

Formation of Professional Teaching Identity: Educational Psychology Approach in Developing Soft Skills Through Teaching Training Program

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Abstract – This study investigates the role of teacher training program in the formation of professional teaching identities through the application of soft skills among undergraduate education students. Through the lens of educational psychology, this study analyses how aspects such as self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and metacognition develop through co-curricular management experiences and influence students' readiness to undergo teaching training. Qualitative methodology was applied by combining semi-structured interview methods observation. There are 150 respondents for observation and 5 respondents has been interviewed. The study findings showed significant improvements in four dimensions of soft skills: communication, teamwork, leadership, and interpersonal. However, problem solving and decision-making skills are still at a level that requires further improvement, a phenomenon explained through the theory of psychosocial development and cognitive load. Analysis through a transformative learning framework reveals how authentic experiences in co-curricular management accelerate the formation of professional identities through the process of critical reflection, problem-based learning, and behavioural modelling. The important implications of this study suggest that an experiential learning approach applied in a structured manner can empower knowledge and trigger changes in teachers' professional development. This study contributes a new perspective on understanding how co-curricular activities can be designed and implemented through an educational psychology perspective to maximize the formation of soft skills and professional identity of teachers. This shows the importance of integrating aspects of educational psychology in s to produce holistic, competent, and resilient educators in facing the challenges of the teaching profession in the 21st century.

Keywords – teaching professional identity, educational psychology, soft skills, co-curriculum, transformative learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Soft skills are an important element in the formation of a holistic individual, especially in the teaching profession and especially for prospective educators in the field of Technical and Vocational Education. Zakaria & Daud (2021) explain that generic (soft) skills are general, non-technical skills that are needed in all job sectors and across various levels of employment. These skills can be developed in educational institutions either through curricular or co-curricular activities. Through co-curricular activities, students can clearly form elements of soft skills

such as leadership, teamwork, problem solving, communication, personal skills, and critical thinking (Zulkifeli et al., 2022).

In the 21st century education era, teachers not only need to master technical knowledge and skills, but they are also required to have high soft skills. From an educational psychology perspective, these skills serve as the basis for the formation of a teacher's professional identity that is resilient (teacher resilience) and high self-efficacy—two psychological constructs that have been proven to have a positive relationship with teaching effectiveness (Bandura, 2018). These soft skills elements are very important for the formation of a holistic teacher's character. Gordon (2022) recognizes that high quality human capital is not only equipped with intellectual values but also with ethical and moral values and progressive and strong personalities.

An excellent teacher will prepare himself with appropriate preparation before starting the teaching and learning process. Before becoming an educator, prospective teachers will be exposed to teaching training by educational institutions that offer education courses (Sani & Azmi, 2024). The main purpose of teaching training is to provide orientation and practice about teaching, build mental readiness and enthusiasm, and strengthen the teaching field, as well as guide the development and assess students' skills and competence (Ishar & Jabor, 2016; Ali et al., 2017).

Abdullah and Ismawi (2020) stated that prospective lecturers who take co-curricular management courses gain various benefits that help them in the workplace consciously or unconsciously. The results of observations of 15 lecturers found that through the teacher training program they participated in, they were able to improve their communication levels, develop moral and ethical values, and apply problem solving and critical thinking skills. This shows that teacher training program can indirectly help prepare for teaching practice and develop students' soft skills.

The subject of co-curricular management was introduced in higher education institutions and began to be given priority when the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (2006) launched the Soft Skills Development Module to provide skilled human capital. Through co-curricular activities, it became an important channel to develop students' soft skills. This is in line with the view put forward by Esa (2007), who stated that some sports skills can be transferred to the workplace.

Teacher training program are an effective medium in shaping and honing soft skills among students. Through involvement in student organizations, clubs, associations, and extracurricular activities, students have the opportunity to practice various soft skills in real situations (Zanalabidin

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& Aziz, 2021). For Technical and Vocational Education undergraduate students, active involvement in co-curricular management has the potential to increase their level of readiness to face teaching practice, which is an important component of a teacher's professional training.

