

Measuring Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI) among Student Representative Council (SRC) at UiTM Pahang

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ABSTRACT

Students Representative Council (SRC) is a group of students, positioned as student leaders in higher learning institutions. The formation of an SRC in public universities is vital as this has been clearly stated by the Malaysia Ministry of Higher Learning (MOHE) under Act 174 "Akta Institusi – Institusi Pelajaran (Tatatertib) 1976 Seksyen 7 Perkara 3". SRC represents the young voices of university, a council in which leadership qualities are demanded and should be well demonstrated. Among the core functions of SRC are to lead the students in materializing the vision and mission of the university, to channel messages between the management and students and to help the university management in handling events involving students. Fundamentally, the SRC is required to have positive thinking as well as a positive image, excellent communication skills, admirable attitude and also pleasant appearance. The main objective of this study is to identify the quantifiable leadership qualities of the present Student Representatives Council (SRC) at UiTM Pahang. This research uses the five 'Leadership Practice Inventory' (LPI) introduced by Kouzes and Posner namely; Model the way, Inspire a shared vision, Challenge the process, Enable others to act, and Encourage the heart. Finally, from the research outcome, this study will suggest the Five Practices of Leadership elements that need to be improved in the future among SRC at UiTM Pahang.

Keywords: *Students Representative Council (SRC), Leadership Practice Inventory-(LPI)*

Introduction

Students Representative Council (SRC) represents the young voices of university, a council in which leadership qualities are demanded and should be well demonstrated. The council must always stay with the university directions as to help institutions' vision and mission successfully grasp by the students. Because of this big role, the SRC must be represented by students who are really capable with strong leadership qualities. According to Omar Osman (2010), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) has formed students' parliament as a platform for all students' club and society leaders including the SRC members to have an intellectual debate and carry critical ideas while debating on certain matters. This shows how vital for the university to have a good SRC, which comprises of quality student leaders who will later portray the quality of the university itself. Holding students' highest position as mentioned in the "Perlembagaan Penstrukturan Pentadbiran Majlis Perwakilan Pelajar, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM)", the SRC members should be able to give a positive reflection of the university and its students. Because of that, this study wants to highlight the quantifiable leadership qualities of the present Student Representatives Council (SRC) at UiTM Pahang using the five 'Leadership Practice Inventory' (LPI).

Literature Review

Student representative council

The development of leadership skill among students is gained through different activities and various experiences (Astin, 1993). Learning about leadership skill can take place in formal and outdoor activities including lecture session and experiential learning such as co-curricular programs. One of the activities that

have been acknowledged is the student representative council which can be found in the university. A university plays a big role to facilitate a nation to build a high quality young people, therefore it is functioning as facilitators to assist the students to attain maturity and develop as perfect humans (Marcketti et al., 2011; Mozghan et al., 2011). The Student Representative Council (SRC) is made up of a group of students who want to help other students by presenting ideas which are beneficial to all students and university. They are entrusted by the students through an election process where the students have a right to choose their peer as representative. Therefore, SRC is responsible to identify the students need and wants and work together with the administration of the university to solve any issues raise in the university. Mager and Norwak (2012) stated the importance of student participation in democratic activities such as listening to pupils, encouraging them to participate and giving them more power and responsibility is seen as an important way to create a better functioning school. A study by Mozghan et al., (2011) has identified several benefits of involvement in student associations such as involving in SRC could improve knowledge, understand differences, recognition of different culture. Other than that they also highlight the benefit on developing good quality of attitude which includes being responsible, having ethical behavior, open-minded, being optimistic, and understanding others.

Development of student leadership

University or college was identified as a perfect place to develop a leader among young people (Triolo et al., 1997; Eich 2008, Mozghan et al., 2011). Hay and Hodgkinson (2005) proposed the leadership skills could be taught in courses offered by implementing some leadership qualities such as negotiation skills, conflict resolution, communication and networking. Meanwhile a study by Triolo et al., (1997) at nursing college stated that faculty should play an importance role to shape the leadership competencies among the student such as global perspective, superb communication skills, organizational improvement strategy, conflict management, systems thinking, personal mastery etc. In general, the benefit of leadership development could empower the students to mature and develop toward greater levels of leadership over a period of time (Mozghan et al., 2011).

