

Principals' Knowledge and Skills in Co-curricular Management

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A school principal's inability to manage co-curricular activities effectively and efficiently can potentially have an adverse effect on student achievement. Achievement in co-curricular activities is crucial since it has become a compulsory requirement for students to further their studies at higher education institutions. However, management of co-curricular activities is often being empowered to senior assistants, whereas, as a school manager, the principal should have the necessary knowledge and skills to manage these activities. Hence, the aim of this quantitative survey study is to examine the level of knowledge and skills of Malaysia's principals in managing co-curricular activities. The instrument used for this study was a questionnaire, which was distributed to a total of 1645 respondents, consisting of 314 principals, 720 senior assistants and 611 senior teachers. Overall, the main findings from this study show that the knowledge and skills of these principals is high with the mean score of 4.21 and 4.23 respectively. However, in certain areas, these principals' knowledge is still low, therefore, they are encouraged to practice lifelong learning to strengthen their knowledge and skills in co-curricular activities management.

Key words: *Knowledge, Skill, Practice, Co-Curricular Activities Management, Principal.*

Introduction

According to Malaysia's Education Act (1996), it is compulsory for both government and non-government school students to participate in co-curricular activities. This decision was made in recognition of the value of co-curricular activities in shaping students' skills and personalities. Studies have shown that involvement in co-curricular activities creates informal

interactions, enhances social confidence (Daley and Leahly, 2003), enhances social skills (Azmi and Hamsiah, 2000), strengthens students' interactions and thus fosters integration amongst the multi-ethnic communities in our country (Mohd Izham & Norziana 2015).

Co-curricular activities such as sport is important to optimise students' physical capabilities. With this in mind, various sporting activities were introduced so students that could lead a healthy and active lifestyle (Mohd Izham & Norziana 2015). Malaysia's Ministry of Education (MOE) implemented "Satu Murid Satu Sukan" or "One Student One Sport" policy in order to shape a sports-based generation to complement the academic curriculum. The policy, which was introduced in the Curriculum Transformation programme, is aimed at increasing the interest and ability of students in sports (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2011). As a preparation for producing sports teachers who can function effectively in schools, the Institute for Teacher Education and the Ministry of Higher Education have implemented courses suitable for prospective teachers. In addition, the Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia offers Sports Education Programme Module specifically to its student teachers (Mohd Taib Harun & Norlena Salamuddin 2008).

This policy is in line with the national sports policy which emphasises 'Sports for All and Sports for Excellence'. The policy also gives attention to underprivileged students so that they are involved in sporting activities. At the same time, potential students are being polished and developed through the School of High Performance. The policy stipulates that each student, including those with special needs, who are not suffering from health problems, must participate in at least one sport. In addition to developing human capital through the participation of students in sports activities throughout the year, the policy also aims to foster a sports culture that ensures students become members of a community that promotes a healthy and active lifestyle. 'One Student One Sports policy' requires every student to participate in at least one sports' activity at school. The policy supports the implementation of the National Education Philosophy that focuses on developing students intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically.

According to Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1995), management is the process of planning, directing and controlling organisational work and utilising existing organisational resources to achieve the goals of the organisation (Mohd Izham & Sufean 2009). Efficient management is necessary to design, manage, lead, and control the co-curricular programme. With all the policies and supports implemented, principals as school administrators should play a vital role in developing students' potential through co-curricular activities. This is because the person in-charge of co-curricular activities is a major driver for the success of a school in the curriculum (Shafiq Aizatullah & Mohd Izham 2018). Co-curricular management courses and training have been implemented for school administrators including principals. But the extent



to which principals have knowledge and skills in co-curricular management remains uncertain. Therefore, this study was carried out to seek the answer to this pertinent question.

Research Purpose and Question

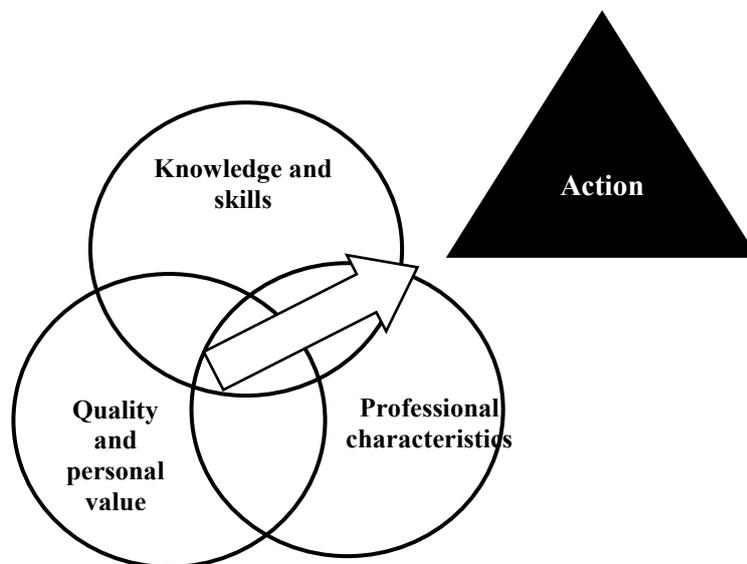
The purpose of this study is to examine the knowledge and skills of principals in managing co-curricular activities. Thus, the research questions are:

- 1) To what extent do the principals possess knowledge in managing co-curricular activities?
- 2) To what extent do the principals possess skills in managing co-curricular activities?

The Core Attribution Model of Leadership and Action

The Core Attributes of Headship and the Action model are shown in Figure 1. This is the model underlying the National Principals of Wales. It demonstrates competence in the actions of principals in carrying out their responsibilities and is determined by the knowledge, skills, and personal qualities that they possess. It also can be influenced by professional attributes including: commitment, confidence, consistency, enthusiasm, creativity, sensitivity to change, empathy, honesty, resilience, common sense, inspiring, integrity, motivation, visibility, problem-solving, trustworthy, flexible, respectful, self-aware and appreciative of others. The many roles listed here explain what principals need to know, what commitments they need to show, and what they need to do to enable them to fulfil their role as principals. This model also creates boundaries of action appropriate to the role of a principal. While the standards clearly state that knowledge, skills, personal qualities and professional characteristics are specific to each role, at the same time, each of the elements listed can transcend other areas of responsibility. This is because each one is built on a reciprocal relationship.

Figure 1. The Core Attributes of Leadership and Action



Source: Cattell 2004

Previous studies on the management of co-curricular activities

A study by Mohd Izham and Norziana (2015) titled, 'The Role of Principals in Co-curricular Management from the National High School Teacher's Perspective' concluded that principals need to practice effective management so that teachers and students are more motivated to ensure successful implementation of co-curricular activities. The findings also demonstrated that principals routinely empowered the task to the Co-curricular Senior Assistant, but there were excellent schools where principals played their role effectively and efficiently in co-curricular management. This finding is in line with Ayob (2005) which showed that attention and direct contact with principals can lead to successful co-curricular management. Mohd Izham and Norziana (2015) also found that some schools that were initially excellent in co-curricular management began to decline as new principals take over.

Ayob (2005) argued that co-curricular development depended on the interest of principals. Principals who were once active in sports and associations, may place greater emphasis on these activities. In fact, some activities like games excelled because of the principal's interest. For principals who did not have experience in sports and associations, they usually

empowered the job to their co-curricular senior assistants. In this case, the principals acted only as observers and were satisfied with the reports received. This arrangement led to lack of enthusiasm and eventually, a lack of attention on co-curricular activities.

Mohammad (2003) found that the main factors contributing to school success in co-curricular activities was the interest and enthusiasm of the principal. This was because of their input at the planning stage and their ability to gain teachers' cooperation to be involved in co-curricular activities (Faudzi 2008). According to Hanishah (2006) and the report of the Federal School Board of Nursing in Secondary School (1993), leadership can cause various problems in the implementation of co-curricular activities. An emphasis on co-curricular activities by a leader is generally less stringent than the attention given to academic achievements.

Mohd Izham and Norziana (2015) also felt that school management should emphasise co-curricular activities. However, principals often give less attention to the success of students in co-curricular activities as compared to their academic achievement.

A study by Dicken and Tajul Arifin (2017) found that the implementation of Physical Education subjects closely related to co-curricular activities was still under-appreciated in schools. The study focused on factors that were considered to have an impact on the implementation of physical education including school administrators. Among the suggestions given, is that administrators and teachers need to take into account how they will affect the physical well-being of the students so that they are actively involved in the co-curricular activities.

Methodology

This research is a quantitative survey study and the instrument used is a questionnaire, which is distributed to a total number of 1645 respondents, consisting of 314 principals, 720 senior assistants and 611 senior teachers. Descriptive analysis using the SPSS programme was performed to calculate the mean scores and was interpreted using Kuebler and Smith's score range (1976), which is: very low (mean score ≤ 1.50), low (mean score 1.51 - 2.50), moderate (mean score 2.51 - 3.50), high (score Mean 3.51 - 4.50), and very high (mean score ≥ 4.51).