From an educational psychology perspective, co-curricular activities provide an authentic learning environment that allows students to apply social cognitive learning theory (Bandura, 1977), where modelling, observational learning, and mastery experiences occur in meaningful social contexts. This process aids in the formation of self-efficacy, which is a critical aspect of teacher professional development (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

However, there is still a question as to the extent to which involvement in these co-curricular activities really impacts students' soft skills and subsequently influences their level of readiness to undergo teaching training (Ong et al., 2021). Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the relationship between the application of soft skills through teacher training program and the readiness to undergo teaching training among Technical and Vocational Education undergraduate students.

The objectives of this study are: 1) Identify the level of involvement of Technical and Vocational Education undergraduate students in teacher training program; 2) Assess the level of mastery of soft skills among Technical and Vocational Education undergraduate students; 3) Assess the level of readiness of Technical and Vocational Education undergraduate students to undergo teaching training; and 4) Analyze the relationship between the application of soft skills through teacher training program and readiness to undergo teaching training.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the recognized importance of soft skills in teacher preparation, there remains a significant gap in understanding how co-curricular activities specifically contribute to the development of professional teaching identities among Technical and Vocational Education undergraduate students. While existing literature acknowledges that soft skills such as communication, leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving are essential for effective teaching (Zakaria & Daud, 2021; Zulkifeli et al., 2022), limited empirical evidence exists regarding the mechanisms through which teacher training programs foster these competencies. This knowledge gap is particularly concerning given that prospective educators often enter teaching practice with insufficient preparation in critical soft skills, potentially leading to challenges in classroom management, student engagement, and professional adaptability (Abd Samad & Ahmad Zanzali, 2009). The lack of systematic investigation into how co-curricular management experiences translate into measurable improvements in soft skills competencies represents a critical oversight in teacher preparation research, particularly when considering the psychological constructs that underpin effective teaching such as teacher resilience and self-efficacy (Bandura, 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Furthermore, the relationship between soft skills

development through co-curricular activities and students' readiness for teaching practice remains inadequately explored from an educational psychology perspective. Current teacher training programs may not be optimally designed to maximize the formation of professional teaching identities, as there is insufficient understanding of how psychological constructs such as self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and metacognition develop through experiential learning in co-curricular contexts (Bandura, 1977; Beijaard et al., 2004). This gap is particularly problematic for Technical and Vocational Education students who require specialized preparation to handle the unique demands of their teaching environment (Ong et al., 2021). Without a comprehensive understanding of how co-curricular experiences contribute to the holistic development of future educators through transformative learning processes (Mezirow, 1991), educational institutions may be missing opportunities to enhance their teacher preparation programs, potentially resulting in graduates who are inadequately prepared for the complex realities of 21st-century teaching and fail to develop the resilient professional identities necessary for effective educational practice (Gordon, 2022).

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching practice is an important component of the pre-service teacher training curriculum, which is in line with the goals of the National Education Philosophy and the Teacher Education Philosophy. It provides trainee teachers with the opportunity to experience first-hand the reality of the teaching profession, thus strengthening their skills, confidence, and readiness to become quality educators. This experience is considered important because it forms the foundation of a teacher's professional competence.

From an educational psychology perspective, teacher training provides scaffolding in the process of teacher professional development a concept that originates from Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development (1978). Through structured support and guidance, teacher trainees gradually develop pedagogical competence in stages until they are able to carry out teaching tasks independently and effectively (Wood et al., 1976).

For inexperienced students, teaching practice can be a challenging and potentially stressful phase. Abd Samad and Ahmad Zanzali (2009) explained that stress during teaching practice stems from the inability of trainee teachers to adapt to the new environment and the lack of comprehensive preparation. This phenomenon can be understood through the framework of psychological adaptation theory, which emphasizes the importance of developing positive coping mechanisms to face challenges and stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Therefore, thorough preparation is necessary not only in terms of theory and pedagogy but also in terms of mental, physical, spiritual, and intellectual aspects (Tewiran et al., 2024). This preparation often occurs in an informal form and is built naturally through experiences outside the classroom, which also include elements of soft skills (Espina-Romero et al., 2023).

At the higher education level, soft skills are applied through various activities, including co-curricular management. Active involvement in co-curricular activities is seen as an effective approach because it contains philosophical elements and practical practices that contribute to the overall development of students. This approach is in line with the principles of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), which emphasizes a change of perspective and meaningful self-development through experience and critical reflection.

