

ENGAGING UNIVERSITY'S ROLES IN SOCIAL INCLUSION

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ABSTRACT. This paper presents the role of a public university in Malaysia in engaging into social inclusion responsibilities. The partial results of archival data and focus group discussion are presented from the actual study. The findings explain on how a university impacted on improving society through providing facilities and services to their neighbor.

Keywords: social responsibilities, social inclusion, social impact, neighbor, community engagement

JEL classification: M14

Recommended citation: Shaari, R., Panatik, S.A., Rajab, A., Khalifah, Z. (2016), *Engaging University's Roles in Social Inclusion*, *Studia UBB Negotia*, vol. 61, issue 3 (September), 2016, pp. 85-98.

1. Introduction

Social responsibility has become one of the pertinent issues being discussed and researched in the past several years because it turned out to be an increasingly important component of sustainable economic and social development. One could not deny the fact that when it comes to

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social responsibility, large corporations that are under public scrutiny should adopt social responsibility as the backbone of the operation together with all other actors of society.

Universities are known as having direct influence to the quality of life in the community due to their educational, research and social actions, and because of that factor universities certainly could be listed as one of these actors. By exhibiting socially responsible behavior, universities demonstrate that they know and can respond to current social issues both through personal projects related to community development and through educational programs which educate young people to become socially responsible individuals and equal participants in creating positive social change (Peric, 2012). This paper discloses initiatives by a public university namely Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) in developing community capacity for their neighbors.

In relation to social isolation, UTM is expected to contribute in creating society where all individuals can live to their full potential and lead lives in line with their own needs and interests. By providing facilities and services, it would benefit community to improve its abilities to learn by participation, and make decisions which gives impact on the community by having a voice.

Apart from being a provider of education, leader of internationalization, pioneer of research and development (R&D), and developer of economy, UTM is also perceived as a neighbor to the community. As a neighbor, it offers other benefits and services. In some cases, some UTM affiliates proactively offer services within campus as well as outside the university boundary, whilst in other cases, near or distant community members come to UTM to enjoy the facilities and amenities available for public use. Thus this study investigates the impact of UTM in providing facilities and services to community. We emphasized on the role of UTM as neighbor.

In the context of this paper, community is referred to UTM's neighborhood and it is defined as residents and/or outsiders of UTM. Even though it can be argued that 'residents' perceptions and definitions of their local area are not "holistically" defined, but according to Hwang (2007) it is a way to define neighborhoods or community areas because they are an independent reality that should not be ignored or discounted as these communities are believed to be very significant for UTM.

The idea of improving society is not merely looking at 'welfare' or 'charity' works but rather to engage with disadvantage groups so that their well-being and development can be enhanced. Federico (2012) mentioned that the university community is a place of belonging for thousands of people and it gives them substantial meaning in their lives, which signify certain bonding sort of like forging a shared identity. Therefore it is believed that universities should enhance their social responsibilities to the public, ethical behavior, and the need to practice good citizenship. They are also responsible for improving education in the community, pursuing environmental excellence, practicing resource conservation, performing community service, and sharing quality-related information as part of their social inclusion initiatives (Schneller et al. 2011).

2. Literature Review

The notion of social inclusion can be dated back at least to the nineteenth century sociologist Weber and regard for the importance of social cohesion. In terms of more recent history, the term is more readily identified through its counterpart - social exclusion. One of the ways that this ideology may exist from the perspective of higher education theory and policy is through social capital. Sociologist addresses that social capital is "the reproduction of social class divisions and inequalities of power" that stressed on free from social power imbalance. It means that despite pertain on economic interests, the social inclusion primarily aims to enable all human beings to participate fully in society with respect for their human dignity. Here, acts of community engagement and participation are foregrounded. Increasing social and civic participation can also be linked to community sustainability, which has been highly addressed compared to economic interests. For instance, the role of sport to increase the social inclusion is developed in Melbourne by the Department of Planning and Community Development with the Australian Football League (Gidley et al. 2010).

The relationship between social inclusion and social capital can be explained in the form of social capital is central to a social inclusion agenda. Social capital is seen as a way of expanding empowerment, well-being and community development towards an improved society (Skinner et al., 2008).

O'Halloran (2007) stated in her book of *Charity Law and Social Inclusion* that social inclusion is not just a policy but it is a process. It requires a proactive approach involving the investment of resources and the implementation of action plans necessary to make it attractive for the marginalized to join with the majority (O'Halloran, 2007). Besides that, the concepts of inclusion and exclusion are multidimensional due to the concepts encompassing more than the concepts of poverty and inequality (Oxoby, 2009). Polat (2011) stated that inclusion is not only restricted to the young generations who experienced difficulties but is involved all people with regards of their gender, race, ethnicity and others aspect of an individual's identity that may be perceived as different. Previous studies have defined social inclusion in variety of meaning nevertheless of individual perception, health sector, country and others (Betram et al., 2010).

