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SOFT SKILLS FOR TEACHERS: ACCEPTING *STANDARD GURU MALAYSIA 2.0 (SGM)* AND *SSB4K* THEORY IN FUTURE TEACHING PRACTICES

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**Abstract:**

This paper discusses how Kemahiran Insaniah (KI) (softs kills) for teachers are constructed by accepting the combination of the Standard Guru Malaysia (SGM) 2.0 and Sistem Sahsiah Bersepadu 4K (SSB4K) or Integrated Personality System Theory. The main objective of the study was to highlight the contents of the SGM2.0 and SSB4K in order to propose teachers with relevant soft skills for transition into various education landscapes. The realisation of this objective can be met if most of the qualities of the features drawn from the SGM 2.0 together with SSB4K offer relevant and responsive curricula in line with current teaching practices. In this article, the researchers address the concern of experts' views on the way experts see themselves as professionals teaching and how they compose their identities. Three data themes, expert authority, commitment to the profession, and multitasking are theorised from a symbolic interactionist (SI) framework, using constructs such as situational, social, and personal identity. This study is part of a larger research project involving the development of the understanding of the soft skills of teachers and broader teacher standards issues within Malaysian context. This study aimed to outline the current soft skills of teachers. The data were analyzed by qualitative content analysis. Two kinds of perspectives are described: the media perspective by illustrating what kind of descriptions, evaluations, and requirements of SGM2.0 and SSB4K is established in framing soft skills for teachers and the experts' perspective by reporting the experiences and evaluations of themselves. These two perspectives are described and interpreted. The findings show that soft skills are a crucial part of the competence of teachers. Four main categories of soft skill competencies were

oral communication skills, media digital skills, thinking skills, and leadership skills.

**Keywords:**

Soft Skills, Teacher Standards, Professional Teaching and Development, *Sistem Sahsiah Bersepadu 4K (SSB4K)*

## Introduction

Scholars have recognized that teachers' 'ups and downs' involvement during their profession are usually due to changes in their work or personal life (Day & Gu, 2010). Teachers' professional development is essential as it could change classroom practices, improve schools, and enrich students' learning outcomes (Borko, Jacobs & Koellner, 2010). In the context of Malaysia, the application of 21st Century learning (PAK21) in learning and facilitation (PdPc) at all levels of education is often debated by academics and experts in various fields. The application of 21st century skills have been given thoughtful attention by higher education institutions to meet the needs of the job market (Rohani, et a.l, 2017).

In general, PAK21, as a learning activity, integrates several elements which include communication, collaborative, critical thinking, creativity and the application of values and ethics. The basic standard elements in PAK21 are evidenced in the 4C concept of communication, collaborative, critical thinking, creativity and also in the 6C concept with an additional two elements, namely values and ethical application according to the Malaysian context (Pendidik2u.my, 2018).

Hargreaves and Fullan (2013) proposed for teachers' professional capital, elements such as knowledge, skills, competencies and experiences are fundamental (Reichenberg & Andreassen, 2018; Uba & Chinonyerem, 2017). In order to realize this goal, teachers' skills and knowledge need to be sustained. Teachers need to work towards the sustainability of their teaching practices, meaning that the teachers improved their practices according to their classroom needs. Teachers' sincerity and willingness to be involved with, as well as sustain their practices, are indeed substantial to ensure teachers' professionalism survives over time. Moreover, teachers do not only have hard skills consisting of pedagogical and teaching skills, but they are also required to possess effective personal and social skills that are referred as soft skills in PdPc activities. Teachers should have all the necessary soft skills in accordance with the current educational needs as well as the relevant knowledge and resources with regards to subjects taught (Mahani Ahmad & Ruzlan Md-Ali, 2019).

