

## Principals' practices in co-curricular management

Prácticas de directores en gestión co-curricular

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### ABSTRACT

Principal's disability in managing co-curricular activities effectively and efficiently can affect student achievement. Nowadays it will also affect students' application to further study at a higher level since it has become a compulsory requirement for the application to be approved. Co-curricular activities management is also often being handed over to the senior assistant, whereas as a school manager, the principal should be able to do their best in managing it. Hence, this qualitative study is conducted with the aim of exploring principals' practices in managing co-curricular activities. The instrument is interview protocol. The total number of respondents are 7 principals, 4 senior assistants, and 3 senior teachers, from 7 schools selected for the study. The qualitative data from interviews is manually analysed to obtain an explanation of the principals' practices in managing co-curricular activities. Overall, this study found that principals did the best practices in terms of management, however, in certain areas such as limited school compound, inadequate equipment and physical facilities, and unskilled teachers to train students, principals need to find a better strategy. Therefore, principals are encouraged to practice lifelong learning to ensure that their practices in co-curricular are at their best consistently.

**Keywords:** Education, Practice, Co-curricular Activities Management, Principal.

### RESUMEN

La discapacidad del director en la gestión efectiva y eficiente de las actividades co-curriculares puede afectar el rendimiento de los estudiantes. Hoy en día también afectará la solicitud de los estudiantes para seguir estudiando en un nivel superior, ya que se ha convertido en un requisito obligatorio para que la solicitud sea aprobada. La gestión de actividades co-curriculares a menudo también se entrega al asistente principal, mientras que, como gerente de la escuela, el director debe ser capaz de hacer lo mejor en su gestión. Por lo tanto, este estudio cualitativo se realiza con el objetivo de explorar las prácticas de los directores en la gestión de actividades co-curriculares. El instrumento es el protocolo de entrevista. El número total de encuestados son 7 directores, 4 asistentes superiores y 3 maestros principales, de 7 escuelas seleccionadas para el estudio. Los datos cualitativos de las entrevistas se analizan manualmente para obtener una explicación de las prácticas de los directores en la gestión de actividades co-curriculares. En general, este estudio encontró que los directores hicieron las mejores prácticas en términos de gestión, sin embargo, en ciertas áreas, como un complejo escolar limitado, equipos e instalaciones físicas inadecuados y maestros no calificados para capacitar a los estudiantes, los directores deben encontrar una mejor estrategia. Por lo tanto, se alienta a los directores a practicar el aprendizaje a lo largo de toda la vida para asegurarse de que sus prácticas en co-curricular estén en su mejor momento de manera consistente.

**Palabras clave:** educación, práctica, gestión de actividades co-curriculares, director.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Azmi and Hamsiah (2000), co-curricular can help build social skill. Strong co-curricular activities are able to strengthen interaction among students and instil integration among local citizens (Mohd Izham & Norziana, 2015). Daley and Leahly (2003) state that involvement in co-curricular activities for adults creates informal interaction and is able to improve their social confidence. Thus, students' involvement in school co-curricular activities is an obligation either for public or non-public schools (Cabinet Report, 1979; Education Act, 1996).

Various sports activities have been introduced to attract students' interest to practice an active and healthy lifestyle (Mohd Izham & Norziana, 2015). The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) through the Extra Curricular Transformation has implemented the One Student One Sports program for students including those who require special needs without any health problems to take part in at least one sports without any exclusion. This aims to ensure all students gain benefit through sports other than improving their interest and ability, as well as getting them healthy and fit (Sports Division Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2011). Other than the enhancement of self-potential through students' participation in sports and games throughout the year, this program also aims to instil sports culture to produce healthy citizens. This supports the National Education Philosophy, which focuses on producing balanced individuals intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically.

