

The role of teacher leadership and extra-curricular activities in the construction of the soft skills of secondary school students in Malaysia

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Abstract

This study is aimed to identify the effectiveness of teacher leadership and student's commitment of involvement in extra-curricular activities towards the development of students' soft skills in secondary schools in two states of peninsular Malaysia. This is a quantitative cross-sectional survey. The population of this study is secondary school students in Malaysia. Stratified random sampling was used to select 500 students from population. The instruments used in this research were Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) Mowday, Steers & Porter (1979), Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) (Kouzes & Posner, 1995), and Soft Skills (MOE, 2013). The findings indicate the level of teacher leadership, commitment, involvement in extra-curricular activities in schools and the development of the soft skills among secondary school students in Malaysia is at high levels. This shows teacher leadership practices play key role towards commitment and involvement of students in extra-curricular activities. Therefore it helps develop soft skills of a student who will spearhead the country's leadership in future. Shortly, stakeholders should pay serious attention to improve the practice of teacher leadership. This will ensure extra-curricular improve human skills of the students in Malaysia.

Keywords: Teacher Leadership, commitment, involvement of students, soft skills, Secondary Schools

1. Introduction

The Ministry of education is extremely considering strengthening the implementation of extra-curricular activities in schools in order to produce knowledgeable, enthusiastic goodwill, and good personality of next Malaysian generation (MOE, 2013). Generally, extra-curricular activities are known as activities conducted outside the classroom, and they provide the knowledge, skills, experience, and values and so on, which helps the development of students' soft skills. Almost all modern educators acknowledge that education does not only memorizing of certain facts, figures and skills. In fact it is all about development of students, and student's quality that formed through their knowledge and experience from school and also through neural communication process (Yahya Don *et al.*, 2014) ^[89].

Academic and extra-curricular excellence of a school is attributed to the leadership of the headmaster and teacher. Thus, the success of the administrative system in a school depends on the quality of the facilities in the school, the quality of curriculum and extra-curricular activities, quality teaching, leadership qualities and the professional skills of teachers. According to Chen (2007) ^[19], the materialization of an effective school is highly dependent on the leadership. He also noted that efficient and effective leadership will be able to enhance the progress and success of an organization. This is due to the behavior and the leadership style adopted by individual teachers will affect the environment, commitment, involvement, and motivation of the students. Former Malaysia Director General of education Dato ' Abdul Shukur bin Abdullah (1998) ^[1] has stated that all principals or headmasters and teachers in every school should arrange their respective strategies to make their school to produce quality students, i.e. students who excel both in terms of academic or

extra-curricular activities, and have a wide range of skills, as well as personality.

Broh (2002) ^[16] has found a positive correlation between participation in extra-curricular and students' academic achievement. While Darling *et al.* (2005) ^[22] found that students who participate in school-based extra-curricular activities achieved higher grades, higher academic aspirations compared to those who do not participate in extra-curricular activities. Mahoney *et al.* (2003) ^[57] found that there is a positive relationship between extra-curricular activities and students aspirations and level of attention. Hollway (2002) found there is a positive impact between extra-curricular activities and student's motivation. Similarly, Bauer and Liang (2003) ^[12] showed a positive effect of critical thinking, personal and social maturity of students as a result of their involvement in the commitment of the extra-curricular activities in schools.

2. Literature Review

School leadership and soft skills Development

Student is an important asset of an educational institution. Students represent image of a community. Ministry of Education set up a body to toil Extra-Curricular Activities (GERKO to ensure the success of government policies. The school administrators and teachers should ensure leadership commitment and comprehensive involvement of students in extra-curricular activities (Mohanaraju Annamalai, Ahmad Tajuddin Abdul Ghani Othman Abdullah & Kanesan, 2012) ^[12].

According to the Drum (1977), student development process involves changes towards more complexes as a result of maturity in his life. Therefore, we can see that the students are active, either in academic association, social, religious or

sports during studying at school will be able to distinct himself in society.

According to Mashitah (1995) [59], there were also students involved in extra-curricular activities tend to be active in sports but are not interested in other activities such as uniformed units or academic associations. According to Adnan Thursday (1989) [3], despite contributions of the extra-curricular activities is recognized, but the concept is still poorly understood by the teachers, parents, and students. They still assume extra-curricular activities less contributed to their future, so that its implementation be done unwillingly.

According to Mohd Suzli (1997) [66] there are some students who are not involved with extra-curricular activities because they had to help their parents at home, also due to various problems such lack of fund, food and etc. Therefore, the objective of the curriculum is tough to be achieved. Here, there is a need to identify the extent to which important aspects of teacher leadership and commitment of student involvement in extra-curricular activities, as well as its impact on the formation of soft skills.