The notion of soft skills has been extensively discussed not only in the context of education but also in other fields such as human resources, management, psychology, and the social sciences context. Soft skills are very important to students as they provide added value in the students' overall achievement and competence. Most organizations require employees with excellent soft skills to work in their company. Therefore, students need to develop their soft skills from the university (Fuziah et al., 2018) so that with the appropriate soft skills they will be able to adapt to the job when they graduated (Ruzlan et al., 2016). Most students find it difficult to secure a job after graduation because they are weak in soft skills despite having good academic achievement (Jardim, 2020).

Transversal competencies framework was introduced in European countries in order to contribute to the well-being, lifelong development and employability of Asian and European individuals, as well as to sustainable societies (ASEM Education 2030 Strategy, 2021). They are personal attributes which go beyond knowledge, and which help individuals to easily move on along with the changing environments and collaborating with others. They are transversal because they can be developed and are useful in any sector, position and also in personal life. They are highly related with emotional intelligence and have to be complemented with hard skills.

The empirical studies have highlighted the fact that teachers' whose pedagogical knowledge is associated to their transversal competencies perform much better than teachers who only have theoretical knowledge. MOE (2019) indicates that the quality of teachers' personality is important, and it is one of the priority areas highlighted in the national education landscapes within the Malaysia Teacher Standards (Standard Guru Malaysia) (SGM) 2.0 framework. The transversal competencies appeal to the knowledge acquired, to the IQ as well as to the capacity to develop a task. In a similar manner, soft skills are in line with social skills and the capacity to socially relate in different contexts including a professional one. Nevertheless, soft skills of teachers are difficult to translate into a curriculum – because it sometimes becomes something rather abstract.

### **Problem Statement**

Realizing the fact that global economy and industries are rapidly growing, the knowledge management and understanding of teachers on the process PdPc within the context of PAK21 is deemed to be a critical matter. Teachers must be well-prepared in order to face the challenges of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR4.0). Teachers must have a clear understanding and knowledge regarding the latest technology, especially that assist and support them to reinforce or enhance the PdPc, which is now different from the approach to the conventional ways of managing classroom teachings and interpretations of students' learning. Hence, as teachers, their knowledge and soft skills must be at par with, or exceed that of the students' knowledge and skills, especially when the latest technology is involved (Adolfsson, 2018). This thinking became the impetus for embarking on this study, whereby the researchers are of the opinion that it is indeed useful and necessary, to create and develop a much more 'personal brand' of teachers' competencies and soft skills that consisted of teachers' soft skills that are based on Malaysia Teacher Standards 2.0 (SGM2.0) and the Thought System Theory 4L (SSB4K).

### **Literature Review**

In this section, the researchers will highlight the development of the concept of competencies and soft skills of teachers that are based on both the *SGM2.0* and the *SSB4K* frameworks.

#### ***Standard Guru Malaysia (SGM) 2.0***

*Standard Guru Malaysia (SGM) 2.0* (Malaysian Teacher Standards) is a reference document relating to competencies that need to be achieved and ethics that need to be instilled, practiced and demonstrated by teachers in Malaysia. *SGM2.0* is different from *SGM1.0* in terms of components where *SGM 2.0* consists of two components, namely the dimension of competence and teaching ethics. The competency dimension explains the competencies that teachers need to have at various levels of professional development to implement learning and teaching processes more effectively. While the ethics of teacher training is also a moral principle and moral value that should be handled and practiced by teachers in Malaysia to ensure the

profession of teacher training as a professional career and is seen as noble by the community. The first dimension of competence is the orientation of science. Teachers in Malaysia should explore and expand their knowledge of learning and teaching to make it more effective. Furthermore, teachers need to understand the latest philosophy, policies, curriculum and trends of education and also the educators.

*SGM*, that was introduced in 2009, is a guideline of professional competency of teacher that needs to be achieved by every teacher in Malaysia. *SGM* contains three standards, namely Standard 1 practice of teacher professionalism value, Standard 2 knowledge and understanding, and Standard 3 teaching and learning skills (PdP).