A study by Sikor et al., (2010) also showed that technical teachers in technical secondary schools in Melaka mastered oral communication skills well, especially in interpersonal contexts. This competence not only attracts students' interest during teaching sessions but also ensures that information is delivered clearly, accurately, and meaningfully. One approach that has proven to be helpful in strengthening these communication skills is through involvement in the management of co-curricular activities in schools.

Furthermore, a study by Han et al., (2023) highlighted that co-curricular activities play an important role in the development of students' soft skills, including communication, leadership, and teamwork skills. They found that active involvement in co-curricular activities can increase students' self-confidence and interpersonal skills, which in turn contributes to their readiness to face the challenges of the teaching profession.

From a social psychological theory perspective, this phenomenon can be explained through the concept of social learning (Bandura, 1977) and the formation of professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2004). Co-curricular activities provide a space for the construction of identity as an educator through meaningful interactions and experiences, which then shape the self-perception and professional capabilities of a prospective teacher.

In a global context, a study by Riojas-Cisneros and Hernández-Fernández (2023) shows that the development of soft skills among education students requires a systematic and integrated approach. They propose a model of soft skills development that involves collaboration between lecturers and students in the teaching and learning process, as well as involvement in carefully planned extracurricular activities.

Overall, this literature review emphasizes that the application of soft skills through teacher training program is important in preparing Technical and Vocational Education undergraduate students to face teaching practice. Active involvement in co-curricular activities not only builds the necessary soft skills but also increases students' self-confidence and readiness to face the real challenges of the teaching profession, thus empowering knowledge and triggering positive changes in the formation of future teachers.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative approach by combining semi-structured interviews and observation as the main data collection techniques (Jasmi, 2012). A total of five respondents were interviewed in depth to gain a detailed understanding of their experiences in managing co-

curricular activities and the application of soft skills throughout their involvement. To strengthen the interview findings, observation methods were also implemented, involving two forms of approach, namely participant observation and non-participant observation (Becker & Geer, 2003).

In participant observation, the researcher directly participated in teacher training program with 150 respondents. This experience allowed the researcher to experience the real atmosphere of the activities and record behaviours that reflected the application of soft skills. Throughout the observation, visual materials such as photographs and videos were recorded to support the empirical evidence.

This study involved 155 undergraduate Technical and Vocational Education students who participated in teacher training program as part of their study program. From a cognitive psychology perspective, this approach allows for a holistic assessment of students' metacognitive development the ability to reflect on and control their own learning processes which is essential in shaping effective educators (Flavell, 1979).

Through interviews and observations conducted, all Malay respondents consisted of 135 females and 20 males. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 23 and 29. For observations, the researcher only acted as an external observer. The focus of the observation was to identify behaviours and interactions that led to the formation of soft skills elements throughout the activity. To ensure that the observations were carried out systematically and consistently, an observation form was developed as a guide to identify the main elements to be examined.

Interviews were conducted immediately after the activity was completed to ensure that the feedback obtained was still fresh and relevant to the respondents' recent experiences (Ortiz, 2015). The responses provided a comprehensive picture of their perceptions and experiences of applying soft skills through teacher training program.

Data obtained through interviews were manually analyzed using a thematic approach, where information was categorized according to relevant themes. Meanwhile, observational analysis was conducted based on the main dimensions of soft skills that were the focus of the study, namely communication skills, problem solving, teamwork, interpersonal skills, leadership, entrepreneurship, and decision-making.

V. FINDINGS

The results of the study are based on six aspects of soft skills as follows, namely communication skills, problem solving skills, teamwork skills, interpersonal skills, leadership skills, and decision-making skills. These elements are the soft skills elements that have been set in the Soft Skills Development Module for Malaysian Higher Education Institutions. The researcher also identified the backgrounds of the respondents studied to see if there were any relationships that could be linked to forming stronger soft skills and influencing their level of readiness to face teaching training after undergoing co-curricular activities.

Formation of Communication Skills

Among the respondents, there were a few who were known to be very shy and had problems communicating. They would shiver and bow their heads when speaking in front of a public audience. From an educational psychology perspective, this phenomenon can be linked to the concept of social anxiety, which is often a barrier to effective communication in professional contexts (Rapee & Heimberg, 1997).

