



Soft Skill and Co-Curriculum Activities at Secondary Schools and Public University

Mukhtar, N.S., Esa, A, Ariffin, L.M. and Suhadi, N.

Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education, Universiti Tun Hussien Onn, Malaysia, Parit Raja. Batu Pahat, Johor.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 13 June 2017;

Received in revised form:
13 July 2017;

Accepted: 23 July 2017;

Keywords

Soft skills,
Co-curriculum activities,
Secondary schools,
Public universities.

ABSTRACT

Soft skills were essentials for students to enhance them to their career in future. Soft skills has been practiced since school days and being polished at higher level in higher learning institutions. The continuous of activities in high school and public universities were crucial to ensure the development of soft skills among students. Hence, this research are done to see the continuous of supply for soft skills activities between secondary schools and public universities. It is hoped that this article will supply awareness on the importance of continuity of the soft skills activities in high schools and public universities in order to ensure the development of the soft skills practiced among students.

© 2017 Elixir All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Soft skills are the essential skills that students need to master as entering into the work environment. It can be obtained directly or indirectly through activities in the classroom or outside the classroom. Implementation of co-curriculum activities in primary and secondary schools is a platform for soft skills to students at an early stage, and then being polished at the university level..

2. Literature Review

2.1. Soft skills

In general, this soft skill can be defined in various ways and it does not have specific and exact definition. This can be proven through the use of soft skills terminology in different countries even though the goals and characteristics practiced were almost identical. For example the terms used in Australia were either 'key competencies', 'soft skills' or 'employable skills'. Meanwhile New Zealand has used the term 'essential skills' and the United States has used either 'necessary skills', 'employability skills' or 'workplace know-how'. For the United Kingdom, the terms 'key skills' or 'core skills' were used to refer to these soft skills. (Mustafa et al., 2008).

Soft skills are part of generic skills (Ahmad Esa, 2005). It refers to the mastery of the students in non-academic skills and it focused more on the development of personal skills, personality and humanity. These skill were required for students to succeed and excel from many aspects of work and life (Esman et al., 2014). The existence of continuous quality education and training skills were to ensure that national human capital remains relevant to the needs of the industry and the current marketplace to meet the challenges and the increasingly competitive environment among nations (Ahmad Esa et al., 2010).

Soft skills were identified as an extremely critical element in the globalized and rapid technology changes occupational world. The Ministry of Education has outlined seven soft skills that must be implemented by the public university to ensure that its graduates were competent and able to compete in the global era.

These soft skills are communication, critical thinking and problem solving, teamwork, continuous learning and information management, management and entrepreneurial, leadership, and values, attitudes, ethics and professionalism.

2.2. Co-Curriculum activities

Co-curriculum activity defined as any process of teaching and learning activities planned out of the classroom (which is a curriculum that gives students the opportunity to add, consolidate and practice the skills and values learned in the classroom). Co-curriculum activity is the basis of the national curriculum. It is an educational program that includes curriculum and co-curriculum activities that encompass all knowledge, skills, norms, values, cultural elements and beliefs to assist the development of a student in full physical, spiritual, mental and emotional. It cultivate and enhance moral values that desired and convey knowledge (Ahmad Esa et al., 2015).

The offer of co-curriculum activities takes place at secondary and public universities level. There are various activities that apply soft skills to students at secondary school level. Typically, these activities are known as co-curriculum activities that are divided into uniform, sports, and associations and club units. Co-curriculum activity is the catalyst for the application of student's soft skills, whether at the secondary school or university level. The application needs to be managed systematically and there needs to be an alignment between these two levels of study, namely secondary school education, and public university education. It is because it takes a long time.

2.3. The Importance of Soft Skills

In the 9th Malaysia Plan, it has been outlined to enhance the knowledge and innovation capability and nurture the 'First Class Mind' among Malaysians in line with the latest developments. It is to create first-class human capital that is competitive, efficient, durable and flexible when faced with various challenges in the workplace, and the emphasis of the soft skills aspect of the student needs to be improved (Ahmad et al., 2010).

Human capital development is being emphasized as it contained in the Education Development Master Plan (PIPP). Expected human capital should have the skills to improve the development of a country. Generic skills are important and needed by the employee before entering the job environment (Lau,2016). Malaysia is an information-based industry nation and is responsible for introducing the concept of job skills to students. In order to carry out this mandate, the aspect of mastery of the soft skills needs to be emphasized from the school level so that the human capital produced will be beneficial and capable of meeting the needs of the national industry.

The government through the National Education Policy has also expressed its desire to increase the participation of teenage teens in acquiring an education that combines the knowledge and soft skills, in harmony with and in line with today's work environment. This is supported by the former Higher Education Minister, Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, in the text of his speech saying that Higher Education Institutions (IPTs) need to strengthen the element of soft skills in their structure of program to produce graduates with high marketability (Mustapha, 2008).

Academic achievement does not guarantee that graduates will be accepted directly into the job market as employers' expectations and job challenges increased. Most employers does not put academic achievement as the main criteria for selection, but also need soft skills on graduates as a selection criteria for their employees (Md et al., 2013).

"At this time the knowledge gained from textbooks only is not enough for students as they now need soft skills to succeed as entrepreneurs as well as in " said Dato Seri Mustapa Mohamed, Minister of International Trade and Industry at the closing ceremony of the Konvensyen 1Malaysia Cabaran Usahawan Muda (YEC) at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) . Most current employers require employees who also have generic skills as well as technical skills to enhance the productivity of the company and being competitive. Employees with these generic skills will be able to adapt to all types of work and being versatile. (Lau,2016)

Hence generic skills are important for knowledge-based economics. This combination of skills enhances individual productivity and company production. To achieve the country's dream of a knowledge-based industrial nation, every individual needs to improve the cognitive abilities and other generic skills. Hence, educational institutions should play a part in focusing on the importance of soft skills as a critical contributor to generating comprehensive human capital as well as being able to bring global competition to address IPT product quality issues (Pua, 2014).

