class, when learners read the text about "Poverty," they not only comprehend the text by practicing reading strategy but also explore the values about how the importance of helping poor people. Teachers have a lot of freedom to be creative in exploring important values in their lessons; 2. Reviewing instructional materials for themes relating to personal development; 3. Constructing a list of ideas in various subjects that are focused on character themes; 4. Selecting methods and activities that involve students in the process of reflection about moral/ethical issues; and 5. Evaluating students learning for evidence of understanding of and personal growth in matters of character. The second key principle is creating cooperation between the school and the community. The third principle is providing a positive classroom atmosphere at the classroom that supports character education. This can be applied by several things such as promoting team building through small group work, using social learning skills like cooperative learning, and interacting with students in a way that allows them to be comfortable expressing their opinions. The fourth principle states that teachers should be a model for their students to achieve character goals. The fifth key principle clarifies the significance of school policy in implementing character education in schools.

All teachers and administrators in the school not only support the implementation of character curriculums but also be role models in enacting the virtues that character education stands for. The last key principle is that character education is action education. This means that curriculums should involve students in discussion, reflection, and action of worthy values and morals. It is concluded that in implementing moral education, it is important to know three main factors, which are: learners' cognitive development, ethical core values which learners should apply, and principles of implementing character education.

2.2. Soft Skills in Teaching PAI

As in all teachings, the Islamic religion's teaching is inherent in belief and character education. This fact, at least, can be seen in terms of the nature of Islamic religious values, and the theory of values learning. One of the most basic underlying tenets of belief and values teaching is that values are not merely a set of forms, but are used for something: to convey

information, maintain relationships with God and human beings, and act in and on the social world (Nawali, A.K.2018). Moreover, Solihin, et. al (2020) state that the Islamic religion can be seen as a part of a more general theory about belief, values, and character. In this view, a person who acquires values is not only directed to know value features but also the ability for using values concerning the context in which it is used. Thus, using values contextually is a clear character-laden activity. People should have morality awareness in using values believed in terms of to whom they interact, where they interact when they interact, and what the values function of their interaction. He also described seven basic functions of values and belief which are performed by students in learning PAI, which are: 1. the instrumental function: using values to get things, 2. the regulatory function: using values to control the behavior of others, 3. the interactional function: using values to create interaction with others, 4. the personal function: using values to express personal feelings and meanings, 5. the heuristic function: using values to learn and to discover 6. The imaginative function: using values to create a world of imagination, and 7. The representational functions: using values to communicate information. These functions of values and beliefs are tied to the dimension of character building. Students are not merely guided to know, understand and answer the questions in test time, but also respect the norms of using the values in a community.

Character dimension is also found in the theory of PAI learning. This view is based on the following reasons: Firstly, learning PAI ties to learners' motivation. Motivation refers to the intensity of one's impetus to learn. (Wafiroh, U.L.et.al 2021). There are two types of motivation which employ in PAI learning, namely integrative motivation or intrinsic motivation and instrumental motivation or extrinsic. Integrative motivation refers to a desire to learn values that emerge from a positive effect on a community of its doers. The learners integrate and identify themselves with the Islamic religious values they learn and their culture. On the contrary, instrumental motivation relates to learners' desire to learn values to attain certain career, educational, or financial goals. Some theories claim that integrative motivation is linked significantly to the learners' success in learning religious values than instrumental motivation. Changing one's type of motivation is begun with changing his/her core value. Moreover, the effort of changing learners' motivation in learning PAI is indeed a part of character education. Integrative motivation is generated by the values such as enthusiasm, creativity, discipline, confidence, and responsibility. Those who keep and act on these values in their own lives will do anything following their idealism even though their external condition is not conducive to doing it.

The second strand states that learning PAI is influenced by learners' attitudes. Attitudes toward self, religious values, classmates, the teacher, and the classroom environment play a critical role in learning PAI. The last, learning PAI needs interaction which occurs among students, students to teachers, and vice versa. Learning PAI is not a separate activity of individuals, but an integral part of participation in an interaction. Such interaction should be employed in the frame of moral values, such as respect, obedience, tolerance, kindness, cooperation, etc. When the PAI teachers apply these values, they will have great care for the learners in mastering Interaction skills. The learners are taught in humanistic ways so that the learners' error is seen as a creative construction process. Thus, the error is placed as an inevitable and positive part and a reflection of a learner's stage of development. This condition also promotes positive feelings toward learning and respect for the competency of every learner. Learners feel cared for and supported in learning PAI as they learn from their successes and failures. The evidence as explained above indicate that character

building and PAI teaching are like two sides of the coin. Ideally, the study of PAI should enable learners to cultivate core values to be internalized and acted upon in their real life.