**Figure 1: MTS Framework**

Source: (Bahagian Profesionalisme Guru, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2009)



**Figure 2: Standard Guru Malaysia (SGM2.0)**

Source: (Bahagian Profesionalisme Guru, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2019)

Both frameworks are relevant to human capital development - identity, skill, noble personality, knowledgeable, and discovery challenges in globalization, liberalization, internationalization and ICT development in promoting a world-class education system according to Malaysia's reference. Furthermore, teachers need to have a high level of teacher professionalism, knowledge and understanding, and high PdPc skills to enable them to function as professional teachers effectively. The purpose of both *SGM* is to identify the level of professional and competent teachers in aspects of competencies, knowledge of teacher professionalism, values and ethics. Teachers are more exposed to hard skills, also known as academic knowledge and know-how, which are often the direct emphasis of education and the skills that are considered compulsory in various fields of employment. Moreover, in encouraging the development of these competencies of teachers, they should also be prepared with soft skills, since their mastery leads to improvements in the overall PdPc. The teachers will extend their understanding of soft skills and reflect on their own capabilities with regards to leadership skills, thinking skills, and more importantly, the communication skills. With these soft skills, teachers will learn to translate their pedagogical knowledge into everyday teaching experiences which sometimes are indicated within the formal curriculum and include them into everyday PdPc.

Many studies (for examples, Hairuzila Idrus et. al, 2014; Jasim & Khalifa, 2019; Ubaka & Ukwe, 2019) have found that soft skills of students and their emotional intelligence are directly related to academic and life achievement. In the real context, especially in the education landscapes where the teachers must possess soft skills in order to prepare students with the required soft skills that describe relationships with society, are more crucial and relevant than in other sectors. Students who master communication skills will be able to communicate well between teachers, with friends during group discussions, can provide ideas or opinions, and can answer examination questions well. In addition, students can perform better in their academic presentations of their assignments and will be able to successfully complete the assignments given by the teachers throughout their schooling. Students' human skills also affect students' academic achievement. Studies show that low academic achievement of students are related to their lacking skills in communication and writing (Jasim & Khalifa, 2019; Ubaka & Ukwe, 2019).

In order to instil soft skills among students during PdPc, teachers' professional local knowledge and practical knowledge in executing activities with the pedagogical knowledge of the classroom context through continuous and deliberate reflection should be refined. Even though teachers do not really comprehend the term of soft skills, through the practice of student-centred approach, they have actually inculcated soft skills among the students. The effective approach to develop teachers' soft skills in the classroom is through creating democratic classrooms that emphasize common opportunities between teachers and students. From both frameworks, teachers need to apply their soft skills in the classroom based on their professional local knowledge. Studies showed that the concept of soft skills actually confined in the teachers' tacit knowledge that is intangible knowledge acquired from experience and insight by recognizing it in people with competence and expertise (Gonzalez, R., & Melo, T., 2018).

### **Methodology**

In this paper, the soft skills are ethnographically portrayed (Wall, 2015), whereby an expert and two excellent teachers are taken in narrative portraits, looking specifically at their personal, social and situational identity, as reflected both in their language and behaviour. In this study, the experts, whom were acknowledged as most suitable for this inquiry in terms of their background and teaching experiences, are presented as the main social actors. The researchers have clear criteria and rationale for their inclusion in this study. As part of the larger study, the expert and two excellent teachers were purposively sampled, characteristically in terms of their differences. The selection of the participants was constructed based on their jobs and positions which suggested that they might have very rich source of information on the topic under investigation (Sanders, 1982). Moreover, the researchers wanted to gain detailed knowledge about a specific phenomenon rather than make statistical inferences, since the population is very small and specific.

This methodological frame appropriately examined interaction with regards to the personal and the social context, collected issues of soft skills and curriculum as well the situation analysis of the context. The theoretical perspective of Symbolic Interactionism (SI) (Aksana, et al., (2009) is closely associated with this frame. According to Blumer and Kuhn (1991), data 'themes' were conceived from the SI framework, using concepts such as situational, social and personal identity and offer an interpretation of possible meanings. This allowed a conversational analysis of identity, to explain how experts and teachers shape their perceptions and meanings in their teaching practices. The two central questions that guided the focus of the

interviews were: What are your notions of soft skills for teachers? and (ii) What are the soft skills that are appropriate for teachers in PdPc?