Today's educational institutions need to train students to be competitive in order to meet the growing demand for the job market. Meanwhile, students need to master the traits of workers required by the employer of the globalization era, especially in terms of soft skills, and have the ability to learn life long and have positive work ethics. To get there, students need to apply with diverse skills and in accordance with the standards that is appropriate to the needs of the national industry so that those who are going to pursue a career nature are ready to carry out the tasks given in accordance with employer's requirements (Mat, 2005).

It is clear that the importance of the soft skills cannot be denied, especially in this age. Soft skills are important to nurture first-class minds and in preparation to enter the realm of work.

It is also a requirement of industrialized countries, job market requirements or job opportunities today. These soft skill should have been applied since the school year so that the skills can be developed and contributed to build the country in future.

3. Discussion

The application of soft skills is applied and implemented throughout the institutions of higher learning in Malaysia. It is a continuation of the education system at the school level that has embarked on the integration of soft skills or generic skills in KBSM's education curriculum (Talib et al., 2010).

Sports activities are activities that have the most common equality between secondary schools and public universities. This is because sports activities can stimulate the learning process in institutions of learning. An organized and good exercise will make the mastery of basic skills more effective and increase interest and confidence of students. The mastery of basic skills in various fields of sports will complement a student with diverse psychomotor skills.

According to Islam, sports activities are strongly encouraged to make one's body healthy and fit. This can help individuals to become always willing to perform its prayer either alone or together with community and do community service. Sports activities are seen as able to maintain the health as evidenced by the study conducted by Buntat et al. in 2009.

Co-curriculum activities at secondary schools and public universities also tend to the core activities of volunteerism. This is because the involvement of students with core activities of volunteerism will naturally create sympathy and mutual help. Such good values are a must have value in each student so that they does not only excel in academics but will excel as human capital too (Suanda et al., 2012)

4. Conclusion

Soft skills are very important skill today. This skill is embedded and polished through co-curriculum activities in secondary schools and public universities. However, the findings show that there are many co-curricular activities that have weak continuity between these two institutions. This can inhibited the development of the soft skills of our students today. The responsible party should take rigorous action to overcome this problem in order to produce a brilliant, glorious and distinguished citizen.

References

- Ahmad Esa. (2005): *Perkasakan Kokurikulum*. Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publication & Distributors Sdn. Bhd.
- Ahmad Esa, Mohd Nor, Mohd Khir, Nawawi Jusoh, Norashidah Abd Rahman and Zalinah Salehon. (2015). "Citra kokurikulum." Penerbit UTHM.
- Ahamd Esa, Mohd Zaid Mustafa, (2010)). *Citra kokurikulum and kemahiran Insaniah:Kajian Di Institusi-Institusi Pengajian*. Penerbit UTHM.
- Ahmad, A.A. and Esa, A. (2010). *Penerapan Kemahiran Insaniah di Pusat Giat Mara (PGM): Satu Analisis Perbandingan. Kemahiran Insaniah: Kajian di Institusi-Institusi Pengajian*. Batu Pahat: Penerbit UTHM. pg 1-19.
- Buntat, Y. and Jailani, N. (2009). *Penglibatan Pelajar Wanita Tahun Akhir Fakulti Pendidikan dalam Aktiviti Sukan di UTM*.
- Esman, F. and Mokhtar, R. (2014). *Pencapaian Kemahiran Insaniah melalui Aktiviti Kokurikulum dan Hubungannya dan Pencapaian Akademik Pelajar POLISAS*, 452–468.
- Lau, M.R., Ahmad, H., Ibrahim, M.F., Nabilah Yusof, N. and Arifin, N. (2016) *Kemahiran Insaniah Dan Aktiviti Ko-*

Kurikulum Di Sekolah Menengah Dan Universiti Awam,
Paper No: iLEC 2015-267

Mat. A. F. (2005). Penerapan Kemahiran Insaniah Di Sekolah Menengah Teknik : Satu Analisis Perbandingan.

Md.K, A., Shahiri, H.I and Bachok, M.S. (2013). Pelaburan Awal Modal Manusia dari Perspektif Penglibatan Aktiviti Ko-Kurikulum kepada Tempoh Pengangguran Siswazah Malaysia, 3, 1099–1107.

Mustapha (2008). Mantap elemen kemahiran insaniah di kalangan penuntut.

Mustafa, M.Z, Mohd.N, N., Mohd.S, K., Madar, A.R., Ibrahim, B., Sulaiman, N., and Razzaq,A.R. (2008). Pelaksanaan Modul Soft Skills di Politeknik Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia. Prosiding SKIKS 08, 1, 187–201. Retrieved from

http://eprints.uthm.edu.my/2315/1/PELAKSANAAN_MODUL_SOFT_SKILLS_DI_POLITEKNIK_KEMENTERIAN.pdfPua.P.K. (2014). Tahap Kemahiran Insaniah dalam Kalangan Pelajar Kejuruteraan Tahun Akhir di Politeknik KPM.

Suanda, J., Hamzah, M.R., Bahari, A. and Ku.D, K.A. (2012). Semangat Kesukarelawan dalam Kalangan Mahasiswa Melayu di IPTA: Satu Tinjauan ke Arah Pembentukan Pendidikan Kesukarelawan (August 2015).

Talib, N.H.F., Mohd.S, B.H., Awang, M.H., Zakaria, H.B., Kassim, N. and Ahmad, J. (2010). Pembangunan Negara melalui Pendidikan Kemahiran Insaniah.