In order to implement One Student One Sports, functional and effective sports teachers need to be produced. The attempt has been made by the Teacher Education Institute (*Institut Pendidikan Guru*) and the Ministry of Higher Education who offer suitable courses for future teachers. This includes the Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, who has implemented the Sports Education Program Module (*Modul Program Pendidikan Sukan*) specific for its students (Mohd Taib Harun & Norlena Salamuddin, 2008).

The success of the program could be a reality if support from all parties from the school is obtained. This means that the principal as the school manager should play his/her role effectively to ensure any co-curricular program to be successfully able to develop students' potential in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects. Shafiq Aizatullah and Mohd Izham (2018) believe that a co-curricular manager is the main cause for a school's success in co-curricular. Excellent management system is needed to plan, manage, lead and control co-curricular activities. This is based on the definition of management by Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert (1995) who state that management is a process of planning, managing, leading and controlling organisational works and the use of available sources to achieve the aims of the organisation (Mohd Izham & Sufean, 2009). In addition to manage with the best practices, personal qualities, which are the positive values of principals, are very crucial (Bity Salwana, Azlin Norhaini & Mohamed Yusof, 2018). KPM through Institut Aminuddin Baki has organised numerous courses and trainings to increase principals' competence in co-curricular activities management. However, without research, there has been no definite practice in co-curricular activities management by principals.

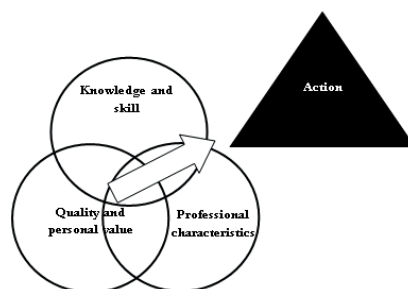
## 2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This research aims to explore into principals' practices in managing co-curricular activities. Based on the objective, the research question is, "What are principals' practices in managing co-curricular activities?" To strengthen the research, study on the theory, model, and previous studies are also done.

## 3. THE CORE ATTRIBUTION MODEL OF LEADERSHIP AND ACTION

The Core Attribution Model of Leadership and Action (Model Atribut Teras Kepengetuaan dan Tindakan) as in Diagram 1 is the model that underlies the Wales Principal National Standard (Standard Kebangsaan Pengetua Wales). It shows that competence includes principals' actions (practices) in implementing the responsibility of being the principal based on knowledge, skills, quality and personal values, as well as professionalism. This also includes commitment, confidence, consistency, creativity, sensitivity to change, empathy, honesty, passion, belongingness, inspirational, integrity, motivation, visibility, problem solving, trust, flexibility, respect, self-realization and appreciative. Every listed element is built in a relative manner, strengthens each other, and decides the actions or practices in playing their responsibility including co-curricular manager.

**Diagram 1 Core Attribution Model of Leadership and Action**



## 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

A research by Mohd Izham and Norziana (2015) has concluded that principals need to practice effective co-curricular roles so that teachers and students are more motivated in ensuring the success of any co-curricular activities. Findings also show that it is common for principals to delegate the co-curricular management directly to the senior assistant, but for some schools that achieve excellence in co-curricular activities, the principals directly play the role. This is parallel with

the research by Ayob (2005) which shows that the activities that receive direct attention from the principal will be successful. Mohd Izham and Norziana (2015) also found that schools that achieve excellence in co-curricular activities face decline in achievement when new principals take over the school administration.

Ayob (2005) believes that co-curricular achievement depends on principals' interest. An active principal might lead to active clubs and activities. Specific sports and games can also be successful with a principal's continuous support and interest. However, for principals who have no experience in sports and clubs, they usually hand over the role completely to the senior assistants. In this case, the principal's roles are to observe and receive the written reports. This could negatively cause principals to become less interested, insistent and finally ignore co-curricular activities.

A research by Mohammad (2003) also found that the main factor that leads to a school's success in co-curricular activities is the principal's effort and interest since the planning stage, and his ability to cooperate with teachers in implementing co-curricular activities (Faudzi, 2008).