The following section discusses three identity portraits of the three experts in education who were involved in this study – MYH, RA and AF (pseudonyms).

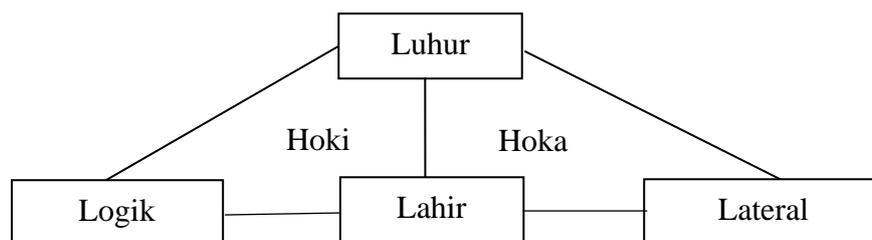
### Findings and Discussions

This section presents the interview data gathered from the experts. The researchers also studied, examined, and summarized in the best way possible in order to provide a clear picture and understanding on their recommendations of soft skills for teachers.

#### **Expert 1: MYH - Sistem Sahsiah Bersepadu 4K (Kebenaran, Kebijaksanaan, Keamanahan Keterampilan) (SSB4K)**

MYH explains that prior to the development of SSB4K, MYH introduced *Pemikiran Saintifik* (Scientific Thinking), a theory of integrated Thought System Theory 4L (Sistem Pemikiran Bersepadu 4 Luhur, Lahir, Logik, Lateral) in 1990's. This SPB4L/4K theory combines and blends four thought systems translated by the author in literary works that include noble, birth, logical, and lateral thinking...he adds that HOKA-refers to Right Brain - people are incline to have creative, innovative thinking especially in literature...HOKI-refers to Left Brain hemisphere – people who study Science & Technology. MYH states that he combines and blends four systems of thought by humans through their literary works of religion, professionalism, humanity, and humanity.

MYH continues... any teaching can be linked to the theory of integrated thinking that 4L/4K Integrated Systems Thinking Theory (SPB4L/4K) would be applied...e.g in the teaching and learning of Malay language and literature.



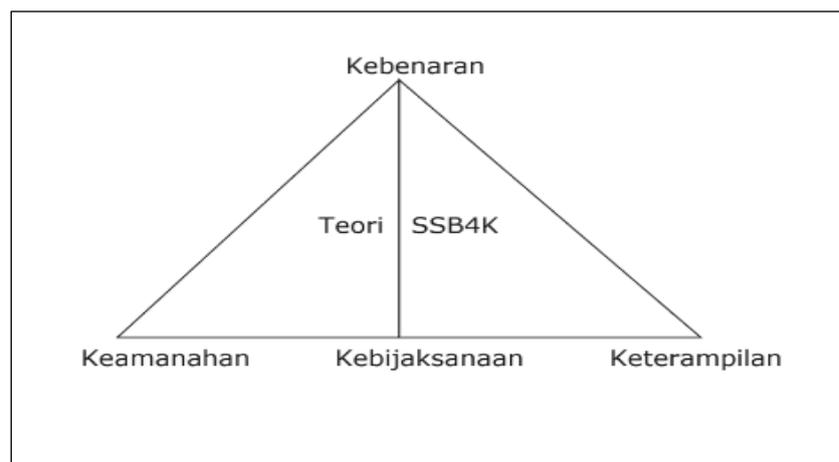
**Figure 3: Pemikiran Saintifik: SPB4L/4K Theory**

Source: (Mohd. Yusof Hasan,2000)

MYH stated that logic helps to have clear thinking for writing or narration. Scientific thinking is the process of questioning that leads to decisions such as ideas and facts. Logic is the whole process that leads to decisions through the application based on clear and concrete evidence. Lateral/Creative thinking is also a type of thought that does not attach importance to logic, fact or truth. This type of thinking attaches more importance to creativity, imagination, design, delusion alone.

