



## A Model for Developing Soft Skill Training Management Oriented Toward Service Quality for Shs Counselors

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### Abstract

As a way to achieve a high-quality Guidance and Counseling (GC) session, there is a need to apply soft skills in GC service interactions. However, many counselors have yet to optimally develop and implement proper soft skills in GC service sessions. Therefore, a model for developing soft skills training management oriented toward service quality is required for counselors. This is particularly necessary because a meaningful relationship between counselors and students can be built through having proficient soft skills, such as appearance, verbal communication skills, work ethics, analytical abilities, self-management, and others. The purpose of this study is to obtain ways to overcome hindrances in soft skill training programs, so similar service quality improvement programs for counselors could be carried out well. This study proposes a model for developing soft skills training management oriented toward service quality for counselors. Training management includes planning, organizing, implementatoin, monitoring and evaluation, whereas the conceptual model for soft skill training oriented toward service quality consists of training analysis, training program design, training development, training implementation, and training evaluation.

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## INTRODUCTION

The role of counselors in Senior High Schools (SHS) is very important as they hold a strategic position to help students in solving their issues and facilitate the growth of their potential. As regulated by Indonesian Law no. 20 of 2003 on National Education System, guidance and counseling are considered an integrative part in the school education system, especially to improve the education in Senior High Schools, thus making counselors hold a substantively decisive role. Indisputably, satisfactory service by counselors will contribute significantly in achieving educational goals. Mola, Murtaza dan Khan (2012) describe the essential role of counselors, whereas Fulya (2009) proves that the presence of a school counselor should be compulsory. Counselors are public servants that provide assistance for students individually or as groups so that they can fully grow and become independent through personal, social, career and education guidance which are given by various services and supporting activities based on appropriate norms (SK Mendikbud No. 025/0/1995). Guidance and counseling are done by counselors who fulfill the qualifications of an educator, which is to be pro-active and systematic in aiding students to achieve optimal growth, effective behavior development, growth environment development, and improves in how individuals function in their environment.

Due to the importance of their role, counselors must be able to provide prime service, consequently building meaningful relationships with students. Counselors have full responsibility for the education system in the country. Guidance and counseling are aid services for students, both individually and as a group, so that they can fully grow and become independent through personal guidance, social guidance, career guidance and education guidance which are given by various services and supporting activities based on appropriate norms (SK Mendikbud No. 025/0/1995). Professional skills of counselors, reinforced with many comprehensive components, will help tremendously in improving guidance and

counseling services. John McLeod (2007: 43) explains that a proficient counselor is capable of responding to their client's needs. Hence, counselors must be prepared to provide prime service in an education setting. This prime service should encompass all elements of guidance and counseling, comprising of personal guidance, social guidance, educational guidance, and career guidance. Considering the diverse population of students and the disparity in counselors' skills, guidance and counseling at schools should be held according to a program that is created based on Indonesian Law No. 20 of 2003 and Minister of Education and Culture Regulation no. 81a of 2013 along with other supporting regulations. As a result, guidance and counseling services are required to be oriented towards a superior, focused, systematic, and structured service; as well as executed by professionals in education counseling. This is necessary since education reformation demands a practical change in guidance and counseling services by counselors. Herr (2002:221) once stated, "Historically, school counseling have been connected with school reform movements", meaning that education reformation in SHS also entails a professional school counseling program (Adelman & Taylor, 2002: 235), even House & Hayes, (2002: 249) affirm that school counselors hold a key role in revamping schools. For that reason, prime services given by counselors will help students improve academically and develop their self-potential with the support of various components in a comprehensive unison.