In this regard, this paper examines the effectiveness of teacher leadership and commitment of student involvement in extra-curricular activities towards soft skills edifice national secondary school students in Malaysia.

3. Methodology

The study was descriptive in nature involving quantitative data collection for the purpose of reviewing the real picture regarding the commitment of student involvement in extra-curricular activities and the effectiveness of the extra-curricular activities in the development of human skills. The approach of cross sectional survey is used to obtain the profile of respondents and dimensions of the study, based on questionnaires answered by respondents. The population for this study was all the National Secondary Schools students of two northern States in Peninsular Malaysia. Since the population is too large, then by simple random sampling is used. Sample size for this study was about 500 respondents.

A set of questionnaire was used to collect the information needed for this study. Questionnaire relating to the respondent's demographic information (gender, ethnicity, respondents in the distance between the place of residence with the school, the school's location, the status of the parental relationship, while students attend school, parents' occupations, response to the number of close friends, family, parental encouragement of extra-curricular activities, and parental response to the success of the curriculum). Soft skills questionnaire (SS) used to assess the level of soft skills students.

Instrumentation

The instruments used in this research were Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) Mowday, Steers & Porter (1979), Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) (Kouzes & Posner, 1995) [52], and Soft Skills.

4. Results

4.1 The Level of Teachers' Leadership Practices

Descriptive findings in teacher leadership practices of Secondary School in two States in Peninsular Malaysia is as shown as in Table 1, i.e. for five dimensions of leadership practices in national secondary school teachers. Based on the

results of the descriptive analysis, overall leadership practices that teachers found to be presented by the respondent to be at a high level (mean = 4.08) where each teacher leadership dimension is also at a high level which shows example (mean = 3.95); sharing the vision of inspiring young (mean = 3.93); challenging process (mean = 4.20), enable others to act (mean = 4.01) and encouraged (mean = 4.29). This finding indicates that generally, teachers at the national secondary school in Kedah and Perlis had high leadership value, particularly in terms of giving encouragement.

Table 1: Teachers' leadership practice level

Teacher's leadership dimension	Min	SD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows examples a role model to all. investing time and energy to ensure students. keep promises feedback on their actions build values leadership philosophy 	3.95 3.98 3.91 3.96 3.93 3.82 4.13	0.51 0.70 0.59 0.76 0.67 0.59 0.58
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspiring vision of the partnership discuss the direction of the curriculum describe the image of the future school. invites all students to share dreams demonstrates the importance of long-term co-curricular activities. shape the picture of success conveying direction and responsibility as a member 	3.93 3.49 3.65 4.08 4.00 4.22 4.15	0.45 0.72 0.63 0.63 0.56 0.45 0.60
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> challenging process look for opportunities that are challenging challenge students to make changes and innovative Innovative beyond school boundaries activities to do if something does not achieve the objectives set. making goal setting take risks even though it may face failure 	4.20 4.26 3.96 4.16 4.31 4.26 4.29	0.46 0.64 0.60 0.62 0.58 0.58 0.67
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable others to act Fostering cooperation among teachers and students. actively listen to various views of students treat students with respect encourage and support the students' results give freedom and choice to students ensure that students learn new knowledge 	4.01 4.13 3.99 3.96 3.97 4.10 3.92	0.47 0.67 0.76 0.77 0.56 0.62 0.47
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage commended the students done a good job. provides a measure that can give confidence ensure that students are always creative recognize students who demonstrate a commitment celebrate the success of the school curriculum. appreciation to the leadership of the student 	4.29 4.28 4.31 3.90 4.28 4.04 4.08	0.43 0.52 0.57 0.68 0.50 0.60 0.64
Teachers' leadership	4.08	0.48

4.2 Student's Involvement level in extra-Curricular activities

Table 2: Commitment Level of Student's Involvement in extra-Curriculum

Dimension commitments	Min	SD
Commitments students	3.71	7.26
Affective commitment	3.71	3.64
Normative commitment	3.57	3.23
Ongoing Commitment	3.88	1.88

Table 2 above shows the Commitment Level of Students Involvement in extra-Curriculum are high with (M = 3.71, SD = 7.26). Table explained that the commitment stage was conceived by students is the ongoing commitment by a score of stage of min (M = 3.88, SD = 1.88), followed by affective commitment (M = 3.71, SD = 3.64), and the lowest stage of the normative commitment which is the min (M = 3.13, SD = 3.23).

