

Enhancement of Students' Soft Skills through a Module of Game-Based Problem Solving Activities in Moral Education

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Abstract

Soft skills comprised of seven key components namely communication, thinking and problem solving, teamwork, ongoing learning and information management, entrepreneurial, moral and professional ethics; and leadership should be embraced by all students as they are essential to the process of student development. This study aimed to examine the level of students' soft skills based on the seven components in a gamebased problem solving activities such as Fun Card, Moral Dice, Playmat, One-2-Learn, NipMo 36, Fun Learning and EEL Wheel. This study consisted of 5 phases based on the ADDIE Model, namely, analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation which involved a survey through questionnaire to 80 co-curriculum students from the Universiti Utara Malaysia. The findings showed that all seven soft skills in the games have been developed. Overall the highest soft skill was teamwork skill while the lowest soft skill was entrepreneurial skills. It is hoped that this game-based problem solving module for Moral education will contribute to new knowledge as well as improve the quality of learning and teaching Moral education as well as build soft skills through game-based problem-solving methods that enable students to be highquality and competent individuals.

Keywords: Soft skills, Problem solving, Games, Moral Education, Higher Education Students.

1. Introduction

Soft skills are skills that individuals must possess to enable them to function well, effectively and efficiently when performing a task based on their specific skills. The development of one's soft skills can grow through maturity, growth and aging (Megat Zakaria, 2007). The current major concern is the lack of soft skills among Malaysian students or graduates now widely spoken by the industry either locally or overseas. The main reasons for graduates' failure to get a job are lack of English proficiency, narrow-mindedness and lack of innovation, not a team player, lack of leadership qualities and communication skills that cause employers to reject graduates to work for their company. Therefore, various efforts, research and actions have been taken to produce students who are aware of the importance of soft skills in themselves other than having good grades.

Emphasis on soft skills is very important and should be instilled in students so that they have first-class human capital characteristics, competence and agility to meet the needs and requirements of the institution and be able to cope with more challenging situations in the workplace later (Ahmad, Anuar&Esa, 2010). This is because, in the future, employers will set certain criteria to determine whether or not the individual is eligible for the job offered. However, nowadays there are many graduates who do not relevant skills after leaving school or university. It is very difficult for employers to choose the right graduates to work in their company. Therefore,



various parties should play an important role in instilling students' soft skills through various channels such as cross-curricular elements, co-curricular activities and so on. In this study, researchers focused on how soft skills through game-based problem solving in Moral Education can be applied to students.

Mohd Saleh, Kamarudin, Abu Bakar, Ibrahim, Megat Zakaria and Bunyamin (2009), explained that soft skills are skills that individuals must possess to enable them to function well, effectively and efficiently when performing a task based on their specific skills. It enables one to think and act rationally in order to solve problems based on rational, logical and objective thinking (Mumtazah&Husna, 2008). In the game, the individual needs to understand the problem, determine the plan, operate the plan and then review the results (Germain-Williams, 2017). This study was completed with three objectives, first of all, built a game-based problemsolving module in Moral Education based on seven components of soft skills. Secondly, applied game-based problem-solving module to students and thirdly, identified the level of soft skills components in the gamebased problem-solving module in Moral Education.

2. Literature Review

According to the Ministry of Higher Education (2006), soft skills comprise aspects of generic skills that include cognitive elements related to non-academic skills such as positive values, leadership, teamwork, communication and ongoing learning while generic skills are general skills in quality, ability and features that enable one to work and contribute effectively to solving problems, communicating, thinking creatively and critically and acting as an effective team member. This element is really important and it needs to be instilled in the students when they are in school. Students or graduate students with no soft skills will not be easily employed. Elements of soft skills such as communication skills, thinking skills, leadership skills and so on should be emphasized in the classroom or lecture hall to extract students' ideas as well as bring students closer to real-world problems. Soft Skills in Game-based Problem Solving activities in Moral Education was a game application that has the potential to increase human capital and instill moral values in students and was based on the concept of playing while learning whether in the classroom or at home. It is common knowledge that learning while playing is one of the strategies that will attract students to engage themselves in the learning activities. Thus, in line with the 21st century education concept, the use of gamebased application has become an integral part of learning because it integrates the development of information and communication technology (ICT) in learning.