An indication of a prime service can be observed in counselors' soft skills while attending students. Guidance and counseling services in secondary schools need to be improved and revamped towards a more professional manner, especially in SHS. This demand surfaces owing to many things, such as changing education paradigm regarding democratic values, increasing recognition for students' human rights, escalating demands on a more humanely teaching, the high demands to

reform schools, the strong urge to improve education quality in order to achieve comprehensive and optimum skills for the students, rising awareness on the importance of school culture development, the strong need to revitalize education values. The implementation of a range of innovative learning strategies and methods requires counselors to substantially adjust their way of thinking and taking actions, respond to the complexity of problems the students face, and adapt to the development of ideas to improve the school character education. So as to deal with such pressure, GC service programs in SHS should be handled more professionally in school reformation. This is particularly necessary because a meaningful relationship between counselors and students can be built through having proficient soft skills, such as appearance, verbal communication skills, work ethics, analytical abilities, self-management, and others. Everyone is gifted with varied natural talents, namely character, personality, verbal communication skills, creativity, social skills. Bernd Schulz (2008) in *The Importance of Soft Skills: Education beyond Academic Knowledge* describes the significance of soft skills and how they complement hard skills, thus adding the responsibility for educators to develop students' soft skills at school. Soft skills have a vital role in forming an individual's personality. Soft skills include communication skills, logical and structured thinking, problem solving skills, creativity, teamwork skills, negotiating skills, self-management, time management, conflict management, cultural awareness, general knowledge, responsibility, ethics and manners, self-esteem, socializing, integrity/honesty, empathy, work ethics, project management, business management. Aforementioned data showed that soft skills are no longer seen as complementary, but are actually preferred instead of hard skills. Regarding education reformation in SHS, guidance and counseling services serve as an integrative part of the school's education system, so the development of education curriculum must involve all related stakeholders to ensure the relevance of education to the needs of life,

consisting of community, business, and work. Therefore, a balance between hard skills and soft skills in every school subjects and in between subjects should be maintained in the curriculum. (Indonesian Law No 20 of 2003 on National Education System and Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation no 81a of 2013 on the Implementation of Curriculum in the guidelines to create and manage education unit curriculum).

Currently, SHS counselors' soft skills have yet to be utilized well. An observation at a SHS in Semarang revealed the lack of interpersonal communication between teachers and students. During the GC service, most students did not appear to be actively enthusiastic to pay a visit to their counselors, causing the counselors to formally invite them instead. Moreover, counselors have yet to fully perform their task. In reality, the service given at schools is still limited to only several basic components (hard skills) with no flexible developments, and counselors have yet to utilize their utmost potential during GC service, thus most of them are unable to achieve individual competence that is needed to fulfill GC service needs such as development. Furthermore, the majority of students are not at the level of capability to develop themselves using school GC services, nearly all of them only using the service to express issues that are really troubling them, including study concerns. Innovative ideas in all components that support GC service are also not implemented yet by neither counselors nor schools, eventually producing lacking results.

Yirgalem (2013) conducted a survey on the significance of guidance and counseling from 336 participants using chi-square, independent t-test, Kruskal Wallis test, and percentage to analyze the data. The result showed that school community had a low awareness on the existence of GC services, indicated by the lack of specific plans, roles, and responsibilities of the GC services. There was also no organized coordination between the headmaster, teachers, and counselors. Also, Gundy, 2011 and Kuijpers & Meijers, 2012 (cited by Frans Meijers, 2013) who both held studies on guidance and

counseling in Dutch major, reported that most conversations between counselors and students are about school progress and future decisions. Forty percent of the counselors expressed lack of support from both schools and other field professions, whereas 63% stated little to no support from the headmaster and other teachers. Fifty four percent of the counselors also said that they did not gain any support from other professions, followed by complaints of mediocre facilities that did not support proper pedagogic approach which would be measurable. GC services should be done with well-balanced hard skills and soft skills, thus requiring the counselors to be intelligent, smart, open-minded, and dynamic; which will also make them more easily accepted because they can adjust and interact well with changes. So what is lacking from GC services at schools? An aspect that has been much underrated is soft skills. Soft skills are beyond technical and academic capacity—they are abstract, psychological traits.