Table 3: Affective commitment

Affective commitment Items	Min	SD
Feel happy and excited with extra-curricular activities at school	3.48	.74
All organizational problems are my problems part of the school	3.73	.89
A strong relationship with schools and teachers	3.78	.89
It's hard to leave the club / association	3.79	.96

Table 3 above describes the items for the dimension of affective commitment. Overall, a majority of the item record high score and only one item which is at a moderate level. The highest score was on the item 'hard to leave the club / association at school' score (M = 3.79, SD = 0.96), followed by the item 'part of the schools' and item 'strong relationship with the school and teachers' mean scores the same (M = 3.78, 0.90) and (M = 3.78, SD = 0.89), as well as items 'all organizational problems are my problems' with score (M = 3.73, SD = 0.89). The items are scored on a simple level is 'happy and excited with extra-curricular activities in school' with a mean (M = 3.48, SD = 0.74).

Table 4: Normative commitment

Normative commitment items	Min	SD
Must be loyal to the association / club	3.40	.89
Not fair to leave the association / club	3.35	1.05
It is better to remain with the organization	3.98	.72
Students who want to be loyal	4.06	.97
has been raised with the loyalty	3.06	.80

Refer to Table 4 for above normative dimension commitments, the overall item- four items for normative commitment level students is the highest score while one item at a simple score. The highest item is 'students who want to be loyal', ie with (M = 4.06, SD = 0.97), followed by the item 'better to remain with the organization' (M = 3.98, SD = 0.72), item must be Must be loyal to the association/club' (M = 3.40, SD = 0.89) and item 'Not fair to leave the association/club' (M

= 3.35, SD = 1.05). The item has been raised with loyalty 'is moderate with a mean score (M = 3.06, SD = 0.80).

Table 5: Ongoing commitment

Ongoing commitment Items	Min	SD
Life changed when leaving the association / club	4.02	.95
I worry eventuality	4.08	1.03
Would lose something if leave associations / clubs	3.64	.87
The presence of club / association for purposes solely, not interest	3.76	1.02

Based on the findings in Table 5 for the dimensions of the ongoing commitment, all items show a high level of item 'I worry eventuality' (M = 4.08, SD = 1:03), followed by the item's life changed when leaving the association/club (M = 4.02, SD = 0.95), item 'attendance to the club / association for purposes solely, and not interests' with the mean score (M = 3.76, SD = 1.02) and the lowest item will be 'would lose something if leave associations / clubs' with a mean score (M = 3.64, SD = 0.87).

4.3 Students soft skills level

Table 6 shows the level of soft skills of secondary school students in the state of Kedah and Perlis. Overall, the soft skills that are in high level (M = 3.75, SD = 14:47). Of the 18 items surveyed, seven items were found to be at a very high level. The highest item is on the 'Ability to practice active listening skills and providing feedback' with a mean (M = 4.08, SD = 0.90), followed by the item' ability to negotiate and reach an agreement '(M = 4.06, SD = 0.95), item' ability to get ideas (orally) with light, effectively and confidently, '(M = 3.96, SD = 0.98), item' ability to develop interpersonal communication skills' (M = 3.94, SD = 0.88), item 'ability to lead the training, programs, and activities' (M = 3.84, SD = 0.95), item' ability to understand and interchange roles between the chairman and members of a group (M = 3.82, SD = 0.90), and the item 'ability to build good relationships, interact with others and work effectively with them to achieve common objectives' (M = 3.80, SD = 1.10). The remaining items by 11 other items recorded at a high level with the highest item in the item 'knowledge of the basic theory of leadership' (M = 3.74, SD = 1.01), followed by the item 'ability to recognize and respect the attitudes, behavior and others' trust '(M = 3.72, SD = 1.01), item' ability to develop a curiosity, thirst for knowledge and want to try something new '(M = 3.71, SD = 1.01), item' ability to accept new ideas and capable of autonomous learning '(M = 3.66, SD = 1.00), item' ability to use non-verbal skills' (M = 3.60, SD = 1.00), item 'ability to make presentations bright with confidence appropriate to the level of the listener' (M = 3.59, SD = 1:06), item 'ability to supervise the team members' (M = 3.59, SD = 1.10), item 'ability to understand and interchange roles between team leaders and team members' (M = 3.57, SD = . 99), item 'ability to use the technology in presentation' (M = 3.56, SD = . 99), item 'ability to find and manage information from various sources (M = 3.55, SD = . 99), and the lowest in the item 'ability to communicate with speakers of different cultures' (M = 3:51, SD = . 97).