According to School Inspectorate Report (1993), leadership factors specifically in the management field has become the source of multiple problems in co-curricular management (Hanishah, 2006). Emphasis on co-curricular is commonly not that serious compared to academic matter.

Mohd Izham and Norziana (2015) also believe that co-curricular activities at school must be emphasized by the school administration. However, principals often give less attention on students' service and success achieved for being too focused on academic achievement. The roles of principals and the senior assistants are said to influence and help teachers and students to be actively involved in co-curricular activities at school.

A study by Dicken and Tajul Arifin (2017) found that the implementation of the Physical Education subject linked to co-curricular activities was still not emphasized by the school. It was found that the implementation of the subject was focusing on the factors that were assumed to influence Physical Education, including the school administration. One of the suggestions is that administrators and teachers need to pay more attention to the subject which is believed to affect students' physical well-being to be actively involved in co-curricular activities.

## 5. METHODOLOGY

This research used the interview protocol to collect the qualitative data from 14 respondents, consisting of a principal and a senior assistant or senior teacher from every school. Interview sessions were conducted respectively and face-to-face. Respondents were given the opportunity to pick the dates, time and venue for the interview sessions to ensure their comfort, focus and honest answers while being interviewed. The researcher also assured information confidentiality which should be used for the purpose of the research only. When the respondents suggested the interview to be done in a few sessions, the researcher agreed. Once the interview session with the first respondent was done, the following interview was done with the next respondent from the same school. Researchers did not assign who should be interviewed first, and let the principals decide. Collected data was analysed manually.

## 6. FINDINGS

Findings were discussed based on the question, "What are principals' practices in managing co-curricular activities?"

Based on the interview, a few themes were identified in discussing principal's practices in managing co-curricular activities. They include principals' practices in enhancing co-curricular achievement, encouraging high commitment towards co-curricular activities, and the practices in handling challenges of curricular management. The elaboration on the findings is listed below:

### 6.1 Practices to Improve Co-curricular Achievement

Principal 1, Principal 4, and Principal 5 showed support towards students to perform well and succeed at co-curricular activities. Principal 1 realized students' talent in debate, thus, providing students support to do their best. The senior assistant on his school agreed this. Principal 2 wanted to produce students who are excellent in terms of academic and co-curricular. He supported his students to join any competition of interest. As a result, he managed to create success in various co-curricular activities including drama and a few games. He also let teachers take some time off their schedule to train students.

"I see my students' strengths in debate, so I support them for it." (Principal 1)

"The principal encouraged ... whatever game we needed to join ... he was very supportive ... so far what we have planned went well with his support." (Senior assistant 1)

"We always talk about producing quality students. Quality students do not mean in terms of academic only. We have been producing quality students in drama, in football. Last year we managed to reach the national level in drama. Our student became the best dramatist ... Our students, last year, took part in programs organized by Toyota... They were very passionate in this co-curricular activity and also passionate in learning." (Principal 2)

"... to him do not deny these children the opportunity to win. HM wanted us to persevere and ordered us to play against other teams. Whatever it was, he wanted the boys the chance to win ... for the other co-curricular activities, he is very supportive. For competitions, he gave 100 percent support. We have our annual activities, science competition, debate ... he even allowed working time to be utilised for training." (Senior teacher 1)

"...we support students to join any activities that we believe they could be good at..." (Principal 4)

The advantage of having students coming from different districts was fully utilised by Principal 5 to choose talented students to represent the school in football and rugby. He always reminds students to train hard to achieve success.

“... My students have the advantage of the background. There are quite a number of them and come from all over the region. We can pick really talented students ... football, rugby they always win ... I just give them reminders to train to be successful in co-curricular activities...” (Principal 5)

Principal 3 fully supported students who wanted to achieve more for co-curricular activities. According to his senior assistant, Principal 3 personally prepared the trophies for the school's sports day, encouraged students to join any competition, cheered on the students, celebrate each success together and displayed their names at the notice board at the school lobby.