### 2.3. Classroom Technique for Developing Soft Skills

The classroom implications of character education in PAI teaching deserve the teachers' attention at least for four aspects: course design, the instructional materials, the types of learning and teaching activities, and classroom management. Course design refers to the way of designing a syllabus to the need of character education. Then, instructional materials refer to the kinds of material which are used in teaching Islamic religious beliefs and values. Then, the types of learning and teaching activities are attained through the instructional process and interaction of teachers, learners, and materials in the classroom directly. The last aspect is directed specifically toward managing learners' behavior in language classrooms. These aspects are tied to learners' differences cognitively, and core values which should be internalized and acted on by the teachers, learners, and those who concern with character building.

In providing a syllabus for the need of character education, the teacher must not change the existing syllabus, but adapt it to the need of character education. All materials in the syllabus can be cultivated to integrate them into the core values. From the perspective of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CLT), this strategy is in line with the principle of interdependence that drives to establish relationships to arrive at new insights. In other words, this makes it possible for the teachers and learners to create a connection to reveal meaning (Johnson, 2002). In this case, the core value can be understood as a kind of meaning which should be found by the learners in learning language skills.

To integrate the core values into the syllabus, the teachers must understand the curriculum, materials, and core values. Some strategies which can be employed by the teachers are as follows: First, identifying the standard of competency and basic competency. The curriculum contains a standard of competency (goal) and basic competency (objective) for each subject which should be achieved by learners. Teachers must find an ethical value that is possibly integrated into the standard of competency and basic competency. Secondly, analyzing indicators, subject matter, and topics. The standard of competency and basic competency is spelled out by the indicator as a basis to formulate the subject matter and topic. Finally, select a subject matter which can be integrated into the core values. This is the significant stage to integrate the English subject and the ethical core values for character building.

The teachers analyze the potency of integration between subject matter and core values by considering three main principles: the principle of correspondence, the principle of philosophy, and the principle of clarification. The principle of correspondence entails the direct connection between a subject matter and core value. Teaching had its texts, for instance, the teacher uses a text which contains a direct connection to certain ethical values. Then, the principle of philosophy states the teacher can integrate the subject matters into the core value philosophically since not all subject matters have a direct connection to a core value. Thus, in teaching fiqh, for example, any kind of learning objectives can be connected to certain core values, such as empathy, respect, obedience, etc. The final principle emphasizes that the teachers can clarify the content of the subject matter which contains contradictory remarks to the core values. Briefly, the stages of integration of core values into the syllabus can be illustrated in the following schema:

