

# The Influence of Spiritual Well-Being towards Generic Skills among Students

Siti Khatijah Binti Said

Faculty of Islamic Contemporary Studies, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Gong Badak  
Campus, 21300 Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, Malaysia

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## Abstract

Spiritual is an aspect that must not be ignored in the context of the development of generic skills among students. This article will discuss 5 spiritual constructs claimed by Neff as well as 7 generic skills constructs according to UTM attribute. A conceptual discussion obtained from these literature reviews emphasizes on the influence of spiritual well-being towards generic skills among students. It is greatly hoped that this research will be able to prove the effectiveness of spiritual well-being towards the development of generic skills among students.

**Keywords:** Spiritual Well-being, Generic Skills.

## Introduction

Future generation is Malaysia most important asset in the government initiative to create an excellent, developed, modern, and glorious country ahead of 2020 Vision. This means that the purpose of 2020 Vision is to create a country with a goal in which Malaysia will be a developed country in its own approach. The perfect development should not be measured with outward or physical achievement only instead it should be covered with a society that is perfect and complete in terms of physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual and social. This in line with the cores of National Education Philosophy which is to produce individuals that are physically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually balanced. Thus, generic skills are introduced to develop talents within students to produce individuals that are balanced in all aspects.

Besides, Malaysia Higher Education Blueprints 2015 – 2025 (PPPM PT) which launched in 2015 is a higher education plan developed by Malaysian, for Malaysian and will drive Malaysia in becoming developed higher income country. PPPM PT highlighted 10 paradigms to achieve students and system aspirational. One of the paradigm is to produce graduates that have *Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)* qualities. Therefore, polytechnic as one of the higher education institutes that provide TVET to the industries needs to ensure that the graduates are able to fulfil the requirement. The employers nowadays highly demand for the graduates that have technical and employability skills.

Unemployment phenomenon among fresh graduates is caused by their unwillingness to compete with the market requirements. Employers need an employee who does not only have technical skills but also need to master generic skills, being competitive and can boost company productivity (Zakaria, 2005). Graduates unable to get any jobs due to lack of additional skills. Additional skills need to be mastered by the students before penetrating into working field. There are still students who did not master those skills after graduating. A study showed that employers unsatisfied with the mastery of employability as compared to technical skills (Ramlee et.al 2014).

Even though there were students who practiced generic skills during their study it was not practiced as a whole. They practiced certain elements only. According to Dazali & Awang (2014), English language skills are lacking among IPTA's students. They should be encouraged to master communicative skills especially in English. All parties should give attention to take effective ways to develop communicative skills among IPT students as to prepare them for the future and also to make sure that the country will continue to develop and able to compete internationally.

In addition, the mastery of generic skills among students does not clearly show its effectiveness. Skills such as personality or ethics, problem-solving skills and critical thinking are less mastered by the graduates. In order to ensure that generic skills are been instilled among students, it should be referred to spiritual well-being at the working place where a study has been made regarding spiritual in workplace that involved few elements of generic skills only.

Therefore, spiritual well-being should be seen as a crucial aspect that affects generic skills. Spiritual well-being is an activity that is able to create good self-esteem among students especially among Muslims students in order to ensure dependents to God to achieve success. Buchanan (2009) found that spiritual aspect in curriculum helps teacher to overcome anxiety and stress.

This showed that spiritual aspect also need to be highlighted by the ministry of education. Spiritual aspect indirectly depends on strengthen value needed in each students. This parallel to the graduate's point of view in which related to value and good behaviour could make student to act rationally when dealing with problem (Abdul Salam 2010, -Hasan al-Bana 2003).

### **SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING ELEMENTS**

Every human being could not run from their religion and belief until the day of the judgement. This feeling and faith towards religion is natural behaviour of every human in the world (Haron, 1993). Well-being practices also known as spiritual practices. Al-Ghazali (2000) stated that spiritual referred to four elements which are *ruh*, *al-qalb*, *al-aql* and *al-nafs*. It explains that spiritual aspect is inner elements in human. This aspect should not be ignored in every activity in human daily life especially in education world.