The theory introduced by MYH can be classified as a Malay independent theory of thought and literature. *SPB4K*'s theory is based on three main sources, namely Islamic knowledge, the development of western and eastern science and technology, and the state of the plural (*majmuk*) society among Malaysians. In order to build the mental development of the Malaysian nation and create a country of knowledge, morality and dignity, Malaysians need to have a steady development thinking power as the foundation of Malaysia's cheerful paradigm of thought. To improve the development of a unified Malaysian nation, the Malay literary fields need to have a Malaysian thought formula that combines the 4L Integrated Thought System of *Luhur, Lahir, Logical and Lateral (SPB4L)*, or the 4K Integrated Thought System which is Spirituality, Inequality, Designation and Creativity (*SPB4K*). From the west, several modern theories about the brain and mind were studied. From Malaysia, it is seen as the way of life of the multicultural people – among the Malays, Chinese, Indians and other races. In terms of education, Islam emphasizes the elements of godliness, mind and physicality. The West attaches great importance to cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The philosophy of State Education attaches importance to the spiritual, mind and the physical. In the Western world, there is the concept of IQ which is intellectual skills, EQ is emotional skills, and SQ is spiritual skills. Therefore, this theory attaches importance to the concept of integrated thinking from birth to a complete and perfect human.

This paradigm of Malaysian thought is in accordance, in harmony and in line with the National Education Philosophy which is to create a well-adjusted and harmonious human being in terms of IQ and EQ. Interestingly, among others, MYH had highlighted the need for the educators to understand, internalize, and be appreciative of soft skills as related to all sorts of thinking with the mind that is mixed with ethics and moral, and that soft skills are related to becoming a “humane human”. By understanding the theory proposed by MYH, thinking skills are regarded as soft skills for teachers that can be translated in the present PdPc. This *SPB4L/4K Theory* also reflects 6C in PAK21.



**Figure 4: SSB4K Theory**

Source: (Mohd. Yusof Hasan,2020)

According to MYH (2019), *SSB4K* was introduced in order to show the four types of actions that comes out from the teachers' heart...they are *4K* or *R-P-R-H*...that is *Religion, Professional, Rational, and Humanity*. This is how they can be presented in a diagram Ethics,

*moral is the behaviour, character that are triggered from the Integrated 4K Ethics System theory...Religion (Keagamaan), Professionalism (Keprofesionalan). Rationalization (Kerasionalisan), and Humanity (Kemanusiaan). This means we act in four ways or methods ... Religiosity that is following our religion's instructions and prohibitions; ...Professionalism, that is according to our jobs or tasks and roles in life; Rationalization, that is actions based on factual arguments. Next is Humanity...it involves actions with love, concern, gentle and full of humanitarian characters.*

MYH's interpretation of soft skills as something related to quality of thinking, ethics and personality among the educators. MYH had considered the notion of soft-skills (KI) within a significantly wide context that extends beyond the elements crafted in MTS and SGM2.0 by MOE. His notions and statements would permit pondering among teachers— perhaps something that can be further researched on so that a comprehensive and holistic framework can be constructed to assist teachers to educate students who will be well-received by colleagues at their workplace, and perhaps most importantly, graduates who are respected by the stakeholders in IR 4.0.

The themes that had emerged from his responses are (i) soft skills in relation to the human brain, heart and face, (ii) soft skills in relation to spirituality, scientific skills, intellectual thinking and creative thinking, (iii) soft skills in relation to religiosity, rationale, professionalism and humanity, (iv) soft skills in relation to being truthful, skilful, wisdom and truthful, and (v) soft skills in relation to quality of thinking, ethics and personality.