In addition, the uniqueness about this application was that it incorporated seven soft skills in students so as to create a generation that has skills such as leadership, teamwork, management and is also highly knowledgeable. These skills need to be developed from the very beginning among students to provide high potential human resources and compete with one another for the good of society, the country and the world. In addition, fostering universal values among early learners is to instill holistic concepts of ethics, morals and values within them. As such, the Game-based Problem Solving app was a way of shaping students' cognitive, affective experiences and psychomotor through virtual entertainment and touch which could stimulate students' personality formation. In short, the Soft Skills integrated in the Game-based Problem Solving app clearly touched on three aspects in order to produce students who are physically, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and socially balanced to realize a balanced human capital.

The Concept of Game-based Problem Solving in Education

Game-based Problem Solving is an app used by teachers to stimulate students to gain problem solving experience, build soft skills and instill good values in their students. Therefore, teachers use virtual games for students so that they can experience the joy of learning while playing games that benefit themselves. It enables one to think and act rationally in order to solve problems based on rational, logical and objective thinking (Mumtazah&Husna, 2008). In the game, the individual needs to understand the problem, determine the plan, operate the plan and then review the results (Germain-Williams, 2017).

The Development of Game-based Problem Solving Application

Game-based Problem Solving app was a tool that adhered to the concept of play while learning in Moral Education and focused on two goals namely the cultivation of pure values and the development of soft skills in students. This application also served as the tool of assessing students' level of cognitive, affective and psychomotor achievement. In addition, this app served as a stimulus to engage students, enhancing teacher pedagogical skills using ICT and 21st century learning whereby teachers were merely mentors.

The development of this application was made up of mastery games that included a number of stories which required students to investigate using a scientific problem solving method. The story embedded in the game was a journey that required answers and was bound by the allocation of time and challenges to get to the next level by collecting points. Students' ability to complete this task was tested with eight different levels of intelligence and high-level thinking (analytical) skills based on the questions posed in some of these stories. The instructor monitored the progress of the students in the group and made a report. Their level of achievement was tested using the Rest Theory consisting of three levels, conventional, pre-conventional and post-conventional. The way to build soft skills within students was to put certain conditions in the game such as prioritizing team



work, working on tasks, achieving goals and competing healthy.

3. Methodology

The study was conducted to develop a game-based problem solving module in Moral education, applied the module and subsequently identified the level of soft skills in the developed module. The test for the module involved 80 from the co-curriculum centre of Universiti Utara Malaysia. This design and development study involved 5 key phases based on the ADDIE Model, namely, analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation phases which involved a survey assessing students' soft skills level using a questionnaire from the Department of Leadership and Professional Development, IPGM, KPM (2016) Course module for teaching methods and assessment of soft skills elements.

4. Findings

The ADDIE model design in developing the app was used but researchers have not followed all the requirements needed in each phase of the ADDIE model. The following is an adjustment for each phase in the ADDIE model when developing the application.

Analysis Phase

In this phase, problems encountered in Moral education were identified to determine the objectives of the study. The target user of the module was undergraduate students who enrolled in Moral Education course. In order to understand the design and development features of the game-based problem solving module in Moral Education, user targets and environments were analyzed in depth. The components of the soft skills implemented into the module were also identified.

Design Phase

Here is when a game-based educational strategy that incorporated elements of problem-solving was designed. Storyboards were used to draw the details of educational are presented in Table 1. strategies through activities involving case studies and activities designed implemented into the module. In the design phase, Gagne's (1985) nine learning steps were used as a guide to develop the module.

Development Phase

As a result of the storyboard generated during the design phase, a game-based problem solving module was developed. An explanation of how to implement activities based on the modules developed was designed to make the educational process run smoothly.

Implementation Phase

In this phase, the completed module was implemented in the learning process. 80 students were involved in undergoing the activities of this module and the session took four hours.