“... The principal gives his full support ... for sports day, the principal voluntarily donated trophies ... whatever the competition our students are encouraged to participate ... every student who participates in any form of competition will even meet with the principal to ask for their blessing, receive words of encouragement... if they win, they will be praised. We celebrate and we hold a statement board in the school foyer showing the awards the students received.” (Senior assistant 2)

Principal 4 dan Principal 5 were proven by the senior assistants and heads of panel as always providing suggestions and support towards co-curricular activities. Principal 4, for instance, struggled to find funds for those joining programs outside the school. Escort teachers' welfare was also taken seriously. He tried his best to support students in terms of moral or financial aids, just as Principal 5. Not only that, Principal 5 was seen actively sharing ideas to help improve students' achievement in co-curricular activities.

“Principal gives advice and support ... he finds the resources to cover the expenses of the team or encourages the players ... for the teachers ... hears the problems ... he provides moral support, financial support ... he has even provided allowance.” (Senior assistant 3)

“... He always gives encouragement ... in meetings with teachers, he often expresses moral or budgetary support ... he even comes up with ideas. He told PK KoKu, the teacher, how to improve the guideline. He is positive, does not prevent students from being active in the co-curricular.” (Senior teacher 2)

Principal 7 was also supportive of school co-curricular activities by ensuring students to always train, join more activities, and there will always be students to join any competitions in various levels; district, state and national. Principal 7 always makes sure students are sponsored, and any success be celebrated. His senior teacher gave the same statement.

“I always make sure they get regular training ... efforts are made to enhance the program, ensuring full school participation at the district, state and national levels.” (Principal 7)

“... principal gives encouragement ... he encourages students to participate ... sports, rugby, basketball and so on ... at the national level, for the tournament, the school sponsored. When we win, the principal celebrates...” (KB3)

It was also found that Principal 2 was very proactive in improving school's achievement in co-curricular activities. He created a special program known as Atlet Pintar. In conjunction with the Parent-Teacher Association (PIBG) as the sponsor, he picked students who acquired at least 4As in UPSR and had experience representing the school or district in sports to join the program. Students then stayed at a hostel, trained to be successful at sports, and at the same time joined special classes to ensure that they succeed academically too. Students who experience intensive training as athletes have extra classes in the evening. The teachers involved will be paid for their time and energy.

“We have another program called Atlet Pintar. These students are excellent in UPSR, and moderate in sports. They are not state players but may have represented the school or play at the district level. We train this group of players to become committed players ... they are assisted by special tuition. Although in terms of stamina, they are lacking but because they are smart, they are able to capitalize their intelligence to become a champion... we put them in the hostel, and we train them. At the same time, we take care of their academics ...” (Principal 2)

“Program atlet pintar... he proposed a minimum of 4As but with excellence in koku. In the primary school, they are representing school level or district level. So, we produced champion. He did something to this student. He arranged class for them, especially for Math and Science. Class exercised in the afternoon. Teachers are paid to help these students. They are not following the normal timetable because they always go for training, but they learn in the afternoon. He gets parents teachers association to fully fund this student.” (Senior teacher 1)

According to the senior teacher, Principal 2 always gives permission for students to do co-curricular activities, including those based on students' culture as long as they do not break the rules. Students who are not academically successful will be given chances and support to be involved in other activities that can show their potential and be successful.

“Our HM seemed to support all kinds of co-curricular activities whether they were religious or cultural in nature. He encouraged all sort of activities that were within the school regulations. Students who were weak in their studies are given support to excel in other areas.” (Senior teacher 1)

## 6.2 Practices to Encourage High Commitment towards Co-curricular Programs and Activities

In order to encourage high commitment in co-curricular activities, Principal 1 ensures teachers realize that their roles were not only teaching. He also explained the advantages that teachers can gain from what they do, including those related to knowledge and skills, which could complement teachers as future leaders.