Table 6: Tahap Kemahiran Insaniah Pelajar

Bil		Min	SD
	Soft skills	3.75	14.47
1	Ability to communicate ideas (orally) in a clear, effective and full of confidence.	3.96	.98
2	Ability to practice active listening skills and provide feedback.	4.08	.90
3	The ability to create vivid presentations with confidence appropriate to the level of the listener.	3.59	1.06
4	The ability to use technology in presentations.	3.56	.99
5	The ability to negotiate and reach an agreement.	4.06	.95
6	Ability to communicate with speakers of different cultures.	3.51	.97
7	The ability to develop interpersonal communication skills.	3.94	.88
8	The ability to use non-verbal skills	3.60	1.00
9	Knowledge of the basic theory of leadership.	3.74	1.01
10	The ability to lead the training, programs, and activities	3.84	.95
11	The ability to understand and interchange roles between team leader and team member.	3.57	.99
12	Ability to supervise team members	3.59	1.10
13	The ability to build good relationships, interact with others and work effectively with them to achieve common objectives.	3.80	.99
14	The ability to understand and interchange roles between team leaders and team members	3.82	.90
15	The ability to recognize and respect the attitudes, behaviors and beliefs of others.	3.72	1.01
16	Ability to search and manage information from various sources.	3.55	.99
17	The ability to accept new ideas and the capacity for autonomous learning	3.66	1.00
18	The ability to develop a curiosity, thirst for knowledge and want to try something new.	3.71	1.01

5. Discussion and conclusion

The results of the study showed the importance of teacher leadership in influencing the students' commitment of involvement in extra-curricular activities in secondary schools in Kedah and Perlis. The increase in the level of Distributive leadership that practiced by teachers able to increase the commitment of involvement in extra-curricular activities in school. It shows elements of teacher leadership is an important element in the commitments of involvement in extra-curricular activities in secondary schools in Kedah and Perlis.

The findings are consistent with the findings of the study of Hulpia *et al.* (2010) ^[46], Firestone & Martinez (2007), Harris *et al.* (2007) ^[40] and Camburn, Rowan & Taylor (2003), which generally found the existence of a significant and positive relationship between the respondent's involvement with the commitment of leadership practices adopted by Distributive principal and teacher at the school. However, the results of this study as opposed to the results by (Bush & Glover, 2002) ^[18], that found there was no significant relationship between student commitment in school with distributive leadership practice teacher in school.

The findings of this study indirectly strengthen the claims of Bogler & Somech (2004) ^[15] relating to the theory of organizational commitment where individuals tend to engage actively and serve more than claim her once felt himself able to give certain influence and have its own status and appreciated in the organization. For a student who felt himself able to give certain influence and part of the school, club, organization or association specified time, then the student will tend to give a commitment that affective involvement in extra-curricular activities. However, this situation will only occur with the existence of organizational characteristics that can help develop students' positive elements such as effective leadership practices developed in schools, which is believed

capable of affecting not only on the commitment of teachers, but the students' participation commitment in various aspects (Louis, 1998) ^[56]. In fact, based on social exchange theory Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) ^[14], it is not surprising that when the findings of this study indirectly saying that students who have the impression that he has a high level of support and encouragement from teachers and schools, are expected to feel the obligation to give consideration to the organization through the commitment of its involvement that schoolmates affective in extra-curricular activities.

The findings are consistent with the findings of the study Grant *et al.* (2010) ^[31], Mulford (2008) ^[69], Abu Bakar & Courtesy (2003) ^[2] Foster & St Hilaire (2004) ^[28] and Amir Azros (2009) ^[6] that are generally found no significant relationship between practice and positive distributive leadership adopted by the teacher with the formation of soft skills. However, the findings of this study contradict the findings by Grant (2008) ^[30] found there was no significant relationship between teacher leadership practices with formation of distributive human skills.

This study shows the contribution of teacher leadership in shaping students' soft skills which is guided by the Theory of Distributive Leadership Kouzes & Posner (1995) ^[52] model exhibit leadership practices; inspire a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling another person to act, and to encourage a person to be on the teachers in the process of developing soft skills. The findings of this spell has also proved that the practice of encouraging, enabling others to act, challenging process, and shows an example of a very strong relationship with the formation of soft skills. Thus, as emphasized by Spillane (2006) ^[81], should be aware that the teacher is responsible for leading the student, and the teacher concerned will make the students respect them at once, raising

the credibility of its leadership in the organization of the school.

6. Conclusion

Results of this study contribute significantly to the treasures of knowledge especially to those responsible as a mover to extra-curricular activities in schools and education policy makers in Malaysia. This can be seen from the corner of the key role of leadership practice and commitment the involvement of distributive teacher students in extra-curricular activities towards developing human skills in the life of a student who will spearhead the country's leadership. Overall, the results showed student involvement in the widely accepted commitment extra-curricular activities of the school played an important role in improving the soft skills of the students.

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