Evaluation Phase

The evaluation phase was conducted to identify the effectiveness of the module developed in the educational process and to identify the components of the soft skills applied during the activities carried out using the module. In this phase, after the activity has been completed, a questionnaire was distributed to the students to evaluate the effectiveness and identify the level of soft skills in the module. The overall findings of the soft skills level are as follows:

Communication Skill

It can be concluded that all items had high mean scores. This means that the respondents have high agreement on the items in the Communication Skill. The item with the highest mean score was item 8, 'Using electronic media for information' (mean = 4.26; SD = 0.77). Meanwhile, item no. 10, 'Using information from different sources using different languages' showed the lowest mean score for the Communication skill component with a mean score of 3.73 and SD = 0.86. However, this item was still interpreted as a high approval level category. Briefly, the frequency, mean, and standard deviation of each item reported for the Communication skill variables

No	Items	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Mean	SD	Interpretation
		(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	-		
1.	Convey ideas in the			15	65	26	4.10	.616	High
	Malay/English language.			(14.2)	(61.3)	(24.5)			
2	Convey ideas in the		2	20	65	19	3.95	.667	High
	Malay/English language clearly in written form.		(1.9)	(18.9)	(61.3)	(17.9)			
3	Present confidently		2	24	64	15	3.88	.661	High
	and suitable to the level of the audience.		(1.9)	(22.6)	(60.4)	(14.2)			
4	Discuss maturedly to			11	61	33	4.21	.615	High

Table 1: Communication Skill



	achieve an agreement.			(10.4)	(57.5)	(31.1)			
5	Communicate by understanding the cultural context of society.			17 (16.0)	62 (58.5)	26 (24.5)	4.09	.637	High
6	Communicate non- verbally using social media.	2 (1.9)	8 (7.5)	23 (21.7)	44 (41.5)	28 (26.4)	3.84	.972	High
7	Deliver information using appropriate voice intonation.			16 (15.1)	58 (54.7)	32 (30.2)	4.15	.659	High
8	Use information from different sources using other languages	2 (1.9)	4 (3.8)	32 (30.2)	49 (46.2)	18 (17.0)	3.73	.858	High

Thinking and Problem Solving Skills

Thinking and problem solving skills are the components that were analyzed descriptively as in Table 2. The distribution of all items in this component was high (mean score <3.7). It can be said that respondents showed

a very high degree of agreement on all items in this component, namely that the mean value for all items was greater than 4.0. Only items no.8 and no.9 showed scores less than 4.0, respectively (mean = 3.89; SD = .681 and mean = 3.99; SD = 0.655)

Table 2: Thinking and Problem Solving Skills

Ne	Itama	SD	D	NS	А	SA	Maan	CD.	Intermetation
INO	Items	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	Mean	2D	Interpretation
1	Identify the problem by		1	11	65	29	4.15	.629	High
	the situation.		(0.9)	(10.4)	(61.3)	(27.4)			
2	Analyze problems in		2	13	69	22	4.05	.638	High
	identified issues.		(1.9)	(12.3)	(65.1)	(20.8)			
3	Assess and justify a			17	68	21	4.04	.600	High
	problem rationally.			(16.0)	(64.2)	(19.8)			
4	Apply appropriate		2	14	63	27	4.08	.678	High
	(critical) thinking skills		(1.9)	(13.2)	(59.4)	(25.5)			-
	to the identified								
5	Apply appropriate			11	71	24	4.12	.564	High
	(creative) thinking skills to the problem faced.			(10.4)	(67.0)	(22.6)			
6	Give full attention to			9	67	30	4.20	.576	High
	the responsibilities at hand.			(8.5)	(63.2)	(28.3)			
7	Make decisions based			15	59	32	4.16	.649	High
	on solid evidence.			(14.2)	(55.7)	(30.2)			
8	Think beyond the		1	28	59	18	3.89	.681	High
	bounds of solving problems in different ways		(0.9)	(26.4)	(55.7)	(17.0)			
9	Analyze information		2	17	67	20	3.99	.655	High



	thoroughly to identify problems and solutions.	(1.9)	(16.0)	(63.2)	(18.9)			
10	Adapt to the new environment.	1 (0.9)	13 (12.3)	61 (57.5)	31 (29.2)	4.15	.659	High