**Expert 2: RA (Mathematics Excellent Teacher)**

In order to answer question 1: What are your notions of soft skills for teachers? Teacher RA elaborates that soft skills are not academic mechanisms but they are means for academic, therefore they cannot be in isolation subject. If they are to be stand-alone subject, teacher trainees...I am referring to student teachers are undergoing teacher education programme.. will only learn to pass in the examination without know and practise them in their learning process. In addition...soft skills like ethics, moral and professional skills, on the other hand, life-long learning and management of information can be stand-alone subject.

RA recommended that to recommend entrepreneurship skills among student teachers is through activities so that they will become risk takers while handling daunting activities and tasks in PdPc and co-curricular activities. Sometimes teachers must be conscious of their limitation so that they are able to identify their limitations of their soft skills and take the opportunity to gain as much soft skills as possible while in university to prepare them for the challenging work place. The most important thing is that the teachers must be made to realize the position of instilling their soft skills so that they are able to participate in the borderless.

What are the soft skills that appropriate for teachers in PdPc?

*Since I have 40 years in teaching Maths...my priority is hard skills...more academic serious teaching...to make sure students understand and pass the exam...When I first started teaching People like to talk about teacher competency...In order to produce competent teachers, knowledge and skill should be together...not knowledge only...so the process of mastering human skills should be carried out as early as possible including while attending college programs. Brilliant academic decisions are not sufficient to be a competent teacher, so it*

*should be well mastered all elements in human skills...soft skills. I think soft skills that Maths teacher needs to be an effective communicator...and know how to express to a variety of different people in order to do their job effectively. With good communication skills...teachers are able to explain and question the students effectively...giving instructions is one of the important communication skills that Math teacher needs to master. As a math teacher...I think by giving clear and short instructions...students will understand the questions...for instance problem solving questions. With good communication skills...teachers are able to develop their presentation skills as well. Teachers are expected to recognize how to exchange ideas with people.*

Mathematics teachers also play an important role in implementing PAK21 with the aim of advancing and improving PdPc. The need for the implementation of new, fun and meaningful teaching strategies with appropriate digital resources and adequate facilities must be met. Efforts and together with leadership skills of teachers should be taken to address these issues wisely to ensure that teachers can achieve the best in practicing 21st century learning. *I understand that leadership skills of teachers involve all activities, conduct, skills, attitudes and knowledge that reflect the ability and willingness to influence, move, guide and train students, school colleagues and community outside the school towards achieving the objectives of the school organization. Last but not least is problem-solving skills...being a math teacher...always become a problem solver either with subject content and students themselves... I regard Problem-solving skill is the main component of mathematics education. Thus, in the PdPc mathematics, teachers assist the students to solve problems that signifies an influential approach to expanding mathematical concepts and skills...*

In PdPc, the teachers also transfer their knowledge to students, by providing problem-solving skills and strategies with good communication skills, and to describe and assist them to construct their own approaches and leadership skills. In this way, transversal skills can be hands-on practices that they can use to resolve both real-life problems and future workplace problems.

**Expert 3: AF (English Excellent Teacher)**

*AF has been teaching English for 30 years...Teachers nowadays, are not just teach...they do more than that...notions of soft skills for teachers can be called tacit knowledge...and most related to personality traits...tacit knowledge is considered as a tough task because the origin of tacit knowledge prohibited it from being expressed. We will notice that the teachers are sharing their tacit knowledge by observing them and draw out when doing PdPc... similar with soft skills...If the teachers use the skills then we know that the soft skills are used through their actions and practices in PdPc. The teachers become facilitators...in teaching and learning contexts. Teacher facilitates their soft skills when teaching...*

What are the soft skills that appropriate for teachers in PdPc?