Findings

The findings presented below are based on two research questions, a) To what extent do the principals possess knowledge in managing co-curricular activities and 2) To what extent do the principals possess skills in managing co-curricular activities? Overall, the level of knowledge of principals in co-curricular management is high. The mean score was 4.39 based

on the principal's self-assessment, 4.19 based on the senior assistant's assessment, and 4.06 based on senior teachers' assessment. A detailed analysis of the results on their level of knowledge in co-curricular management is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Principals' knowledge level in co-curricular management

	Knowledge	Evaluation								
		Principal			Senior Assistant			Senior Teacher		
		Mean	SD	Lvl	Mean	SD	Lvl	Mean	SD	Lvl
1	To implement co-curricular activities which is in accordance with school facilities	4.41	.61	H	4.22	.77	H	4.13	.79	H
2	To explain about the co-curricular rules and regulation	4.35	.62	H	4.21	.77	H	4.06	.82	H
3	To develop co-curriculum programmes that can suit students' needs	4.35	.65	H	4.13	.78	H	4.01	.82	H
4	To suggest for the best solution to overcome problems in co-curricular implementation	4.45	.62	H	4.19	.83	H	4.03	.84	H
	The level of knowledge in co-curricular management as a whole	4.39	.56	H	4.19	.73	H	4.06	.76	H

Indicator: VH = Very High, H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, VL = Very Low

The findings presented in Table 2 indicated that the principals are highly skilled in managing co-curricular activities. The overall mean score was 4.39 based on the principals' self-

assessment, 4.22 based on the senior assistants' assessment, and 4.08 based on the senior teachers' assessment. A detailed analysis of the result is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Principals' skills level in co-curricular management

	Skill	Penilaian								
		Principal			Senior Assistant			Senior Teacher		
		Mean	SD	Lvl	Mean	SD	Lvl	Mean	SD	Lvl
1	To motivate a better achievement in co-curricular	4.50	.61	H	4.32	.77	H	4.20	.80	H
2	To influence a higher commitment in implementation of co-curricular programmes	4.34	.60	H	4.16	.80	H	4.02	.85	H
3	To identify student potential in co-curricular activities	4.37	.63	H	4.17	.78	H	4.03	.85	H
4	To guide for the right niche area for co-curricular	4.39	.63	H	4.19	.79	H	4.05	.87	H
5	To overcome problems related to co-curricular facilities	4.36	.65	H	4.24	.79	H	4.09	.88	H
	Proficiency level in the overall curriculum area	4.39	.53	H	4.22	.72	H	4.08	.79	H

Indicator: VH = Very High, H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, VL = Very Low

Discussion and Conclusion of the Study

The findings show that overall, principals' knowledge and skills in co-curricular management are at a high level. This finding is in line with the findings of Mohd Izham and Norziana (2015) who showed that teachers' perception on the role of principals as planners was high with a mean score of 3.79 to 3.90. The principals attained lower scores for the knowledge needed to develop co-curricular programmes that can meet students' need and for the skill to influence higher commitment in the implementation of co-curricular programmes. These findings indicated that these principals needed to improve interactions with their school

communities including teachers, students, and even parents. By having frequent interaction and good co-operation with these people, principals can get information to improve their management effectiveness.

A good relationship with teachers also enables principals to get accurate information on the progress of co-curricular activities. Besides, there is a higher chance for the principal to choose a right niche area for co-curricular activities. It is also better for the principal to set a benchmark in co-curricular programmes and plans for the best way to achieve the set target. Principals also need to have good collaboration with external partners to share knowledge and ideas to improve co-curricular management. Principals are also encouraged to build closer relationships with students, to get feedback on students' needs. Students' success in co-curricular activities also needs to be emphasised in order to encourage active involvement in co-curricular activities. This study should attract the attention of principals to offer co-curricular programmes or activities in the best interest of the students.

The findings of this study contradict the findings of Azlin (2006) who found that school principals' practice was relatively modest in some areas, and also Dicken and Tajul Arifin (2017) who found that implementation of Physical Education subjects closely related to co-curricular programs is given less attention. Nevertheless, the findings of this study confirm Ayob's (2005) findings, which stated that co-curricular development depends on the principal and their emphasis on co-curricular activities.

To conclude, principals' knowledge and skills in managing co-curricular activities are adequate. They achieved a high level for all aspects of knowledge and skills. The assistance of senior assistants and senior teachers is also important to ensure that principals can manage the curriculum well. Therefore, principals should maintain good relationships with their staff, students and school communities. However, the challenges and current changes in education may demand changes in the management of the principals. In this regard, principals need to be open to change and cultivate life-long learning so that knowledge and skills are constantly updated. As such, the principal's actions or practices may always be relevant to current developments.

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