Table 3: Teamwork Skill

Teamwork Skill

Descriptive analysis of Team Work Skills is summarized in Table 3. Overall, the mean scores for each item can be interpreted as being high. This meant that respondents agreed with the items in this section. Frequency analysis showed that no respondents answered on a 1-scale or 'strongly disagree, SD. For this variable, all items had a mean score above 4.0, which could be inferred to be very high. Item no.4, 'Respect other people's abilities' was recorded as the highest mean (mean = 4.5; SD = 0.54).

No	Items	SD	D	NS	А	SA	Mea	0.0	Intrepretatio
•	Items	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	n	SD	n
1	Build good relationships with			3	51	52	4.46	.555	High
	team members.			(2.8)	(48.1)	(49.1)			
2	Interact effectively in groups.			5	55	46	4.39	.579	High
				(4.7)	(51.9)	(43.4)			
3	Collaborate between group		1	3	51	51	4.43	.602	High
	members.		(0.9)	(2.8)	(48.1)	(48.1)			
4	Respect other peoples' abilities.			2	49	54	4.50	.539	High
				(1.9)	(46.2)	(50.9)			
5	Responsible for decisions		1	6	51	48	4.38	.639	High
	made in teams.		(0.9)	(5.7)	(48.1)	(45.3)			
6	Interact offectively to achieve			10	18	17	1 35	650	High
0	the same goal.			(0, 4)	(45, 2)	(44.2)	4.55	.050	mgn
				(9.4)	(43.3)	(44.3)			
7	Understand the role of leader in		2	6	56	42	4.30	.664	High
	a group.		(1.9)	(5.7)	(52.8)	(39.6)			
8	Understand the role as a			3	53	49	4.44	.553	High
	member of a group.			(2.8)	(50.0)	(46.2)			
9	Accept the group members'		1	7	49	49	4.38	.654	High
	background differences to achieve the same goal.		(0.9)	(6.6)	(46.2)	(46.2)			
10	Pay attention to tasks that need			4	50	52	4.45	.571	High
	to be done.			(3.8)	(47.2)	(49.1)			

Ongoing Learning and Information Management

Ongoing Learning and Information Management construct was measured using 10 items. These items and mean scores are summarized in Table 4. The 'Get new

information by asking others' item showed the highest mean score (mean = 4.30; SD = 0.6). Overall, all ten items indicated their mean values were at a high level of agreement.



No	Items	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Mean	SD	Interpretation
		(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)			
1	Find relevant information from		1	11	58	35	4.21	.661	High
	a variety of sources.		(0.9)	(10.4)	(54.7)	(33.0)			
3	Accept new ideas for self-			4	66	36	4.30	.538	High
	learning.			(3.8)	(62.3)	(34.0)			
4	Always open to new ideas.		1	8	56	41	4.29	.647	High
			(0.9)	(7.5)	(52.8)	(38.7)			
5	Manage information from		1	9	64	32	4.20	.624	High
	various media.		(0.9)	(8.5)	(60.4)	(30.2)			
6	Get new information by asking		1	5	61	39	4.30	.604	High
	others.		(0.9)	(4.7)	(57.5)	(36.8)			
7	Share new ideas with friends.		1	7	59	39	4.28	.629	High
			(0.9)	(6.6)	(55.7)	(36.8)			
8	Use the internet medium to			10	59	37	4.25	.618	High
	disseminate known information.			(9.4)	(55.7)	(34.9)			

Table 4: Ongoing Learning and Information Management

Entrepreneurial Skill

Reports on Entrepreneurial Skills can be found in Table 5 below. Frequency test showed that respondents were more likely to respond on a 4-point scale, 'agree or A'. This can be seen as a percentage value for each item. About half of the respondents indicated that they had answered 'A' for items in Entrepreneurial Skill. Meanwhile, for the mean value of each item, descriptive analysis suggested that the highest mean score for the entire items with the mean range was reported between 3.88 and 4.03. A summary of the mean and standard deviation (SD) scores can be found in Table 5 as follows.

