

Leadership Soft Skills and Co-Curriculum Management for University Graduates

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses Leadership which is one of the Soft Skills in a graduate's intrapersonal skills and also Co-curriculum Management skills on the activities that are conducted during their studies. My interests in the subject shows that the soft skills plays an important role in ensuring the graduate's employability. The findings also point out the effectiveness of Co-curriculum management in public universities based on the literature presented.

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Introduction

Education in Malaysia is an ongoing effort towards increasing the potentia of individual holistically and comprehensively. There are few elements that are developed in students for example physically, spiritually and emotionally. The elements are elaborated in further details in the FPK which stands for Falsafah Pendidikan Kebangsaan (Nation Education Policy). In analog, stick to the FPK, educators need to make sure that students faced either in the process of learning and teaching in or outside the class is students who can think well, has a body that is healthy, emotionally stable and have a spiritual feeling holy (Esa et,al , 2015). Through the elements inculcated, the soft skill that is produced in students are known as leadership.

According to Mohd Salleh et,al (2010), soft skills are skills that are required for someone to function effectively when performing work that requires specific skill such as leadership. Leadership is a skill rooted in authenticity and there are as many ways to be a great leader as there are people in the world. The world of education that is always shifting and challenging requires leaders that are capable of varying their leadership between a structured ones to a more collective and work cooperatively with the people they work with. (Amey 2006). Since definitions of co-curriculum management are infrequent, the two concepts are dealt with separately but together they provide a perspective on the broad character of co-curriculum management in. Co-curriculum is a broad concept which includes all planned activities and therefore also subject courses which take place during the semester in the university. It includes after-lecture hours planned activities such as societies and sport. This all takes place within a specific system and continuously subject to evaluation and aims to lead so that he/she can be a useful person within the community. Management is the "process of working with and through individuals and groups and other resources to accomplish organised goals". (Pretorius 1998). Effective management is possible when the leaders

of said groups have the cognitive capacity to make sense of problems or issues in their experiences. Marsh (1992:391) supports this by (saying that management is the ability of a person to carry out developmental supervision and provide co-curriculum leadership in the school. Therefore, co-curriculum management can be defined as an activity that has to be conducted to determine the steps to success in the activities conducted whether in creating, spreading, evaluating, or renewing the co-curriculum so that the objective and aim that are selected are achieved in the optimal stage.

Leadership as a Soft Skill

Components in leadership soft skills covers all aspects of other skills such as communication, team work and others that are relevant influenced by leaders to contribute to the organisation success. (Mohd Shatar 2009) It can be debated that this skill can assist in increasing the effectiveness of management and administration of an organization.

Leadership as one of the soft skills emphasis can be defined in this structure-oriented relation like the one shown in Tero Model below. According to Figure 1, Tero Module points out that the straight line connecting strategy and goal were technical skills while soft skills are represented by dotted lines that connects leaders with their followers. Leaders that have leadership soft skills are more capable to assist the efforts of those who are achieving excellence. (Crosbie 2005)

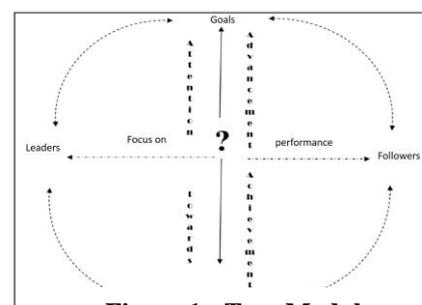


Figure 1 - Tero Module.

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Drucker (1985) believes that an organization success is the executive responsibility. For example in an organisation such as a student council, they are responsible towards their behaviours and actions in setting up curricular tasks after lecture hours. An organisation can achieve many things with the right leadership. Abilities to form partnership between administration from the universities as well as graduates will allow for success on future activities that are going to be held.

Criteria of an Effective Leadership

According to research, some of the criteria for an effective leadership are enthusiasm. Leaders have ambition, determination, persistence, work ethics and the mentality to succeed. In terms of honesty and integrity aspect, leaders are open minded, dependable and can be trusted when given a task to perform. They are very driven to influence others to support their efforts in order to achieve goals that have been set. Leaders also have very strong sets of self-belief, often believe in their own capabilities as well as intelligent. They are capable of combining and analysing vast amount of information and they will use all of their knowledge to assist them in their tasks. They are experts in their fields, as they have mastered all necessary requirements needed in order to lead. They are creative in inventing and implanting new ideas in their ideals. And finally, they are often flexible, and adapt to whatever necessity or situation when it is possible for them to do so.