To produce Malaysian that possess good behaviours, good personality and able to achieve self-well-being, a person must have spiritual strengths and moral values. National Education Philosophy also explains that a person who wants to be well-balanced physically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually must depend on belief and faith to God. This shows that individuals must hold onto religion as guidance in life. Thus, spiritual is necessary because human beings hold to the religion with it. Religion taught us to be more confident and have higher self-esteem and change human to be better (Kamaruddin, 2011).

For the purpose of this discussion, *Spiritually Multidimensional Measure* elements that were built by Neff (2006) are used to measure five constructs used in spiritual well-being. The constructs are as listed below:

a. Beliefs

Belief means an assumption or declaration that something is true. The belief in the existence of God as the Creator of nature and obeying all of His instructions is based on their respective religions.

b. Forgiving

Forgiving means things that begin with the negative effects and the assessment of the mistakes, not just showing themselves always right and trying to forgive the mistakes with sense of pity, generosity and affection in the hope that the offender will aware of his mistakes.

Forgiver is a noble character that must exist in every Muslim. There is in the Qur'an that explains that the virtue of a patient nature is a person near God. As Allah says in surah Ali Imran, verse 134 which means:

“And the one who restrains his anger and forgives another, God loves the righteous.”

Every human being needs to cultivate a forgiving nature by performing the process of purification of the heart such as by performing *fardu* prayers, *zikir* prayer and *sunat* prayers. This is because the good man of the soul also has a calm mind. (Mohamad, 2015).

c. Positive thinking

According to Morliyati (2010), positive thinking encompasses thinking about religious power in life, God always exists together, and always seek help from Him.

d. Self-value

Self-value can be defined as a good thing as love, kindness, excitement, honesty, courtesy, serenity and simplicity. According to Abdullah (2009), the value refers to price, goodness, ugliness and judgment based on human reasoning. Based on Islam's perspective, the value is a measure of humanity to judge a matter whether it is good or bad, beneficial or harmful.

e. Religious activities

According to Morliyati (2010), religious activity is meant to be done to humble ourselves to the Creator as to worship God and to participate in religious activities

Activities that emphasize the spiritual element are an endeavour to build the potential of each person. Individuals who are spiritual, bodily, intellectually and emotionally prepared are those who can lead themselves as well as others towards excellence and blessings in the world and hereafter.

Hence, with the application of spiritual well-being, it will produce students who have good moral values and behaviours. Well-behaved individuals are seen to be able to produce a good society and finally able to create a good and prosperous country (Siraj et.al, 2016). This has been stressed by Salam (2010) that moral value and good behaviour should be given priority and expected in all discipline knowledge so that it will be able to produce society that has positive value in their life. This shows that value system should be strengthen into education system in Malaysia. Meanwhile, according to Buchanan (2009) God and spiritual value element is crucial for someone because it can give positive impact.

## GENERIC SKILLS ELEMENT

Generic skills are general skills other than technical skills needed by individuals to learn in an effective way in university or working with full commitment in a workplace. Generic skills also

known as soft skills. Besides, generic skills are also known as *employability skills*, *core skills*, *key competencies* and others (Abdullah & Razak, 2004).

According to National Educational Philosophy to produce a well-balanced individual and also harmony in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical based on strong hold and belief to God. Hence, teaching and learning activities should be stressed towards main domain such as cognitive, psychomotor, affective and social. Learning is not only functioned as knowledge transfer but able to instil skills via potential development that bring self-changes.

Ministry of Higher Education (2006) defined generic skills as aspect that involved cognitive element related to non-academic elements such as positive value, leadership, teamwork, communication and life-long learning.