Table 5:	Entre	prenurial	Skill
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N o	Items	SD (%)	D (%)	NS (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mea n	SD	Interpretatio n
1	Identify business opportunities.	1	1	27	50	27	3.95	.797	High
		(0.9)	(0.9)	(25.5)	(47.2)	(25.5)			
2	Identify the need to have social	1	1	19	59	26	4.02	.743	High
	networking to become an entrepreneur.	(0.9)	(0.9)	(17.9)	(55.7)	(24.5)			
3	Plan business opportunities	1	2	23	52	28	3.98	.805	High
	based on capital.	(0.9)	(1.9)	(21.7)	(49.1)	(26.4)			
4	Build business opportunities	2	6	23	46	28	3.88	.937	High
	individually.	(1.9)	(5.7)	(21.7)	(43.4)	(26.4)			
5	Resolve business risks with the	1	4	23	50	28	3.94	.849	High
	right channels.	(0.9)	(3.8)	(21.7)	(47.2)	(26.4)			
6	Evaluate areas of business that	1	5	19	53	27	3.95	.848	High
5	are relevant to current needs.	(0.9)	(4.7)	(17.9)	(50.0)	(25.5)			
7	Identify the impact to the	3	2	21	53	27	3.93	.887	High



	selected business.	(2.8)	(1.9)	(19.8)	(50.0)	(25.5)			
8	Identify risks in a business.	2	2	20	54	28	3.98	.839	High
		(1.9)	(1.9)	(18.9)	(50.9)	(26.4)			
9	Justify the advantages of	2	1	14	64	25	4.03	.762	High
	something selected.	(1.9)	(0.9)	(13.2)	(60.4)	(23.6)			
10	Try to get along with more	2	2	18	52	31	4.03	.849	High
	professional entrepreneurs.	(1.9)	(1.9)	(17.0)	(49.1)	(29.2)			

Moral and Professional Ethics Skill

There were ten items in this component as shown in Table 6. It can be concluded that all items had a high mean score except for item no.9 that was "Identify the interest of students over the interests of community, society and personal" showing a mean mean score (mean = 3.66; SD = 0.848). This means that on average, respondents strongly agreed with the items in Moral and

Professional Ethics skill. The item with the highest mean score was item 7, 'Identify values in the Ministry of Education's work ethic' (mean = 4.32; SD = 0.59). In summary, the frequency, mean, and standard deviation of each item for this component are reported in Table 6. It can be seen that the average respondents (over 50%) answered 'A' = agree.

Table 6: Moral	and Pi	ofessional	Ethics	Skill
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NT.	T (SD	D	NS	А	SA	M	CD	Territori
NO.	Items	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	Mean	3D	Interpretation
1	Understand the economic			7	39	16	4.15	.596	High
	impact of professional practices, such as cost of living.			(11.3)	(62.9)	(25.8)			
2	Assess the environment		1	2	40	19	4.24	.592	High
	in professional practice, such as natural disasters.		(1.6)	(3.2)	(64.5)	(30.6)			
3	Understand the socio-	1	1	5	35	20	4.16	.772	High
	cultural impact of professional practice, such as treating individuals of different nationalities fairly.	(1.6)	(1.6)	(8.1)	(56.5)	(32.3)			
4	Identify the potential for			3	43	16	4.21	.517	High
	self-improvement such as attending courses that is required in the service.			(4.8)	(69.4)	(25.8)			
5	Identify intellectual		1	4	43	14	4.13	.586	High
	property related to scientific publications.		(1.6)	(6.5)	(69.4)	(22.6)			-
6	Participate in volunteer			2	41	19	4.27	.518	High
	activities when needed by the community.			(3.2)	(66.1)	(30.6)			
7	Identify values in the Ministry of Education's work ethic (trustworthy, truthful, wise, grateful, dedicated, sincere, caring).		1 (1.6)	1 (1.6)	37 (59.7)	23 (37.1)	4.32	.594	High
8	Justify decisions in			5	40	17	4.19	.568	High



	solving ethical problems.			(8.1)	(64.5)	(27.4)			
9	Identify the interests of students over the interests of community, society and personal.	1 (1.6)	4 (6.5)	18 (29.0)	31 (50.0)	8 (12.9)	3.66	.848	Average
10	Identify the importance of a teaching code of ethics in doing the job.			5 (8.1)	35 (56.5)	22 (35.5)	4.27	.605	High