Through observation with the participants, the researcher witnessed significant changes in the respondents. At the beginning of the activity, the communication level of some respondents was still weak, but it gradually changed through group meetings and discussions, and when actual activities involved students and others. This change reflects the process of systematic desensitization—a technique in psychology that helps reduce anxiety through gradual exposure to stressful situations (Wolpe, 1958).

A total of 5 students who were prospective educators were interviewed as soon as they finished their teacher training program. The interviews were conducted immediately so that the respondents were still in the mood and would give honest and sincere answers. Before continuing the interview to the actual goal of the question, the researcher first asked all the respondents what preparations they had made to face the teaching training. The purpose of the questions was to find out how prepared they were.

All respondents gave the same answer, which was that they had prepared, especially in terms of communication skills. The communication aspect was the skill that was most emphasized. The reason given by the respondents was because the teaching profession requires us to constantly interact with people, especially students. Among the answers given regarding the respondents' preparations before undergoing teaching training were:

Mmm...to face this LM, the first thing I see is the most important thing for me is communication skills, where communication with students is very important. How to attract students' attention when teaching later, which is a problem for me as a student who has not yet worked in the field (MBP1).

Apart from communication skills, there were two respondents who stated that a teacher must first have knowledge and high self-confidence before they can master communication skills. This was expressed by respondents MBP4 and MBP5.

In my opinion, for a knowledge educator, the teacher himself needs to be skilled in the field he is taking on. Secondly, readiness in terms of self-confidence... self-confidence, in terms of the way we communicate, the way we want to attract the students' interest to be interested in and focus on what we are teaching (MBP4).

To face the LM, I need to equip myself in terms of education. I also need to equip myself with

educational knowledge apart from generic skills... for example, during the LM, I may face problems, so that's where problem-solving skills are needed. Apart from that, among other preparations, I also need to hone my talent in communication because later during the LM, I will be carrying out my duties as an educator... because communication is very important for an educator (MBP5).

This respondent's view is consistent with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, which emphasizes the importance of confidence in one's own ability to perform tasks effectively. In this context, strong pedagogical and subject content knowledge forms the basis for self-confidence and subsequently influences the quality of communication in teaching (Shulman, 1986).

In terms of communication skills, one respondent (MBP1) felt that his communication level had increased dramatically, and it had given him greater confidence to deal with students when undergoing teaching training later.

At first, at a very low level because I had no experience yet... but then after handling, not even after the middle of the day, I felt confident... After that, after doing the activity, I felt very confident and could improve the way I communicate... and I felt satisfied that I could improve it (MBP1).

In contrast to two respondents who believed that teacher training program had increased their confidence in interacting with students, through tone of voice and word usage, their confidence did not show an increase to the maximum level. Among the interviews were:

Erm...communication level?... hehehe... erm... hehe ok... it's better than before... Before, I felt a bit nervous, being in front of people made me feel nervous, but after that I felt ok, I didn't feel nervous... there was even a little bit... it was like I could interact a little (MBP2).

Haa...alhamdulillah, it's better with students... Our approach with peers is different, so when dealing with these students, we feel like we have more challenges and worries... So, we will be better (MBP3).

This varying development of confidence reflects Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development, where individuals have different levels and rates of development depending on their experience, support, and learning capacity.

Meanwhile, two respondents felt that their communication level could not only be improved between students but also when involving outsiders, namely fellow students and the public. This was stated by MBP4 and MBP5.

There is also an increase because we deal with the school... meaning not only with friends but also

other people who we know that the way to communicate with them can improve our level of communication (MBP4).

Before participating in extracurricular activities, I was not a very friendly person... When I got involved in extracurricular activities... indirectly I was able to improve my communication, especially with friends and also students, and from there I started to learn to deal more with society, how to discuss things, etc. (MBP5).

This improvement in communication skills across social contexts demonstrates learning transfer—an important concept in educational psychology that explains how skills learned in one context can be applied in a different context (Perkins & Salomon, 1992). This is a manifestation of the empowerment of knowledge that generates changes in professional behaviour.

Formation of Problem-Solving Skills

Problem solving skills are the main factor that a teacher can control students when conducting an activity. Students will use their teachers as their main reference material. Lack of this skill aspect will cause students to lose trust and respect for teachers, and usually students will make their own decisions (Mooi et al., 2021).

