

SOFT SKILLS IMPLEMENTATION IN FINANCIAL STATEMENT ANALYSIS COURSE: CASE IN ACCOUNTING DEPARTEMENT OF STIE PERBANAS SURABAYA

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ABSTRACT. Improving the quality of alumni of undergraduate program having high soft skills depends on learning process in the higher education institution. Because of this, the lecture and its institution have to develop learning method and implementation of soft skills. STIE Perbanas Surabaya in this time tries to implement soft skills in the learning process. Financial Statement Analysis Course is one of courses that implements soft skills in this semester (from March until June 2009). The soft skills are implemented in this course are analytical thinking, team work, and working under pressure. Twenty three (23) students of accounting department involve in this program. The article illustrates planning and the process of soft skills implementation, the measurement of soft skills, the difficulties and obstacles of the program, and student involvement in this implementation. The article also explains student opinion about the advantage of soft skills for their future, especially when they work. Not only for the students, are soft skills also important for the future of higher education. Based on such findings of the implementation, it is advisable that STIE Perbanas Surabaya should place the soft skills in organizing the curriculum, especially before students graduate from the institution.

Key words: soft skills, analytical thinking, team work, working under pressure

BACKGROUND

Every firm has to make financial report picturing the firm activities in some periods. The financial report usually consists of a balance sheet, a profit and loss statement, and sources and uses of funds. From this report, a success or a failure of the firm management is known. There are many information can be explored from the financial report, but not many person can obtain them. It needs a certain skill. This skill can be obtained if a person has knowledge about financial statement analysis.

Financial statement analysis course provides an understanding about a process of financial reporting, an analysis of a firm financial report, an understanding of a condition of business, industry, and economy and knowledge about a firm strategy. The output of the analysis will help internal and external parties to make decision about the relation with the firm. In the reality, someone who analysis or prepares a financial report can't lonely work; He must work with another person. A good team is obtained if he has good soft skills.

Averagely students have knowledge about financial reporting process, an understanding about business, industry, and economy condition, and a thought about a strategy that is performed by the firm, also about preparing and analysis corporate financial report. But usually students don't have a capability to work with another person in a group or team. Usually a discussion is dominated by some students, while other students are good listeners. To push students to work with other persons, to bravely argument and to share them knowledge, need certain techniques integrated in team work attribute.

Financial report preparation and analysis is performed in a certain time target and a good quality. Because of it, a financial reporting and analysis process makes an accountant pressured. To adapt in this condition, an accounting student must be practiced in working under pressure condition.

The problem in financial statement analysis course is how the students can treat or learn about soft skills that are an analytical thinking, a working under pressure, and a team work. The paper obtains how the soft skills process is performed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The business school students will need to understand business and society as a complex, dynamic, and interdependent system and carefully explore theory, use frameworks, and build skills to match each other (Samuelson, 2006). The ability to utilize interpersonal skills is essential in workplace (Amer, B., 2009). Interpersonal skills often referred soft skills (Nealy, 2005). To get a skill to analysis financial statement, students need an analytical thinking, a working under pressure, and team work skills.

Analytical Thinking

In hiring MBA graduate, Zabid A.R., 2003 explained that the key factor considered by employers was e.g. analytical skill of the graduate. The analytical thinking skill is required not only in hiring MBA graduate, but if someone will be a best staff in an office, he or she has to have an analytical thinking skill. Therefore an accounting undergraduate alumnus required an analytical skill too if he or she work in an office.

In financial statement analysis course, an analytical thinking is defined as an ability of students to critically think against all of financial statement. Sin, et al, 2007 explained that analytical thinking skill is a part of general skill that had to be owned by an accounting student. Even an analytical thinking is needed by someone who studies law or jurisprudence (Venter, 2006). The ability in analytical thinking needs a support of mathematics (Nuangchalerm, 2009). By analytical thinking skill, an accounting student is expected to understand and analysis cases of financial statements.

In financial statement analysis course, to experience an analytical thinking skill, an accounting student needs to understand the accuracy of an analysis of financial report case, the ability to analysis by order, the ability to separate the accounts of balance sheet and profit and loss statement, and an ability to count financial ratios connected with corporate health.

Working under pressure.

Working under pressure is a condition pressuring a person to perform and finish a task in a certain time and objective. An ability to work under pressure of auditors makes them able to make materiality judgments (DeZoort, et al., 2007). Not only auditors, usually bankers are in working under pressure, especially in a task of intermediation (Schmidt, R., et al., 2007). Now, many of corporate management are in working under pressure to perform corporate social responsibility that is an issue of all corporate (Pryce, V., 2002). Usually corporate social responsibility is needed by stakeholders (Jackson, G., 2005). The competition pressure increases under pressure situation for business person too (Berkman, H., 1994). Frequently politicians also make the accountants in under pressure condition (Xiao, Z., et al, 2004).

In financial statement analysis course, an accounting student is expected to able to prepare the task in a certain time and to complete and give the task in certain time. The student also has to answer the case rightly and to give the quality answer.

Teamwork.

Teamwork has enhanced the ability of firms to successfully compete in the global market by productivity (Chansler, Phil., 2003). The use of teams has become popular in organizations attempting to remain competitive in today's increasingly global marketplace. Therefore a manager has to know well about how to work in a team. Not only a manager, in the global competition like this decade, every person in the company must understand to work as a team. Towry, K. L., 2003 explained that the effectiveness of the systems is depended on a solidity of team work. Self-managed work teams foster greater autonomy, increase communication among team members, and intensify their commitment to the team and the organization, which in turn enhances innovative behaviors in such

teams (Muthusamy, S. K., et al, 2005). Kräkel, M., 2002 described that team work makes a principal-agent relationship more attractive for the principal and that such effort sharing leads to lower costs.