An effective leadership allows the satisfaction for the followers which in turn produce an excellent work performance. A worker that hard will give their contribution to the organisation objectives until it is achieved. By not burdening the followers with pressure and punishment, leaders will only build a negative influence towards themselves even if it means that in a short term capacity, the work productivity might get increased. However, reactions to this will only damage the relationship in the long run. In order to avoid this, leaders should discuss and give their followers a space for discussion and new ideas when implementing or planning something so that the followers will be satisfied working under the leaders.

Co-curriculum Management

A centralized system of education in Malaysia. It means that all education administrations are under their own sectors which is the Ministry of Education for primary and secondary education and Ministry of High Education for tertiary education. However, a recent shift made by the Prime Minister has merged both ministry under the same management. From what we can understand here, the implementation of co-curriculum is important because of the emergence of many public universities which require a certain framework to ensure that the National Education Philosophy is achieved.

To be able to implement a co-curriculum effectively, requires a great deal more than a few actions or skills on the part of university administrators, lecturers and teachers. It is of paramount importance that the co-curriculum process be managed effectively. Although the latest resources on managing the co-curriculum have been consulted, earlier resources dating from the eighties have also been introduced. These resources were found to be extremely useful since they contain information based on sound co-curriculum management practices. This information is generic by nature and spans the entire spectrum of co-curriculum management – be it a new or an existing co-curriculum.

Johnson and Scholes (2002:44) explain that effective management is possible when managers have the cognitive capacity to make sense of problems or issues in their experiences. Grobler (1998:i) speaks in a school context and is quoted as saying that the quality of management will contribute to the quality of life and the standard of work of both teachers and learners. Likewise, Hoberg (1994:44) argues that instructional leadership implies that the principal as the manager of the school should provide a clear vision and direction and be able to delegate certain responsibilities to competent staff. Teachers can only perform their task of teaching successfully in a school which is effectively managed at every level.

What we can understand here that in the context of tertiary education, the administrations of the university need to proactively contributes to the teaching of effective co-curriculum management practices to ensure graduates to succeed in their life after tertiary education.

Criteria of an Effective Co-curriculum

In the process of developing an effective co-curriculum, certain criterion are considered. An effective co-curriculum heavily centralised around graduates. A graduate-centered co-curriculum will take students' need and interest which will ensure the activities conducted will involve graduates participation in their own learning. The co-curriculum itself needs to be dynamic and adapt accordingly to recent changes in globalisation.

An effective co-curriculum needs to be relevant especially to the need of the world nowadays to ensure that graduates are well-equipped with relevant knowledge of the world. There is also a need to balance academic and non-academic skills to make the graduates become competent in both aspects. The education provided should also mimic real-life situation. For example, the learning resources that are used in universities should be as close to real life as possible. This will make the graduates able to relate their learning more effectively. An effective co-curriculum also capable of nurturing individuals that are creative and innovative. These individual are capable of problem-solving when they move on to a new phase in their lives.

Another important aspects to consider is that an effective co-curriculum take account the economy aspect of the world. To make a country prosper, the leaders of the country need to produce the necessary work force that are skilled and competent. This can be done by giving opportunities for graduates in vocational and technical exercises that needed to be specified in a certain co-curriculum. Leaders also need to provide a whole knowledge in terms of languages, courses, subjects, and others. This can be achieved by providing learning resources in many languages such as English or Mandarin, which are the languages that will be used frequently in their lives after their education.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, from this journal it can be concluded that there is a relation between good leadership practises with co-curriculum management. Graduates who benefitted of becoming a leader will acquire this soft skill that will benefit their followers by evaluating their capabilities to ensure the success of activities carried out by the organisation program. In terms of co-curriculum, tertiary education will have to be more relevant to future employment and the quality of both education and the work force will have to improve. Focus must be placed on the development of relevant skills to meet the needs of the country.

By working together with university administrators, graduates are capable of getting close to what is needed in their future life which is employment.

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