Development framework and approach done by IPT is a holistic approach among students. Generic skills development through formal teaching and learning activities could be seen via two approaches model as below:

a. Stand-alone subject

This model uses training approach and give chances to the students to develop generic skills potentials through a few of subjects created with a purpose to add students' skills. Generally, these subjects are offered as university general courses such as English language, TITAS, Entrepreneurship and so on.

b. Embedded model

Embedded model uses approaches that applies cross curricular generic skills in teaching and learning activities for subject followed. Through this model, students are trained to master generic skills via planned formal teaching and learning activities and is implemented according to certain methods without changing or reducing the contents and objectives that need to be achieved.

Generic skills need to be in the individual to make them an excellent human capital based on knowledge, productivity and competitive behavior (Hasril, Noorazman and Norasmah, 2015). This skill does not only emphasize on graduates need to meet the needs of their skills in facing challenge in the working field but it is also an important element that should be applied to students who are in educational institutions (Wong, Rosnidar and Syakirah, 2015).

There are various elements of generic skills outlined by an organization. The generic skills that are meant in this discussion are subject to seven elements of generic skills outlined by Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. Its elements consist of communication skills, group work skills, problem solving skills, flexible and adaptive skills, lifelong learning skills, self-esteem skills and ethical and moral skills. The following generic skills constructs are used in this discussion.

i) Communication skill

Communication skills are important to the graduates because it is one of the needed skills by the employers. Communication skills involved effective communication in Bahasa Melayu and English in different context with different communication participants. Communication process happened at any time and could not be avoided by any individuals. (Hashim, 2001 & Zaiton, 2003).

Multi languages communication ability is a benefit that can differ ones from other graduates. All of this is an additional responsibility that every graduates need to bear if they want to get a job (Abbas, 2008).

ii) Group work skills

Noraini & Sazalie (2010), define a group as two or more individuals freely interact together to achieve certain goals. Group work can also create effective working relationships since individuals need to respect team members or followers by appreciating the uniqueness, quality and strength they possess.

Meanwhile, according to Awang, Ripin & Haron (2012), human is determined by Allah to live in a society. Every individual in society should feel that they are complementary to other members in society. Relationship and cooperation with the surrounding community are emphasized in Islamic teachings, for example through Friday prayers and the Eid prayers. All of these practices must be done in congregation. While working, Islam encourages cooperation through the mutual help of each other in order to achieve mutual success. As Allah SWT says in surah al-Tawbah verse 71 which means:

*"And those who believe, men and women, some of whom are the helpers of the other, they enjoy good, and forbid evil, and establish prayer and pay alms and obey Allah and His Messenger. For them is Allah's mercy. Lo! Allah is Mighty, Wise. "*

iii) Problem-solving skills

Problem solving skill is one of the ability to use process of problem solving, identifying problem and chances, analyse main aspect in given problem and strategy implementation to find its solution. An individual should be able to apply problem solving strategies according to situation happened. Evaluation should be done on every action taken in the process of problem solving (Rasid et al, 2010).

The revelation given to mankind is a guide to solve the problems that human beings disagree. It is mentioned in the Qur'an as the word of Allah SWT in surah al-Nahl verse 64 which means:

*"And We have not sent down the Qur'an to thee (Muhammad) except that thou wouldst show them that wherein they differed, and that they should be guides and a mercy to those who believe."*

iv) Flexibility skills

Flexible is also often referred to as customization. Flexible is also an easy-to-change process such as attitude, decision, and so on. Flexible skills are often linked to the willingness of individuals to adapt and be trained with the task and skills in any situation and technology (Oliver, Omari & Mc Loughlin, 1999).

A person who is able to adapt this in every matter is highly demanded by Islam. Therefore, every student needs to understand the concept of flexibility with full wisdom to build an atmosphere that will bring great benefits to learning and career as long as it does not violate the principle that leads to the prohibition of Allah (Awang, Ripin & Haron, 2012).

v) Lifelong learning skills

This lifelong learning skill enables one to love knowledge, always apply the theory of learning in their lives, always learning something new and can see an event as a learning (Bligh, 2000). Islam as the teaching of revelation emphasizes the concept of pursuing constant knowledge and taking it anywhere to exploit it on the path of charity. Knowledge lifts human dignity and distinguishing it from animals. Because of the importance of knowledge, Islam urges its people to learn and seek knowledge from cradle until the end of life (Awang, Ripin & Haron, 2012).

vi) Self-esteem skills

Muslims must have strong self-esteem and adherence to the principles taught by Islamic teachings. The faith policy which is the core of all behaviour should be embedded in oneself.