Improvements in human resources are important to develop and maintain teacher quality. Training is a considerably strategic way to improve human resources within an organization. Sustainable and well-planned training programs can lead to an increase in teacher quality which will later result in better service quality. These programs may include soft skills training. Rajkumar Pachigalla (2013), who studied the need of soft skills in counselors, found that relying only on technical services has a low success rate. Regardless of the service held by his subjects, counselors were found to have a better performance with at least the essential soft skills such as interpersonal communication, team building, critical thinking, positive attitude, etc. Teachers who lacked soft skills were unable effectively approach their students. Therefore, teachers must focus on developing their soft skills in order to bond with the students. Still in the same study, Rajkumar Pachigalla (2013) gave soft skills training for a group of teachers and later reported improvements in their attitude and performance after training. This result proved the importance of soft skills in a professional life. In the past, professionals,

including teachers, put much more emphasis on science and knowledge, but now it is a mixture of both intelligence and soft skills. Teachers no longer just order their students, but also inspire by planting ethical and personal values. For this purpose, it is a must for teachers to possess a set of collective skills which is known as soft skills. Soft skills include interpersonal skills, team spirit, social awareness, business ethics, negotiation skills, and decent behavior like attitude, motivation, and time management.

At present, soft skills training are done only as complement to technical or hard skills. Each counselor should have natural talents, i.e character, personality, verbal communication skills, creativity, social behavior; but these talents have yet to be properly developed. Many counselors met with failure in giving services, not due to lack of hard skills, but low soft skills quality. Theoretically, the concept of life skills which covers both hard skills and soft skills has been noted in national education policies (Indonesian Law No 20 of 2003 on National Education System and Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No 81a of 2013 on the Implementation of Curriculum in the guidelines to create and manage education unit curriculum). However, current counselors still do not have proficient soft skills. The fact that there are criticisms on simply the existence of counselors showed how weak and low their soft skills are.

Based on the previous elaboration, it is evident that counselors need to prioritize soft skills in providing GC services. Consequently, it is advisable for them to join more human resources and soft skills training with the aim to improve GC quality service that would help change students for the better. The success of a GC service relies heavily on the counselors, thus a better service quality is only achievable through better skilled counselors. The role of counselors will become more apparent in order to face the globalization era. They do not only facilitate knowledge transfer, but also shape intellectual and tough personalities as the future generation, because they play a part in combining intelligence, skills, and spiritual

aspects. The combination of those three aspects is the key to build decent humans. Hence, proficient hard and soft skills are needed for counselors, and to support that, a soft skill training management model is required to assess the service quality of SHS GC teachers.

## METHODS

This study used a research and development model by Borg and Gall. The developed model originated from current training models. We carried out a preliminary study, literature reviews, and an analysis of training needs expected by counselors before a service quality-oriented training model design was proposed. Through various tests and validations, the expected training model oriented towards service quality was acquired.

The method applied in this study was Research and Development (R & D), because it was related to the research purpose to obtain a soft skills training model oriented towards service quality for SHS counselors. This study developed a procedure and soft skills training process oriented towards service quality for SHS counselors, comprising of planning, execution which consists of organizing and coordination, evaluating, and follow-up actions. We used both qualitative and quantitative approach.

According to Borg and Gall (1989: 784-785), there are ten steps in research and development, i.e. (1) research and information collecting; (2) planning; (3) developing preliminary form of product; (4) preliminary field testing; (5) main product revision; (6) main field testing; (7) operational product revision; (8) operational field testing; (9) final product revision; (10) dissemination. Without lessening the merit of each step, we simplify those steps into eight development steps, as follows.

1. Literature review to find reference on soft skills training
2. Preliminary study to collect information about currently available soft skills training for SHS counselors

3. Need analysis to collect information about the expected soft skills training for SHS counselors
4. Formulating a soft skills training model design oriented towards service quality for SHS counselors .
5. Model validation through Focus Group Discussion (FGD).
6. Formulating a hypothetical soft skills training model oriented towards service quality for SHS counselors.
7. Conducting a small-scale test and large-scale test to obtain input on the soft skills training model oriented towards service quality for SHS counselors.
8. Creating the final soft skills training model oriented towards service quality for SHS counselors

The following is the type of data obtained in this study.