From a cognitive psychology perspective, problem solving skills involve complex mental processes including critical thinking, situational analysis, and rational decision making (Mayer & Wittrock, 2006). These skills are important for teachers to create a conducive learning environment that is responsive to the diverse needs of students.

Through observations during activities with respondents, the researcher found that respondents would feel stuck and unable to solve problems when they were in a stressful situation. They could not think well when pressured by unexpected situations and took a long time to think to solve problems. This phenomenon is in line with the cognitive load theory, which suggests that stress and anxiety can affect working memory function and subsequently disrupt the thinking process (Sweller, 1988).

Overall, these prospective educators have not yet fully mastered problem-solving skills. To solve problems, they still need a third-party perspective and are unable to act spontaneously.

Through interviews, two respondents stated that they would call students who were having problems and have a discussion if a problem arose. This approach can strengthen the relationship between teachers and students and provide space for students to be more open (MBP2 & MBP5). This approach reflects the concept of student empowerment, which is rooted in student centered learning theory (Rogers, 1969), which emphasizes the importance of respecting students' autonomy and involving them in the problem-solving process.

However, one of the respondents was of the view that

he would hand over the problem to a third party if he could not resolve it himself (MBP2). The following is an excerpt from the respondent's words.

Erm... I'll try to sort of... try to solve the problem by asking them what their problem is, why they're doing it that way, and then if they still don't seem to understand what I'm telling them, I'll report it to their teacher; okay... hem (MBP2).

Ok, if I encounter a problem, erm... maybe I will hold a discussion or counseling session where I will know their problem in more depth... or if I want to understand their problem better, I will call them one by one to... ask about their background, maybe from there they will not be too shy to reveal their problem compared to discussing it openly (MBP5).

All respondents interviewed believed that when facing problems and wanting success, it must start with planning. Early planning can prevent problems from arising, and the course of an activity will run smoothly. In solving problems, one must dare to make decisions quickly and accurately. When it involves people and teamwork, there must be a leader who is the leader and makes decisions. This is supported by the words from MBP3 and supported by MBP5.

Maybe we have, er, knowledge, soft skills themselves... leadership, communication skills, the way we work with people around us, whether it's peers or students themselves. Then in terms of, we need to be good at making decisions for ourselves and those around us (MBP3).

To ensure that all the activities we do are actually done, we need to be decision-makers who can make decisions, don't think too long... we need to think creatively and critically so that the problem doesn't linger and cause problems for others (MBP5).

This view is consistent with the action-oriented problem-solving model in educational psychology that emphasizes the importance of executive competence—the ability to plan, implement, and monitor cognitive strategies effectively—in the context of teaching and learning (Zimmerman, 2000). Strategic planning is a critical element in the empowerment of knowledge that enables prospective educators to face challenges more effectively.

Formation of Teamwork Skills

The elements of working in a team can foster a spirit of cooperation, tolerance, sharing opinions, exchanging ideas, and creating understanding (Talaat & Ishak, 2020). These are all things that respondents felt, experienced, and narrated themselves during the interviews.

From a social psychology perspective, group work involves psychological processes such as social facilitation, group synergy, and collaborative learning that promote the development of interpersonal and cognitive skills (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). These processes are important in educational contexts, especially in learning environments

that increasingly emphasize collaboration and teamwork.

Through non-participant observation of group two involving 19 respondents, the researcher found that this co-curricular management activity has provided an opportunity for all respondents to carry out their respective responsibilities successfully. Although there were some misunderstandings and disagreements, when it involved group work, all tasks could be carried out well. Similarly, when the researcher was also involved with the respondents in the first group, the researcher experienced the same thing himself.

Therefore, this shows that this co-curricular management activity has been able to unite all respondents working as a team and has produced excellent results from the management aspect in particular. This finding is supported by the words of respondents MBP2, MBP4, and MBP5.

Erm... the difference, there really is... there really is a difference, because if we're in a group like that, we can share all the ideas, and then if there's something we don't know, there's someone else who knows more; you can combine things, right? Besides helping each other, you have to have an understanding... that's what's important (MBP2).