Leadership Skill

Table 7 shows the descriptive result of each item for the Leadership Skill component. The mean average item score indicates a high level. Items for 'Identify effective leadership characteristics' and 'Take the role of team leader and team member alternately' showed the highest mean scores respectively (mean = 4.16; SD = 0.68) and

(mean = 4.15; SD = 0.63). In addition, frequency analysis found that the majority of respondents answered 'A' scale that is 'agree'. This was reflected in the percentages which showed that more than 50% of respondents rated 'agree' on the other four scales provided. No respondents answered on the 'SD' scale; 'Strongly disagree'.

Table 7: Leadership Skill

No	Items	SD (%)	D (%)	NS (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	SD	Intrepretation
1	Lead a project.		2	14	64	26	4.08	.672	High
			(1.9)	(13.2)	(60.4)	(24.5)			
2	Monitor team members.		1	15	62	28	4.10	.661	High
			(0.9)	(14.2)	(58.5)	(26.4)			
3	Always ready if selected as team		4	16	64	22	3.98	.717	High
	leader.		(3.8)	(15.1)	(60.4)	(20.8)			
4	Take the role of team leader and			14	62	30	4.15	.629	High
	team member alternately.			(13.2)	(58.5)	(28.3)			
5	Influence team members to			18	65	23	4 05	623	High
5	execute a project.			(17.0)	(61.3)	(21.7)	1.05	.023	mgn
	energie a projecti			(17.0)	(01.5)	(21.7)			
6	Become a mentor to team		4	21	53	28	3.99	.787	High
	members.		(3.8)	(19.8)	(50.0)	(26.4)			
7	Design task for each group			20	55	31	4.10	.689	High
	member.			(18.9)	(51.9)	(29.2)			
8	Identify information on quality		2	22	57	24	3.98	.720	High
	leadership.		(1.9)	(20.8)	(53.8)	(22.6)			
9	Apply basic knowledge of		3	16	60	27	4.05	.722	High
	leadership.		(2.8)	(15.1)	(56.6)	(25.5)			
10	Identify the characteristics of		1	14	57	33	4.16	.681	High
	effective leadership.		(0.9)	(13.2)	(53.8)	(31.1)			

5. Summary

This study has achieved the objectives of building a game-based problem-solving module in Moral Education based on seven components of soft skills, applying gamebased problem-solving module and identifying components of soft skills in the game-based problemsolving module in Moral Education. Efforts to build game-based problem solving module in Moral Education based on seven components of soft skills have successfully produced seven games namely Fun Card, Moral Dice, Playmat, One-2-Learn, NipMo 36, Fun Learning and EEL Wheel. The application of the gamebased problem solving module was conducted on the students in a controlled environment. Teamwork skill was clearly evident in the activities. Students were cheerful and happy. Creativity was generated during the session. Indeed, instilling problem solving skills requires the use of effective tools and proper implementation strategies



(Germain-Williams, 2017). This study has identified all seven soft skills in the games that have been produced. By contrast, the most prominent soft skills were teamwork skill. This skill was also detected through student engagement and interaction. The lowest soft skill acquired was the entrepreneurial skill. This was because when students compared the skills; they found that entrepreneurial skill especially related to business was not as much as other skills. The findings on soft skills in game-based problem-solving in moral education are hoped to contribute to new knowledge. It has the ability to improve the quality of learning and teaching Moral Education while developing soft skills through a gamebased problem-solving method that can inculcate high quality students.

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