1. Data on soft skills training for counselors before the study, i.e. data obtained from field trainings for SHS counselors so the weaknesses and benefits of such trainings could be noted
2. Data on the the need of training expected by the respondents, including their hope and suggestions on what should be held (fulfilled) in soft skills training for SHS counselors
3. Data on the model test results, which are recommendations given by the respondents involved in the model test so as to provide revision and to fix the model
4. Validation results data, namely recommendations gained from Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and consulting a training expert so as to provide revision and to fix the model

Data collecting instruments in this study were used according the study steps, which consisted of preliminary study, development, and validation.

1. Preliminary study required questionnaires, interviews, observations, documents, and literature reviews.

Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect information about current trainings, the role and function of both teachers and the training team. Facilities that support the training process were observed, whereas other supporting documents were noted, such as observation form, supervision report, guidance, and follow-up actions.

2. During the development stage, instruments used were questionnaires, interviews, and observation. Questionnaires and interviews were used to assess the suggested training model design, provide information on difficulties found and items that were considered satisfactory about the implementation of the training model design. The role and jobs of each involved parties, i.e. teachers and the training team, in the implementation were observed in this stage.
3. In the validation stage, questionnaires and interviews were used to reveal the participating subjects' response in regards to the hypothetical training model. To strengthen the validation results, a focus group discussion (FGD) was held with the counselors, headmaster, GC supervisor, GC experts, and management experts. In short, the instruments used in this study comprised of:
  - a. Questionnaires
  - b. Observation
  - c. Interviews

This study used both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques. Quantitative analysis was applied through data display, data reduction, data verification, and conclusion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Management Training

Management is a sistem of components. According to Terry (1977:4), "Management is a distinct process consisting of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling, performed to determine and accomplish stated

objectives by the use of human beings and other resources." Management includes activities done by individuals who give their best efforts through predetermined actions in order to achieve a certain goal.

One field of management is human resources management. Mondy and Noe (2005) explain that developing human resources is the main function of human resources management, which may be done through training. Marwansyah (2010) elaborates several roles of human resources training, i.e. planning, recruitment and selection, development, compensation, work safety, industrial relations, and human resources research. His study was in line with Noe's (2010:5) which describes that human resources management consists of analyzing and planning jobs, determining the need of resources, recruiting potential employees, choosing the employees, teaching the employees on how to do their jbs and preparing them for the future, providing rewards and compensation, evaluating employees' work, and creating a positive work environment.

Soft skills training for counselors is a planned effort to increase the quality of GC service. Through soft skills training, counselors are expected to gain the knowledge, skills, and attitude needed to deliver their job, such as analyzing the students' need, arranging GC programs, executing the program, administering service, and evaluating programs.

In creating the training program, authorized parties should be well-prepared with the help of experts. The planning should refer to a systematic approach in developing training programs. Noe, et al. (2010) mentions six phases in planning training programs, namely (1) assessing the needs, i.e. organization analysis, individual analysis, and job analysis; (2) encouraging employees to join training by assessing their attitude and motivation, as well as basic skills; (3) creating a learning environment, consisting of identification of learning goals and training results, matter, practices, feedback, observation, and coordinating and organizing the program; (4) ensuring training changes such as self-

management training and support from coworkers and manager; (5) choosing training methods, and (6) evaluating the training program through identification of training results, evaluation planning, and cost benefit analysis. A successful training depends on the method. The method used in training teachers here is On-The-Job Training, which is a form of training held in the actual workplace. On-The-Job Training is given to expert individuals who have the knowledge they need to do their job at a time different from their regular work hours (Simamora, 2006, Handoko, 2008:110).

### Soft Skills

Elfindri, et al. (2010: 100) state that soft skills are not inherent, but are shaped from (a) overcoming obstacles with a positive mindset, (b) experiencing formal education obstacles where the higher the education, the more complex soft skills obtained, (c) conducive environment which can trigger various soft skills, (d) learning by doing, where a person's character is formed by self-learning. Elfindri, et al. further assert that soft skills should be given by those closest to the students, namely parents, teachers, or experts. Soft skills represent a group of personality and character, social skills, language skills, personal habits, hospitality, and optimism that mark people to varying degree. Soft skills create a balance with hard skills which are technical qualifications in a job.