Figure 1: *The schema of integration of core values into the English syllabus*
(Adapted from Djazuli, et al, 2006)
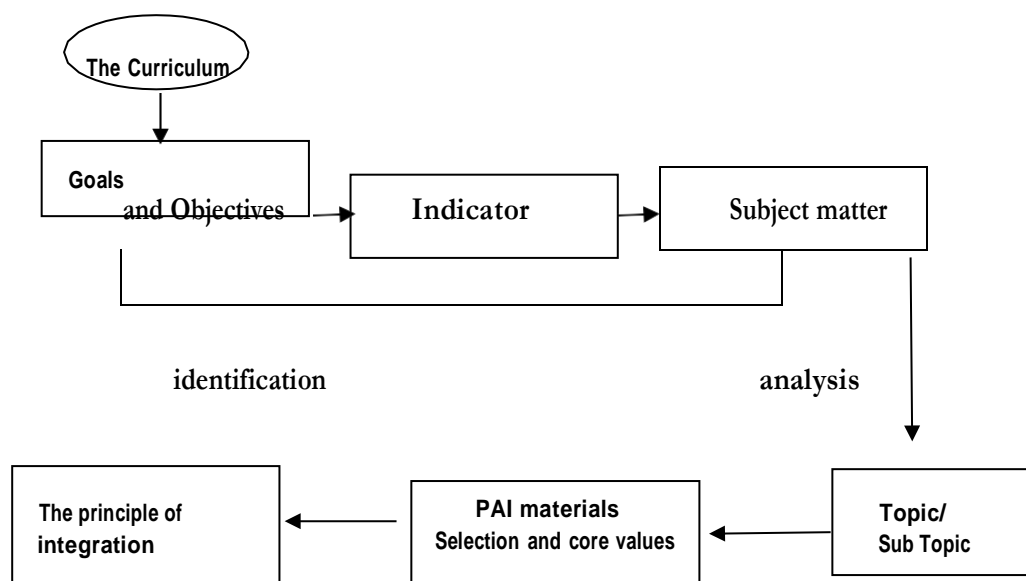
After designing the syllabus in the frame of character education, the next stage is deciding the instructional materials which can accommodate learners to internalize the core values with still concern with the main goal of teaching PAI. The teachers may select instructional material after identifying the chance in a curriculum that can be used to explore moral values (Lickona, 2012). The instructional materials can be in the form of nonauthentic material (e.g. the textbook), and authentic materials such as magazines, newspapers, brochures, films, etc. Since it is hard to meet a textbook that can meet the need of character education, a textbook must be adapted for particular needs. In adapting a course book, the teacher can identify what parts of the textbook are still used but need to change in some way to make them more suitable for character education. Moreover, some parts in the textbook which are not conducive to teaching character must be left out, and they are changed with supplementary material to respond to the needs of particular objectives.

These are also used for adapting nonauthentic materials to meet a particular need. Another crucial stage of the strategy of character education relates to classroom technique. Some approaches in teaching character education can be used in the PAI classroom, which are the values clarification technique (VCT), moral reasoning technique, and rifle, active technique. Values cliche valuation technique is a classroom technique that lead thatrners to discover values through behavior, feelings, ideas, and important choices they have made for their line. (Adisusilo, 2012). By applying VCT, learners are helped to find, to find, and choose the values which they want to achieve. Thus, they can have self-reliance in deciding and directing their life without other person's intervention. This technique also enhances the ability of learners to communicate their beliefs, values, and feelings to another person. Through VCT, the learners are encouraged to empathize with another person who has a different value from their own. Another strategy is the moral reasoning approach. This approach emphasizes learners' cognitive development to think

logically by analyzing problems that relate closely to the values and judge them based on moral values (Adisusilo, 2012). This technique is employed through class discussion which focuses on certain dilemmas of morality. In *the akhlak lesson* class, for instance, some moral problems found in the text, videos, pictures, etc are appropriate to be discussed to encourage learners to decide reasonable ways to solve them. The reflective technique emphasizes learners' effort to find moral values in the subject matter. When they learn akhlak to meet people, for example, on how to say greeting in Islam, the teachers may get learners to find the core values in it. In short, these techniques do not eliminate the learning objectives of PAI and their relationship is just complimentary to each other.

It is also important for PAI teachers should manage learners' behavior in learning every subject of PAI in the frame of character education. In facing learners' misbehaving, the teachers should find its causes before deciding a good way to solve them. Then, some schools of thought on classroom management as proposed by Cohen, et al, (2004) can be selected in terms of character building. Such schools of thought are behavior modification, interpersonal relationships, cognitive behaviorism, and humanistic approaches. The former stresses the roles of rewards and punishment in the control of behavior. The second approach is aimed to produce good, positive relationships between the teacher and students, and among the students themselves. Thus, emphasis on negotiation and suggestion can create a healthy classroom atmosphere. Cognitive behaviorism seeks to promote learners' desirable behavior through counseling and discussions between the learners and the teacher about the ways of solving a problem and handling their behavior in a certain setting. Last but not least, the humanistic approach guides the learners to discuss unacceptable behavior in a problem-solving approach rather than a punitive approach.

3. Conclusion

The essence of PAI teaching is not only about transferring Islamic religious values to the learners cognitively but also touches on moral values. Thus, the teaching of PAI has a great potency to support the effort of character education. To connect it to the concept of character education, the syllabus, instructional materials, classroom activity, and classroom management must be modified in the frame of the quintessence of character education. However, these efforts will not eliminate the effort to make the learners competent in language skills productively and receptively. It is hoped that through integrating the essential virtues into the teaching of PAI, the learners do not merely achieve good grades, but also good in their behavior.

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