Leader Practice Model

There are several leadership theories and models proposed and have been tested by researchers all over the world. One recent leadership model is that developed by Kouzes and Posner (2002). This model focuses on the development and sharing of vision and emphasizes leader integrity and openness based on the research findings obtained by interviewing leaders and followers. Eventually, they have established five practices of exemplary leadership such as;

i. Model the way

Leaders search for opportunities to change the status quo. They look for innovative ways to improve the organization. In doing so, they experiment and take risks. And because leaders know that risk taking involves mistakes and failures, they accept the inevitable disappointments as learning opportunities.

ii. Inspire a shared vision

Leaders passionately believe that they can make a difference. They envision the future, creating an ideal and unique image of what the organization can become. Through their magnetism and quiet persuasion, leaders enlist others in their dreams. They breathe life into their visions and get people to see exciting possibilities for the future.

iii. Challenge the process

Leaders foster collaboration and build spirited teams. They actively involve others. Leaders understand that mutual respect is what sustains extraordinary efforts; they strive to create an atmosphere of trust and human dignity. They strengthen others, making each person feel capable and powerful.

iv. Enable others to act

Leaders establish principles concerning the way people (constituents, colleagues, and customers alike) should be treated and the way goals should be pursued. They create standards of excellence and then set an example for others to follow. Because the prospect of complex change can overwhelm people and

stifle action, they set interim goals so that people can achieve small wins as they work toward larger objectives. They unravel bureaucracy when it impedes action; they put up signposts when people are unsure of where to go or how to get there; and they create opportunities for victory.

v. Encourage the heart

Accomplishing extraordinary things in organizations is hard work. To keep hope and determination alive, leaders recognize contributions that individuals make. In every winning team, the members need to share in the rewards of their efforts, so leaders celebrate accomplishments. They make people feel like heroes.

This model has been repeatedly tested and applied to college students as compared to sole application with leaders already in the workforce (e.g. Posner, 2009, Marcketti et al., 2011)

Research Methodology

The questionnaire items used in this study were primarily adopted from Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI) as suggested by Kouzes and Posner (2008). There were 5 areas of leadership practices; challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modelling the way and encouraging the heart. The questionnaire consists of 2 parts. Part A addressed demographic profile of the respondents which included age, gender, faculty enrolled, years experience as SRC and leadership background in primary and secondary school. Part B focused on 5 areas of LPI. Table 1 summarized the measurement used in the questionnaire. The SRC committee in UiTM Pahang was selected as the sample of this study as they are currently practicing leadership activities in representing all students in the campus. The measurement was structured with closed end design 10-point Likert scale based on 1 “almost never”, 2 “rarely”, 3 “seldom”, 4 “once in a while”, 5 “occasionally”, 6 “sometimes”, 7 “fairly often”, 8 “usually”, 9 “very frequent” and 10 “almost always”. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. This study employed descriptive analysis such as frequency test, mean and standard deviation.

Table 1: Five Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI).

Theme	Description	No. of items	Sources
Challenging the Process	Willingness to seek out and conquer challenges.	6	Kouzes and Posner (2008)
Inspiring a Shared Vision	Spreading enthusiasm and gaining support for the vision.	6	
Enabling Others to Act	Fostering teamwork and building trust.	6	
Modeling the Way	Behaving in a way that you want others to copy	6	
Encouraging the Heart	Celebrating accomplishments and giving support when others are exhausted or frustrated.	6	

Research finding

Respondent profiles

Total numbers of Students Representative Council (SRC) at UiTM Pahang are 14 students. All of them participated in this research. 64.3% (9) of them were females and the balance of 35.7% (5) was males. All the respondents were aged between 18 to 24 years. 11 respondents were aged between 20 – 21 years old that represented 78.6%, followed by 1 respondent each aged between 18-19 years old, 22 to 23 years old and 24 years old and above that constituted 7.1% respectively. The SRC's came from eight different faculties in UiTM Pahang. Most of them represented the Faculty of Business Management at 28.6% (4), followed by 14.3% (2) from Accountancy, 14.3% (2) Plantation and Agro technology, 14.3% (2) from Applied Science and then 7.1% (1) from each of Civil Engineering, Computer Science and Mathematics, Sport Science and Recreation and Wood Technology. According to their academic achievements, most of the SRC's CGPA