Widhiarso (2009: 1) states that soft skills are a cluster of skills that influence how people interact with others. Soft skills contain effective communication, critical and creative thinking, team-building, and other skills related to individual personality capacity. The fulfillment of need for soft skills could happen instantly due to a psychological concept where the need for a specific personality (that fits the demand) can be solved through training. Nowadays, it is popular to hold trainings such trainings about self-image, character building, table manner, out bond for teamwork, psychomotoric in ospek and other types of training in order to build a certain type of character.

The following are several definitions of soft skills by experts:

- 1) According to Bancino dan Zevalkink (2010:20), soft skills are categorized traits of a specific personality, social relationship, language skills, personal habits, hospitality, and optimism that mark people to varying degree.
- 2) Bernd Schulz (2008) defined soft skills as a cluster of characteristic personalities, social graces, facility with language, personal habits, hospitality, and optimism that mark people to varying degree. As a personal quality, interpersonal skill, personal challenge from their group, soft skills consist of aspects such as (a) critical and structured thinking (b) problem solving skills (c) creativity (d) teamwork skills (e) negotiation skills (f) self-management (g) time management (h) conflict management (i) cultural awareness (j) common knowledge (k) responsibility (l) etiquette and manners (m) courtesy (n) self-esteem (o) sociability (p) integrity / honesty (q) empathy (r) work ethic (s) project management (t) business management.  
Inter-personal skills are personal skills in doing social contact with all individuals, which comprises of as follows: (a) participating as a member of the team; (b) teaching others, (c) serving client/ customers, (d) exercising leadership, e) negotiating, (f) working with cultural diversity. Both personal qualities and interpersonal skills are categorized as soft skills. School counselors and teachers should have soft skills as a part of life skills, but not many does up to now. This is a concern considering soft skills are much more needed than hard skills in the society.
- 3) Jacqueline Waggoner, Ed.D. ( 2012) states that soft skills are personal qualities and interpersonal skills in developing and maximizing human work (for example, training, team building, decision making, initiatives). Soft skills encompass a range of interpersonal skills such as courtesy, respect for others, work ethic, teamwork,

self-discipline and self-confidence, conformity to norms, language proficiency, and behavior and communication skills. These skills comprise a cluster of personality traits, social graces, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism which individuals acquire as they grow and mature. Other soft skills are active listening, negotiating, conflict resolution, problem solving, reflection, critical thinking, ethics, and leadership skills. In teacher education, the soft skills are of social justice, caring, responsibility, and fairness.

In conclusion, soft skills attributes include good attitudes such as integrity, initiative, etiquette, motivation, teamwork, leadership, the willingness to learn, commitment, listening, tough, flexible, verbal communication, honesty, logical arguments, etc, which are what is demanded by employers. These attributes can be found in everyone, but within various levels. These attributes may change if related actors are willing to change through a clear and directed mechanism.

### **The Importance of Soft Skills**

The quality of human resources is the main factor that determines the advancement of a nation. Hence, Indonesian education system should really be capable of producing high-quality human resources, which is indicated by proficient skills in facing and solving daily life issues. An alternative solution to ensure the birth of an excellent future generation is by inserting soft skills in GC service.

Soft skills are very important in raising psychosocial competence. In developing an education unit curriculum, there needs to be a balance between hard skills and soft skills in every school subjects and in between subjects (Indonesian Law No 20 of 2003 on National Education System and Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No 81a of 2013 on the Implementation of Curriculum in the guidelines to create and manage education unit curriculum). Based on that elaboration, soft

skills should be developed and integrated within GC service. Counselors need to prioritize soft skills in providing GC services. Consequently, it is advisable for them to join more human resources and soft skills training with the aim to improve GC quality service that would help change students for the better. The success of a GC service relies heavily on the teacher, thus a better service quality is only achievable through better skilled teachers. The role of counselors will become more apparent in order to face the globalization era. They do not only facilitate knowledge transfer, but also shape intellectual and tough personalities as the future generation, because they play a part in combining intelligence, skills, and spiritual aspects. The combination of those three aspects is the key to build decent human beings. Hence, proficient hard and soft skills are needed for counselors.