*From my experience teaching English...communication skills...written and verbal..are significant and daunting task...when conducting class...the moment the teacher entering and starting the lesson...the teacher must be equipped with verbal and non-verbal communication skills and strategies. The following is the framework as reference...*

**Table 1: Taxonomy of Teacher Communication Skills and Communication Strategies**

<b>CATEGORIES</b>
<b>Securing students' attention/ socializing/ establishing and maintaining classroom rapport</b>
<b>Organizing/giving instructions (Reformulating/reformulations</b> -These utterances offer some modification of the previous utterance). <b>Code switching</b> (The strategy of drawing upon L1 to solve the problem) <b>Repetition</b> (These are exact duplications of what has been uttered)
<b>Directing (Reformulating/reformulations</b> -These utterances offer some modification of the previous utterance, <b>Comprehension checks, Clarification requests, Confirmation checks) Repetition</b> (These are exact duplications of what has been uttered)
<b>Presenting/explaining (Comprehension checks, Clarification requests, Confirmation checks; Reformulating/reformulations</b> (These utterances offer some modification of the previous utterance). <b>Repetition</b> (These are exact duplications of what has been uttered)
<b>Evaluating/correcting (Comprehension checks, Clarification requests, Confirmation checks) Repetition</b> (These are exact duplications of what has been uttered) <b>Code switching</b> (The strategy of drawing upon L1 to solve the problem)
<b>Eliciting/questioning (Comprehension checks, Clarification requests, Confirmation checks, referential, display, expressive rhetorical )</b>
<b>Discussion (Comprehension checks, Clarification requests, Confirmation checks, referential, display, expressive rhetorical ) Repetition</b> (These are exact duplications of what has been uttered)
<b>Teacher talk and language</b> -Be simple, be short and be human The teacher varies the length of statements by using:
1. the concrete noun rather than the abstract;
2. the active voice rather than the passive;
3. the short sentence rather than the long;
4. the simple sentence rather than the compound;
5. the direct statement rather than the circumlocution (The strategy of describing the characteristics features of intended meanings or express his/her meaning in several words
6. people as the subject whenever possible.
<b>Tone, volume and pace of voice</b>
<b>Appearance</b>
<b>Eagerness and interest</b>
<b>Confidence and caring</b>

Based on the above explanations on the categories of communication skills and communication strategies, both skills and strategies used by the teacher can be intertwined and used hand in hand, for instance when the teachers are explaining, they might be doing reformulating, circumlocutions and code switching while at the same time to overcome their difficulties when explaining to students.

In English teaching, AF feels that social and affective factors are the two main aspects in Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and online learning are also an important educational element for every student at every age as it will contribute to the well-being of students not only in terms of student self-development, but also helps in terms of academic achievement. *When having interaction with students...teacher also need to have social-emotional reflections in learning. Teachers can be seen as an important 'tool' or 'change agent' in instilling elements of SEL either directly or indirectly to the students as teachers are educators who are capable of forming a human being besides parents. By having good communication skills, teachers also relate their affective and social factors in order to allow their students to associate their cognitive and affective factors to develop their second language competence in PdPc. For instance, in a literature lesson, teachers use effective explanation and questioning skills to inspire the students to describe about a plot and characters in a novel. Teachers also adopt an inquiry-based approach in language learning through groupwork where the students have social interaction and problem-solving skills in understanding the context around them especially now digital world.*

### Conclusions

Realizing the importance of soft skills for teachers, SGM2.0 and SSB4K Theory support the PdPc implementation and sustainability, as well as in their professional development. Teachers' soft skills are vital to be fostered among all teachers through curricular and extra-curricular activities. Many studies have supported this to be true. However, many teachers are unaware that soft skills can also be established via curriculum. Moreover, identifying different soft skills that may develop through knowledge and the practising of soft skills using digital and non-digital teaching resources is also crucial. In line with the present study, the experts were dynamically involved in making the world of experience and relationships between human beings with society and were also involved in determining meanings that bring about effects from interaction through symbols. With regard to a symbolic interactionist approach used in the study, the researchers posit that it is important to study the teachers' understanding about their soft skills they may possessed in order to develop our knowledge about teachers' soft skills in their everyday PdPc.

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