In addition, the nature of self-confidence is also characterized by positive thinking and avoids thinking negatively when facing of any problems.

Many academics have seen that students who lack high self-confidence do not have the will and lack of self-direction to achieve their full potential and to pursue excellence in academics (Yahya & Shahabudin, 2010)

vii) Ethical and moral skills

Values of ethics and morals are a value viewed from the angle of morality, custom or behaviour that become the individual's life holds. Generic skills in this aspect are important to produce a knowledgeable society through a good and praiseworthy moral and ethical process (Norzailawati et.al, 2008).

Generic skills are important to students to produce productive, creative and innovative graduates who are able to compete globally and meet industry demands. Therefore, the curriculum being drafted should be sensitive to the employer's will. Accordingly, generic skills practice is important towards the formation of potential students.

Universities as *IPT* should be the best place to polish student generic skills (Rahayah, Rodiah & Noriah, 2008). Students of *IPT* need to have the desire and ability to engage in the process of human capital formation with this first-class minded. Hence, the application of generic skills must be implemented thoroughly by educational institutions by involving all parties that are in contact with the students. In addition, moral values can also be seen from the digest of generic skills elements in *IPT* for the formation of a quality student's personality to be realized (Abbas, 2008).

### **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING AND GENERIC SKILLS**

According to Joseph and Sailakshmi (2011), increased in spiritual intelligence can develop skills such as intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, problem solving, goals, motivation, commitment, responsibility, self-awareness, team spirit, stress management, time management, leadership and transformation that are necessary for work and workplace success. Spiritual well-being is the ideal use to facilitate everyday problem solving. Besides, spiritual intelligence develops potential and helps in the welfare of workers and each employee has unique skills, abilities and competencies that are the most valuable human resources.

In addition, the mastery of spiritual well-being and generic skills is very important for graduates. Today, high academic achievement alone is not enough for graduates to be accepted directly into the job market. Generic skills are the additional skills that students must master before venturing into an increasingly challenging job sector. In this regard, spiritual well-being is essential for human beings to ensure balanced in terms of emotion, physical, intellectual, and social. This is because unemployment rates among graduates are high nowadays. Preparation in the student should be given attention and emphasized by practicing the elements of spiritual well-being and generic skills. Development of spiritual well-being and generic skills should be done at the earliest stage of study and should be applied in the student through learning. In addition, all parties need to work together in developing the spiritual well-being and generic skills among students.

### **Conclusion**

Unemployment problems among graduates have become most discussed issue on mass media. In regard to this, the components of generic abilities and skills that are applied to students while in *IPT* make university education more relevant to reality needs. Practicing the

generic skills in learning is needed so that students are more valuable in the market. Generic skills are also able to produce graduates who are able to be self-reliant and live their lives more effectively, especially when they are having their career.

In addition, students need a spiritual practice within themselves. This spirituality will further strengthen the mastery of the students' generic skills. This spiritual application should always be embedded in the students during the lecture session so that the attributes are always applied both inside and outside the classroom. This can indirectly create the ideal personalities of Muslim students. Hence, students and institutions need to step up efforts to guide and apply the spirit of consistency among students.

Students should try to improve their spiritual practice and generic skills from time to time. IPTs are one of the fields for students to hone in their generic and spiritual skills. Therefore, students should be wise to use opportunities provided by IPT so that they can improve their spiritual well-being and generic skills.

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### **Corresponding Author**

Siti Khatijah Binti Said

Faculty of Islamic Contemporary Studies, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Gong Badak Campus, 21300 Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, Malaysia.

E-mail: [e\\_tiey835@yahoo.com](mailto:e_tiey835@yahoo.com)

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