Yes... there is a difference... individually, maybe... there is not much of an opinion... just for ourselves... if in a group, we improve the activity more (MBP4).

Yes, indeed, there is a difference between the results of individual work and group work... because when working individually, the ideas we actually get are only from ourselves, compared to when working in a group, where if we work in a group, our ideas may be improved by other friends (MBP5).

These respondents' views reflect the concept of collective intelligence—a phenomenon in which groups can achieve better performance than the best individuals in the group through the sharing of knowledge and skills (Woolley et al., 2010). This phenomenon is important in the context of education, where synergy between educators can result in more innovative and effective pedagogical approaches.

On average, respondents believed that planning activities well and implementing a spirit of cooperation in each activity carried out will enable understanding among group members. This statement was supported by MBP3.

Maybe in terms of... erm... in terms of... activities need to be well planned to attract the students themselves so that they are interested and willing to cooperate with the organized activities (MBP3).

Meanwhile, for MBP5, one way that can be done to foster cooperation in groups is by using the problem-based learning (PBL) method. He stated that...

Ok... if to foster a spirit of cooperation among students, I will hold a PBL (problem-based

learning) teaching and learning session... or problem-based learning because in PBL, each student will be divided into groups, and from there they will have discussions, and from there they will get used to group activities, which group activities bring many benefits in the teaching and learning process (MBP5).

The problem-based learning approach suggested by respondents is a strategy rooted in social constructivism theory that emphasizes the construction of knowledge through social interaction and collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978). This strategy not only encourages collaboration but also develops higher order thinking skills and the transfer of learning to real world contexts—important aspects in preparing prospective educators for the challenges of the teaching profession (Hmelo-Silver, 2004).

Formation of Leadership Skills

A good teacher is a teacher who can be a role model and follow the students. In this aspect, the researcher observed that some of the respondents have leadership skills, and it is clearly evident when they carry out teacher training program (Ho & Hamid, 2024).

From an educational psychology perspective, teacher leadership involves influencing, motivating, and developing students optimally—aspects rooted in transformational leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Effective teachers not only impart knowledge but also inspire and motivate students through example and personal charisma.

Although outwardly, the respondent has a gentle character, he is able to be a good leader, distribute tasks, issue orders, and act according to the situation. For example, respondents were asked how they would act when there was a student who brought a problem. All respondents answered they would call the student face-to-face and ask the student the problem. It is clear that the respondent did not take reckless action by passing punishment without research. These are the characteristics of a good leader: they will listen, evaluate, advise, and make decisions on every problem that arises. The following are some of the answers given by the respondents.

Oh... oh... if that's the kind of person we have to have a character... our character is like love... we have to advise him what kind of person he is... if he has a problem, we have to help him... we shouldn't judge him without knowing what his problem is, right? (MBP1).

If there are students like that, I will call them and see what problems they are facing. So, call them and ask them what problems they have created... and suggest what should be done to address the problems (MBP4).

The approach shown by the respondents reflects a relationship-oriented leadership style that emphasizes empathy, emotional support, and positive interpersonal relationships (Fiedler, 1967). This leadership style is

important in the context of education, especially in dealing with student-related issues that require a sensitive and humane approach.

From a developmental psychology perspective, the empathetic approach shown by respondents is also in line with the concept of authoritative parenting—a parenting style that combines warmth with the setting of clear boundaries—which has been proven effective in shaping healthy and adaptive development among children and adolescents (Baumrind, 1991).

Formation of Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills are also an important aspect when it comes to being an educator. Dealing with problems, pressure from parents, the environment, and administration can sometimes cause a prospective educator to experience various problems (Samsudin & Sulaiman, 2020). Therefore, they need to be smart in dealing with these situations and control their emotions so that they are always balanced and do not affect the tasks they are doing.

From an educational psychology perspective, interpersonal skills involve emotional intelligence—the ability to identify, evaluate, and regulate one's own emotions and interact effectively with others (Goleman, 1995). This emotional intelligence is important in the teaching profession because it influences teaching effectiveness, classroom management, and professional relationships with various stakeholders.

All respondents interviewed considered that being reprimanded for making a mistake gave a signal that they needed to improve and that it was a positive thing. This attitude reflects the concept of a growth mindset, which suggests that intelligence and skills can be developed through effort, learning, and resilience in the face of challenges (Dweck, 2006). As MBP4 said...