“Let me explain, a teacher must go through the learning and teaching process. It does not only involve teaching, but also a classroom teacher, a sports teacher ... when on the field, it's like a homework, but an experience. I'll tell the teachers; the experience is probably twice as expensive. When we become leaders, we at least know how the closing whistle sounds, the closing whistle ... looks small, but it has meaning. To become a school leader in the future, all experience must be present, not just a classroom or subject teacher.” (Principal 1)

Principal 2 stated that in order to improve teachers' and students' commitment, he has chosen a specific day for co-curricular activities. Students are obligated to be at school from morning to evening. A record book containing all kinds of students' involvements in co-curricular activities was provided. The rule is aligned with the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) that uses the grading system to record students' achievements in co-curricular activities. Based on the results shown in the system, students will be given suitable certificates every end-of-year. Principal 2 also ensures students' achievement in NILAM Program (an academic co-curricular program that aims to encourage interest in reading among students) to be certified and given to students when they leave school.

“... Co-curricular is compulsory every Thursday. Therefore, every Thursday students will stay from morning until five ... they cannot go home. We must comply with the Ministry, all recorded. At the end of the year, we give their scores and so on. We design computer driven automation with student records... in fact talking about our program specifically NILAM, I think we are among the first few schools to include NILAM program in students' leaving certificates.....” (Principal 2)

“... to get the commitment ... HM recorded all co-curricular activities in a book where all activities are documented whether they are games, debates, drama, competitions in science and many others ...” (Senior teacher 1)

Principal 6 had once faced problems with teachers' and students' commitment at the earlier stage of introducing co-curricular activities. However, he tried hard to improve the commitment by giving reminder and recognition. The letter of undertaking as well as elements of responsibility as in Islamic teaching were given emphasis. Principal 6 also increased uniform units so that students were able to pick an activity of interest. By getting involved in students training and sharing his knowledge on games, principal 6 was able to instil positive perception on co-curricular activities. She also challenged the teachers to become better in managing co-curricular activities. The senior assistant stated that Principal 6 requires a formal show cause letter for not being able to commit to the co-curricular programs.

“At the early stage, there was a problem of commitment. Therefore, I remind them ... then I give recognition for those who perform. I ask them to refer to available rules and regulations ... They have to sign for “Surat Aku Janji”. They have to follow the rules ... I always relate to Islamic doctrine ... the trust... the responsibility... I create more and more co-curricular unit, club and association... and sports... therefore students can choose at their interest... I myself train students in netball... I said to the teachers, if I, a religious teacher can do, why not they? I challenge them to be better than me...” (Principal 6)

“Principal create more co-curricular units ... sometimes she gives ideas on how to manage the clubs ... she advised those who less committed ... but sometimes she ask for “Surat Tunjuk Sebab”.

(Senior assistant 4)

Principal 6 provided more opportunities for students to involved in co-curricular activities outside of school. Therefore, some of the students make uses of the facilities that are available in their community. Principal 6 also do have a discussion with the teachers from time to time to get feedback on the needs and progress of the co-curricular activities. She also emphasized on the importance of cooperation among the teachers to increase commitment towards co-curricular activities.

"...in organizing these co-curricular activities, sometimes we do have a collaboration with outsiders... to expose students, we take them out. We do monitoring... we have meetings, get feedback from the teachers... what they need... what they want to do the activities ... it is important that we communicate and discuss. That is important. Anything not enough, we buy ... so we must cooperate with the teachers." (Principal 6)

Senior assistant 2 agreed that Principal 3 did not face any commitment problems either from teachers or students, for he was very committed himself. Sponsoring the games and getting involved in celebrating students' success were the proof of how committed Principal 3 was.