were between 3.00 to 3.99 at 71.4% (10) and only 28.6% (4) of them at 2.00-2.99. There are 35.7% (5) of the respondents that have more than 2 years of experience as SRC and as well as 35.7% (5) of the respondents have less than 2 years of experience as SRC at UiTM Pahang. Besides that, 28.6% (4) of them have more than 1 year of experience as SRC. In terms of leadership background during primary and secondary schools, most of the SRC were a school prefect or school librarian. 92.9% (13) stated that they have leadership experience and only 7.1% (1) of them did not have any. In the open ended question section, the respondents were requested to answer this question: Why do they want to hold SRC position in this university? Only 5 of them answered as follows:

Table 2: Reason to hold SRC position

I want to develop my soft skills
I want to learn to arrange my schedule
I want to develop my confidence level
I want to improve my leadership skills
I want to contribute something to the university

Measuring Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI) among UiTM Pahang SRC's

This research uses of the five 'Leadership Practice Inventory' (LPI) introduced by Kouzes and Posner (2008) namely; Model the way, Inspire a shared vision, Challenge the process, Enable others to act, and Encourage the heart. The results from Five 'Leadership Practice Inventory' (LPI) among SRC at UiTM Pahang were determined as below.

Table 3: Mean for Challenging the Process

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I seek out challenging opportunities that test my own skills and abilities.	7.64	1.499
I experiments and takes risks in my work even when there is a chance of failure.	7.14	1.460
I ask "what can we learn?" when things do not go as expected.	7.29	1.590
I take the initiatives to overcome obstacles even when outcomes are uncertain.	7.50	1.286
I search outside the formal boundaries of my task for innovative ways to improve what we do.	7.71	1.069
I challenge people to try out new and innovative approaches to their work	7.29	1.437

According to table 3, all the statements have mean score more than 7. Most of the respondents agreed with the statement "I search outside the formal boundaries of my task for innovative ways to improve what we do" at 7.71 mean and standard deviation at 1.069. Besides that, the lowest mean at 7.14 and standard deviation of 1.460 for the statement "my experiments and takes risks in my work even when there is a chance of failure".

Table 4: Mean for Inspiring a Shared Vision

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I talk about future trends that will influence how our work gets done.	7.64	1.394
I describe a compelling image of what our future could be like.	7.43	1.342
I appeal to others to share an exciting dream of the future.	7.50	1.019
I show others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision.	7.21	1.578
I am contagiously enthusiastic and positive about future possibilities.	7.57	1.284

I speak with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work.	7.07	1.328
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All the statements in table 4 have mean score more than 7. The highest mean is at 7.64 and standard deviation of 1.393 from the statement “I talk about future trends that will influence how our work gets done”. The lowest mean is at 7.07 and standard deviation of 1.328 from the statement “I speak with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work”.

Table 5: Mean for Enabling Others to Act

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I develop a cooperative relationship among the people I work with.	8.64	0.929
I actively listen to diverse points of view.	8.00	1.109
I treat others with dignity and respect.	8.57	1.222
I support the decisions that people make on their own.	8.21	0.975
I give people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how doing their work.	8.07	1.207
I ensure that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.	7.93	1.439

Table 5 measured inventory of enabling others to act. Most of the statements have mean score more than 8 and only one stated less than that. The highest mean is at 8.64 and standard deviation of 0.929 from the statement “I develop a cooperative relationship among the people I work with”. The lowest mean is at 7.93 and standard deviation of 1.439 from the statement “I ensure that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves”.

Table 6: Mean for Modeling the Way

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I set a personal example of what I expect from others.	7.29	1.899
I spend time and energy on making certain that the people I work with adhere to the principles and standards that we have agreed on.	7.79	1.424
I follow through on the promises and commitments that I make.	7.93	0.997
I am clear about my philosophy of leadership.	7.79	1.188
I make certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on.	7.64	1.151
I make progress toward goals one step at a time.	7.79	1.122

Table 6 measured inventory of modeling the way. Most of the statements have mean score more than 7. The highest mean is at 7.93 and standard deviation of 0.997 from the statement “I follow through on the promises and commitments that I make”. The lowest mean is at 7.29 and standard deviation of 1.899 from the statement “I set a personal example of what I expect from others”.