Erm... no, but I would consider it an improvement... that's why our mistakes are our weaknesses so we can fix those weaknesses (MBP4).

The words are supported by MBP1 and MBP5.

Erm... this is a bit of a sensitive question, but I'll answer it sincerely... erm, I'm not discouraged... if I'm asking why there is a problem... why does the problem happen? Maybe it's our own mistake... let's think about it... maybe it's true from the friend's reprimands... if it's true, why do we blame our friend... it's true that we have to improve from the mistakes we made... (MBP1).

For me, if my friends reprimand me... that's actually a positive thing, from that I will know where my weaknesses are... if there are any of my friends who like to reprimand me, I don't think I will be discouraged because from that I will improve every behaviour of mine (MBP5).

Although MBP1 considered this question sensitive to answer, he responded with openness and was very positive in admitting his own mistakes. This openness to criticism

reflects emotional maturity and metacognition—awareness and monitoring of one's own thinking and learning processes (Flavell, 1979). This maturity is important in continuous professional development, which is an important aspect of the teaching profession.

Formation of Decision-Making Skills

When carrying out tasks and dealing with students, an educator will always experience pressure and unexpected events. This is when decision making skills are needed. A leader needs to play a very big role to ensure that planning goes smoothly (Ngang & Sulermutyrean, 2015).

From a cognitive psychology perspective, decision making involves complex processes including risk assessment, consideration of alternatives, and evaluation of expected outcomes (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). In the context of education, teachers need to make quick, accurate, and ethical decisions in a variety of situations, from classroom management to student conflict resolution. From observations with participants and non-participants, it was found that this aspect was very poorly mastered among respondents. They were unable to make decisions accurately and quickly according to the situation. Some respondents preferred to let the situation go without looking for a solution. This phenomenon can be linked to the concept of learned helplessness in psychology—a condition in which individuals believe that they have no control over the situation and therefore do not try to change it (Seligman, 1975).

However, when interviewed, all respondents gave positive answers that they would help students in the decision-making process. Although sometimes the decisions they made were questionable, as in the comment from MBP4.

Feeling a little worried, afraid that the decision made will be wrong...not right, meaning that it is not right, whether he can overcome it or not, whether the decision made can overcome the problem that arises (MBP4).

This doubt reflects the concept of decision anxiety in psychology—the worry that arises from the uncertainty and risk associated with decision-making (Anderson, 2003). In the context of education, this phenomenon can impact the quality of teaching and learning if not addressed effectively.

However, at the same time, respondents will find it easier to make decisions when they are in a desperate situation and do not feel hesitant about the action. This statement is supported by MBP2 and MBP3.

It is true... a little. There is, but throughout the program it didn't feel like it, because thank God throughout the program I didn't feel like I didn't have time to think because I wanted to hurry... usually they would accept all my decisions without any hesitation, because they all agreed (MBP2).

Because the activity is going on... people say it's going fast, so every decision must be made quickly...

so I don't think about feeling hesitant... (MBP3).

This phenomenon can be explained through the concept of action readiness in cognitive psychology—a state in which individuals become more responsive and able to act quickly in urgent situations (Frijda, 1986). In the context of education, the ability to act quickly and effectively in stressful situations is an important skill for teachers, especially in the management of crises and emergency situations in schools.

The discrepancies in the answers obtained from observations and answers during interviews led the researcher to conclude that some of the respondents were still weak in this aspect. They realized the mistake, but when faced with the situation, they failed to solve the problem. Guidance from lecturers is still needed to correct this situation.

Discussion

Based on the data collection and data analysis from participant, non-participant observations, and interviews conducted, it was identified that the level of communication, teamwork, leadership, and interpersonal skills has been successfully fostered through the teacher training program that have been carried out (Ali, 2023). Meanwhile, the aspect of problem solving and decision-making skills is still at a low level.

From a developmental psychology perspective, these findings can be explained through Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development, which suggests that identity formation and competence depend on the resolution of specific developmental crises. Weaknesses in problem solving and decision-making skills may reflect issues related to levels of identity vs. role confusion and intimacy vs. isolation that need to be addressed through structured guidance and experience. This weakness exists because among the respondents, the majority are still unmarried and do not have a high sense of responsibility. Therefore, they are rarely exposed to complex problems and are burdened with problems that require them to make decisions and solve problems.