"...He has no problem in terms of teachers and student's commitment. He himself portray a good example, committed to what he did, sponsored games and even together celebrates students' successful..." (Senior assistant 2)

### 6.3 Actions in Overcoming Challenges and Problems in Co-curricular Management

In co-curricular activities management, lack of facility due to limited area is one of the challenges for principals. Principal 3 and Principal 4 faced this. Principal 3 allowed his students having training for netball on parking lot. Principal 4 varied the use of the volleyball court for multiple games like ping pong, badminton and tennis. Both principals borrowed or rented facilities from the neighbouring schools or other suitable venues to train their students. Senior assistant 2, who works alongside Principal 3 stated that there were students who joined clubs outside the school or rented courts outside the school compound to play basketball on their own. Senior assistant 2 also agreed that Principal 3 had consistently helped including persuading the authorities to overcome the lack of facility, but the problem still cannot be fully settled yet. Senior assistant 3 agreed that although the school had problems with venues to conduct activities, Principal 4 ensured that sports equipment was always sufficient. Although the facility was limited, students were still able to achieve success in games like volleyball, badminton and ping-pong.

"We don't have a netball court; the students use parking lot for training." (Principal 3)

"...We have to rent somewhere else. The infrastructure is incomplete ...many of our students are interested in basketball, but we do not have a basketball court, so our students join basketball team outside ... some have hired their own training facilities ... principal already take various steps to obtain the necessary amenities. He urged the authorities without hesitation. It is not only for teaching and learning or for co-curricular ... in all aspects, he is consistent." (Senior assistant 2)

"For sport, we go to neighbouring schools. We should have our own! Our volleyball courts are also used for ping pong, badminton, tennis..." (Principal 4)

"...We have to borrow neighbouring school field. For badminton, students go to practice outside. However, principal always give his support the provision of equipment ...only the area cannot be expanded. Our students are great at volleyball. Limited infrastructure is not a barrier for them to continue playing volleyball, badminton and ping pong..." (Senior assistant 3)

Principal 5 and Principal 7 who did not face any problem related to co-curricular facilities always ensure that equipment are sufficient and safe. The committee who responsible to monitor the equipment and facilities was created. Storerooms were provided to keep the equipment. Broken equipment was replaced immediately. The priority always on the safety of the students and teachers.

"We have a committee who will make sure that facilities and equipment are always in a good condition and safe to use." (Principal 5)

"...We have rooms, we have store to keep all the equipment, and we will repair all the damage and we will always take care all the equipment..." (Senior teacher 2)

"...We should always check the equipment before use. Teachers and especially pupils should always be encouraged to prioritize safety in all their activities." (Principal 7)

"To monitor the equipment, we already have a sports secretary, so this sports secretary will ensure that the stadium for sports equipment is constantly monitored..." (Senior teacher 3)

## 7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research findings is similar to the findings by Mohd Izham and Norziana (2015), stated that principals are good at managing time, and have the capability to monitor co-curricular activities at schools. Principals can also ensure the successful of co-curricular activities by having benchmark, and by having cooperation with other agencies or communities that can share knowledge and ideas to improve co-curricular activities.

Principals are also advised to create rapport with students, so there is feedback on students' needs in co-curricular activities. Students' success in co-curricular activities needs to be announced to become an encouragement to other

students.

However, the research findings are the opposite with Azlin (2006) who found that principals' involvement in management practices is still mediocre in a certain aspect. Dicken and Tajul Arifin (2017) who found that the Physical Education subject is closely related to co-curricular activities is still not given much attention by the school. However, the findings confirm Ayob's (2005) opinion stating that co-curricular activities success depends on a principal's interest and emphasis given.

In conclusion, this research shows that principals can conduct practices suitable with teachers' and students' needs. In other words, principals know how to choose the best action for each situation in co-curricular activities management. Help from senior assistants, senior teachers and teachers is seen as important to ensure principals can manage co-curricular activities well, thus good relationship and cooperation with colleagues need to be maintained. However, the challenges and changes in education might need change in co-curricular management. Thus, principals are expected to be open-minded towards changes, and to culturalize lifelong learning in order for the practices to be relevant with the current development. With the One Student One Sports program, effective co-curricular activities management needs to be given emphasis to ensure students' true potential could be shown indirectly and improves school's success in co-curricular activities.

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