In financial statement analysis course, team work is two or more students that together perform a collaboration to achieve a certain objective that is to understand and to practice financial statement analysis. The soft skill shows an ability of students to cooperate with the other persons.

In team work soft skill, an accounting student is expected to able as an effective leader in its group, and to understand a system of classifying a job. Also the accounting student is expected to appreciate the other opinion, not to dominate in work and communication and discussion, and able to share a knowledge to the other person or student.

Soft Skills Implementation Method

The design of soft skills is entered in the plan of financial statement analysis course. In this plan, the evaluation of the process of financial statement analysis course in the last period is explained, especially the weakness and obstacle of the learning process before soft skills content implementation. After the evaluation of learning process, the design of soft skills is entered in the general instructional objective of financial statement analysis course.

The general instructional objective of this course expects that the student able to explain and perform the practices of financial statement analysis comprehensively, to understand business, industry, and economy condition and a thought about a strategy that is performed by the firm, also about preparing and analysis corporate financial report. In the general instructional objective of this course, the student is expected to able to make analytical thinking, to prepare the task in under pressure condition, and to cooperate in a team work. Every task of the soft skills is explained in the meeting.

The valuation of soft skills is performed in every meeting. The evaluation is performed for every indicator of soft skills. In the finish of the course, the soft skills score is united with another score of financial statement analysis course. The valuation of the student score is established from soft skills 30%, test 20%, activity in the class 20%, and final exam 30%.

In the finishing of the course, the students are asked to answer a questionnaire about their perception of the implementation of soft skills in financial statement analysis course. The answer of a questionnaire is tabulated by cross tabulation method and described by descriptive analysis statistic to understand the importance of soft skills in financial statement analysis course.

Soft Skills Implementation Result

Students Character

Twenty three (23) students of accounting department involve in this program. Table 1 show the student's character

Table 1: Students Character

2004	2	8.7
2005	2	8.7
2006	19	82.6
	23	100
2.50-2.74	5	21.7
2.75-3.00	3	13.0
3.01-3.49	14	60.9
3.50-4.00	1	4.4

	23	100

Soft skills score

During the learning process, the soft skills valuation is performed to the students. Table 2 show the soft skills score

Table 2: Soft Skills Score

B	2	8.7
A/B	17	73.9
A	4	17.4
	23	100

The students perception about soft skills implementation

In the last meeting, the students are asked to answer a questionnaire about their perception of the implementation of soft skills in financial statement analysis course. The answer of a questionnaire is tabulated by cross tabulation method.

Table 3: Students Perception about Soft Skills Implementation

Soft Skill	Important and most important by
A. Analytical Thinking	
1. The accuracy of an analysis of financial report case	23 students
2. The ability to analysis by order	21 students
3. The ability to separate the accounts of balance sheet and profit and loss statement	23 students
4. The ability to count financial ratios connected with corporate health	23 students
B. Working under pressure	
1. Able to prepare the task within a certain time	23 students
2. Able to complete and give the task within a certain time	21 students
3. Able to give a solution and answer the case rightly	22 students
4. Able to give the quality and neat answer	20 students
C. Team Work	
1. To be an effective leader of group	22 students
2. To understand a system of classifying a job	20 students
3. Not to dominate in work and communication and discussion	17 students
4. To give a chance to the others to make opinion and to appreciate their opinion	22 students
5. To cooperate in finishing the task	22 students
6. Able to share a knowledge to the other person or student	21 students

Then the analysis is described by descriptive analysis statistic to understand the importance of soft skills in financial statement analysis course.

1. In soft skill analytical thinking, the ability to count financial ratios connected with corporate health is considered as the most importance
2. In soft skill working under pressure, able to prepare the task within a certain time is considered as the most importance
3. In soft skill teamwork, to give a chance to the others to make opinion and to appreciate their opinion is considered as the most importance.

DISCUSSION

The paper result finds that an implementation of soft skills in financial statement analysis course is important. It means that the soft skills are useful for a person who wants to be a professional accountant, especially as an analyst of financial statements. The students understand that the soft skills are useful for their future, and then they attempt to follow the implementation the soft skills in this course. Because of that the student score of soft skills in this course is good.

The students give an opinion that the indicators of analytical thinking, working under pressure, and team work are important and most important if they will be financial statement analysts. In analytical thinking soft skill, the ability to count financial ratios connected with corporate health is the most important indicator. An ability to prepare the task in a certain time as a professional is most important in working under pressure soft skill. In team work soft skill, to give a chance to the others to make opinion and to appreciate their opinion is the most important soft skill.

CONCLUSION

According to the analysis of the paper, the conclusion of the result article can be explained as:

1. Soft skill is the important aspect in financial statement analysis course.
2. Soft skills that need to be given in this course are analytical thinking, working under pressure, and team work.
3. The most important indicator of analytical thinking is the ability to count financial ratios connected with corporate health. In the working under pressure soft skill, an ability to prepare the task within a certain time as a professional is most important indicator. The most indicator of team work soft skill is to give a chance to the others to make opinion and to appreciate the opinion.
4. The accounting students have a same perception about the need of the soft skills before they work as financial report analysts.

The article result provides suggestions:

1. The research result hopes that STIE Perbanas Surabaya provides the content of soft skills in all process of education learning, especially before the students graduate and work.
2. Especially in Financial Statement Analysis course, lecturers must make a commitment to implement the three main soft skills attributes namely analytical thinking, working under pressure in term of time pressure and task quality requirement, and team work.

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