Table 7: Mean for Encouraging the Heart

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I praise people for a job well done.	9.00	0.961
I make it a point to let people know about my confidence in their abilities.	8.43	1.399
I make sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of our projects.	8.64	1.336
I publicly recognize people who exemplify commitment to shared values.	8.50	1.092

I find ways to celebrate accomplishments.		
I give the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions.	8.93	1.072

According to table 7, most of the statements have mean score more than 8 but the highest mean is at 9.00 and standard deviation of 0.961 for the statement “I praise people for a job well done”. While, the lowest mean is at 8.14 and standard deviation of 1.231 for the statement “I find ways to celebrate the accomplishments”.

Table 8: Overall mean for Five Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI)

Five Leadership Practice Inventory	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Challenging the Process	32.0	57.0	44.6	7.165
Inspiring a Shared Vision	35.0	57.0	44.4	6.357
Enabling Others to Act	40.0	57.0	49.4	5.003
Modeling the Way	38.0	58.0	46.2	6.091
Encouraging the Heart.	42.0	58.0	51.6	5.679

Table 8 showed an overall mean for Five Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI). UiTM Pahang SRC practiced more on encouraging the heart as it stated the highest mean 51.6 and standard deviation at 5.679. Most of them tend to recognize contributions and proud of themselves in handling the tasks. Furthermore, the lowest mean is at 44.4 and standard deviation of 6.357 from inspiring a shared vision into practice. It seems that, UiTM Pahang SRC is less effort to embrace on envisions the future.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In the case of demographic profiles, the majorities of the respondents were from the age of 20 to 21, from the Faculty of Business Management with CGPA between 3.00 – 3.99 and have more than 2 years of experience as SRC. Indeed, 13 respondents have leadership experience being the school prefect or school librarians during primary and secondary school. Basically, by looking at their backgrounds the SRC of UiTM Pahang has experienced practicing the basic skills of leadership.

However, based on Table 2, they are not a risk taker and seem ‘afraid’ to explore themselves deeper into tasks that are more challenging. They are lack in knowing the purpose of their functions as SRC in term of sharing the vision (Table 7). A vision will organize the student body to be successful. Vision is then transformed into the mission. Fundamentally, the mission and vision statements depict student body main objectives and values. Hence, this means the SRC must be able to take the student body mission where they want to go. This would ensure them to achieve the vision. More specifically, it would strategize the perspective of what they want to accomplish in their mission statement. Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) identify the importance of shared-vision as outcomes of creative orientation and generative conversation which is closely linked to the ability to share a mental image of the future.

Furthermore, looking at the result from Table 4, the SRC members are lacking in learning new skills and how to develop themselves. Obviously, the concept of learning is absent in the SRC or perhaps the SRC are not being exposed enough to any programs related to self-development. Calantone et al., (2002) and Ratten (2008) agree that for survival, committed to learning it as an important investment. Thus, UiTM Pahang needs to invest in providing continuous learning to its student body. In fact, seeing the environment, being open-minded is also considered an important characteristic for SRC. Sinkula et al., (1997) define open-mindedness as the willingness to critically evaluate operational routine and to accept new ideas in addition to engage in unlearning. Individuals that are open-minded and committed to learning are motivated to learn, but may find it difficult to know what to learn unless a shared-vision is in place (Sinkula et al., 1997).

Basically, shared-vision implies a common commitment to desire the future. It gives strength to innovate and learn (Senge, 1990). An individual can likely form strength or even a core competence if they have a clear focus and direction for learning which in turn cultivates energy, commitment and purpose among

themselves (Hoe, 2007). Conversely, Garcia and Llorens-Montes (2006), and Fahey and Prusak (1998) sanction that lack of shared-vision would interfere with individuals' ability to find innovative solutions collectively and can further arise as one of the most important causes of failure for the processes of learning Dess and Picken (2000).

Shared-vision allows the individual to take ownership in goals (Sinkula et al., 1997). Therefore, shared vision is very important learning process because it provides the focus and energy for learning to take place (Hoe, 2007). Consequently, both open-mindedness and shared-vision are required as pivotal components of the learning process. Conclusively, in order to groom the SRC, the university needs to provide and allow learning process to take place, coach its SRC to have a specific vision and lastly the SRC must be open-minded as well as always think outside of the box.

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