The second factor that causes this weakness is that among the respondents, they have just completed their bachelor's degree, and they have not yet worked. In contrast to respondents who have had work experience, especially in the teaching field (Othman et al., 2008). Through observation, respondents who have worked in the teaching field have high levels of leadership and communication skills. They are also able to control the situation, solve problems by finding other alternatives in a short time, and are more confident in dealing with students (Talip et al., 2021).

This finding is consistent with Super's (1980) career development theory, which suggests that professional competence develops through specific stages, including exploration, establishment, and maintenance. Work experience provides individuals with opportunities to develop skills related to their profession through an experiential learning process (Kolb, 1984).

However, through observations and interviews, it was shown that there was a significant increase in soft skills

from the beginning of the study until the end of the study. The difference was seen in the aspects of communication skills, leadership skills, and confidence in dealing with audiences (Sabil et al., 2021). These respondents were able to express their opinions, speak in front of a public audience, make eye contact when dealing with students in particular, have a clear voice, joke, and dare to express their feelings when they feel they are not being treated fairly.

This increase in soft skills signifies a process of knowledge empowerment and personal transformation that is in line with the main goal of co-curricular activities—building professional competence through direct experience in meaningful contexts. This change can be explained through Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, which proposes that meaningful learning occurs when individuals change their perspectives and frames of reference through critical reflection on experiences.

At the end of the interview, all respondents gave a positive reaction and agreed that the teacher training program had been able to improve and develop soft skills in preparation for their teaching training. However, there are still some weaknesses that must be improved, and through continuous involvement in co-curricular activities, all respondents will be more confident and able to develop the soft skills needed by someone who is an educator. The fear of facing students when undergoing teaching training will definitely be overcome, and they will be more courageous in facing any problem.

This is clear when all respondents who were asked could share their views on the important preparations that a prospective educator must do. According to MBP1, problem solving skills are the most important, and he is very willing to undergo teaching training. The answers given by the respondents above show that their experience in teacher training program has greatly helped them in preparing themselves to face teaching training. These skills cannot be learned theoretically in the classroom but require time and a series of experiences, and they will be formed on their own.

From an educational psychology theory perspective, this phenomenon reflects the concept of situated learning, which suggests that the most effective learning occurs in authentic contexts through engagement in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Teacher training program provide an authentic learning environment in which prospective educators can develop professional skills through meaningful interactions with students and peers.

The efforts of higher education institutions to provide such teacher training program have greatly helped students, especially technical and vocational education undergraduate students, to equip themselves in preparation for teaching practice. This approach is a manifestation of the commitment to empowering knowledge, where educational institutions not only provide theoretical knowledge but also provide practical experience that empowers future educators to bring about change in the education system.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the strength and progress of a country depend largely on a good and effective education system, while the strength of an education system depends on quality teachers. As stated in the national development vision, education is an important agenda that will fulfill the aspiration of making Malaysia a country that has become a reality.

This goal is in line with the main goal of the transformation of technical and vocational education, which aims to produce skilled workers with first-class human capital skills. Human capital covers aspects of soft skills in accordance with the National Education Philosophy to produce people who are balanced in physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual aspects.

From an educational psychology perspective, this holistic human capital development requires an approach that integrates theory and practice, reflection and action, and knowledge and skills (Gardner, 1983; Kolb, 1984). Teacher training program provide a learning environment that meets these needs, enabling prospective educators to develop the soft skills needed to be effective educators in the context of 21st century education.

At the same time, we must also have quality educators who have a high commitment to realizing all these goals. The process of teacher education and training must be a starting platform to hone the talents of prospective educators to face the real learning environment. It requires commitment and strength from all parties, especially the prospective educators.

Finally, this study emphasizes the important role of teacher training program in developing soft skills among prospective technical and vocational educators, as well as the importance of an approach oriented towards empowering knowledge and inspiring change in the process of preparing for teaching training. Through meaningful experiences and critical reflection, prospective educators can build a strong professional identity and the soft skills needed to become agents of change in the national education system.

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