### **Developing Soft Skills**

Soft skills are approached as skills that are closely related to personalities, thus the approach in organizing a management system for training SHS counselors should have several benefits, such as achieving learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are the capability to integrate cognitive, psychomotoric, and affective in a whole GC service behavior.

In a cultural context, soft skills mean life long learning. Correspondingly, developing soft skills should be organized with both contextual, proven matter and basic competence that become the expected learning outcome. The main characteristic of soft skills training is how the activities are aimed for counselors, thus the development strategy should be on how to develop personalities. Therefore, each competence element is further elaborated in the main competence, supporting competence, and other competence. Next, the development design planned an approach using an evaluation method oriented towards problem solving in order to obtain the necessary competence.

That way, the development of soft skills will occur by discovering and constructing (shaping) knowledge, not giving knowledge, so counselors must be active. Thus, counselors are



not only counselors but also mediators, facilitators, and role models.

Consequently, the arranged development plan should contain elements of the cluster of thinking from the UNESCO four pillars, i.e. learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. This means that the development plan may help achieve more than one competence, which also covers soft skills. Besides, the development plan should also consider the delivery method so that the skills can be understood well by counselors, as well as planning a proper evaluation method to find out whether the teachers are proficient enough at the expected competence. Hence, the soft skills development process should focus on how to change counselors who did not understand soft skills can have a wider perspective and proficient soft skills.

The development of soft skills education should begin with self evaluation using KEKEPAN (*Kekuatan, Kelemahan, Peluang dan Tantangan*/Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Challenge) analysis, in order to gain information on managerial skills, human resources, facilities, financial resources, and education unit environment. This analysis was also influenced by vision and mission, as well as norms built within GC programs. This aspect can be organized into expected roles of counselors.

It is important to know that all competence should contain matter that help engrave the foundation for personality, increase knowledge and skills, so that counselors would be able to do their job with proper attitude and actions according to their expertise in science and skills which will help improve their understanding about norms of living in the society based on their choice of expertise. Therefore, they will improve in both hard and soft skills. counselors should also have intrapersonal and extrapersonal concerns, which is to have thorough understanding of science and technology and be capable of communicating their knowledge in either individual and team work through critical, logical, and analytical thinking.

To sum up, the principle in organizing the development should fulfill both the societal needs and the professional community's needs and demands. Education units and society demand and require counselors with personality (soft skills) and professional skills (hard skills). As mentioned by several experts namely Kemper (1999), McMurchie, (1998) (cited by Shakir, 2009: 309) state that both soft skills and hard skills complement each other. In the work environment, Shakir (2009:309) mentions that normally, hard skills refer to technical procedures and practice that can be easily observed and measured quantitatively. Training for counselors was easier to give because they felt like they already have the skills during training. On the other hand, soft skills which are usually called as societal skills can not be taught even if we dearly need it in our everyday lives. These skills are usually combined into three main categories, i.e. personal attributes, interpersonal skills, and problem solving, as well as the decision-making (Shakir, 2009: 309).

Attributes of the components of soft skills were developed based on SWOT analysis, SHS GC teacher needs, and a so a factual soft skills model which was held at schools and the community, as well as a relevant theoretical study related to management of soft skills training.

## CONCLUSIONS

Looking at the results from the design test up to the validation test, followed by a validation through a focus group discussion, the final product or model was obtained. The results from the preliminary study done by SHS counselors in Semarang regency were used as a part of the study. The factual model of soft skill training management can be described that it has yet to engage the headmaster in its process other than to monitor the teacher's work in the education process. GC instructors were not involved yet in the soft skills training management. The training team/instructors performed a need assessment merely using simple instruments that only helped in

collecting, but not analyzing, information. The instruments used were not tested for their validity and reliability. Counselors were yet to have proficient soft skills thus the priority scale only focused on hard skills. The determined goals of training were not suitable to the teachers' needs.

The conceptual model of soft skills training management oriented towards quality service embraced GC supervisors, GC instructors, the headmaster, and counselors in monitoring counselors' skills. This training team identified each step, starting from need assessment to training procedure, and eventually acquired the desired soft skills training management oriented towards quality service which fulfills the needs of SHS counselors.

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