Bates and Davis (2004) defined social inclusion as ensuring that people who experience difficulties in learning or attending education have complete and fair access to activities, social roles and relationships directly along with people who are non-disabled citizens. Their study also emphasized on the importance on how social capital and social inclusion integrate with each other. Thus, this shows that the concept of social capital believed to be one of the helpful in additional perspective to those who access to learning disability and by doing this it may indirectly promote social inclusion. The most popular conceptualization of social capital is explained by Putnam (1995) as a concept that refers to connecting among individual and the community while maintaining the norms of mutual trust. In addition, he differentiates between two forms of social capital that which acts as a link between communities and which bonds the difference between them. The idea of social inclusion provides opportunities for individual to take part in society and also concerning on community that are willing to adjust to fit with their various need while maintaining their cares for members in society and willing to make them feel welcome (Marino-Francis, and Worrall-Davies, 2010).

Teesside University is one example that depends on social inclusion as its commitment towards communities that it serves which became a dire success factor for the university to win the Times Higher Educations' University of the Year Award in 2009/10. Some examples of contributions of the social inclusion by the university include:

(i) Involved actively with community groups as required, including supporting social events which are relevant to the achievement of the University's mission.

(ii) Develop and made available/accessible University sports facilities for community groups whenever they are not used by students; and provide students' expertise as part of volunteer work in relation to various aspects of sport, including coaching.

(iii) Offered available meeting rooms for community groups' purpose when not used for University activities

(iv) Created space and opportunity for cultural activities to be displayed, promoted and performed; and providing a forum for dialogue on issues relating to culture in the Tees Valley.

(source: www.tees.ac.uk/docs/docrepo/About/Framework.doc)

The above statement implies that university social responsibility (USR) or corporate social responsibility (CSR) which includes 'community engagement' is currently becoming an important agenda and should be specified in university policy and later on transformed into a community engagement framework. Similar to other organizations, universities should also play an active role and participate in the development of local communities and social capital as universities have a direct impact on the economic, social, and political development of society (Smith, 2008). Relying on this sentiment, Monash University has always believed that they need to become engaged and always offering services to the community for them to become a successful university above others. In doing so, one of their recognized effort is acknowledging the community influence in life-long learning and highlighting community knowledge, of which the university simplified this as "community outreach, building and development" (Monash University Community Engagement Framework, 2010).

As emphasized by Erickson (2010), a university mission has traditionally been focused on three core areas: teaching, research, and service. The service component has taken many forms over time and has expanding its approach and outcomes, for example, engaging student service in communities. Previous research have claimed that little empirical evidence exploring impact of community engagement between universities

and their partners including community outcomes of service-learning (Leisey et al. 2012; Erickson, 2010). Therefore it is difficult to discuss on what constitutes best practices and impact for the community engagement. One of possible reasons for this lack of research is the complexity in introducing the community itself due to cultural differences (Erickson, 2010). The concept of community impact is related to social formation that also includes community voluntary participation, their enhancement towards personal skills and development. In relation to this, the concept of community engagement is also related though it is understood that previous research experiences conflict when defining or conceptualizing community engagement or community development. In reality, community development overlaps concepts in the social sciences literature, including social capital, community capacity, civic capacity or social inclusion (Trojanowicz, 1988; Stern, and Seifert, 2009).

A study by Community Centres in South Australia (2013) suggests social benefits can be assessed to the benefits of individual, community, family and government based on specific scale as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1.

Indicators for Social Benefits

Develops/delivers services of centres
Extent of volunteerism, use and development of skills
Participation, generic skills, personal development
Improves employment and wage outcomes, critical for participation
Employment, supports access at low cost
Reduces transaction costs for individuals
Facilitates participation at low/minimal cost
Health education, access
Support school attendance basic nutrition, family benefit
Engagement, reduce social isolation

(Source: Community Centres South Australian, 2013 pg. 3)

However, there is no solid definition on social impact and there is always difficulty in achieving a common understanding among researchers. The definition itself relies so much on social context. As argued by Burdge and Vanclay (1996), it would be difficult especially for social impact to prove the satisfaction of the courts. Furthermore, there are many impacts that cannot be mitigated or rectified so compensation is not necessarily a desirable strategy. How impacts are measured is very subjective. Certain impacts, such as changes to the environment or character of a community may be perceived as negative by some members of the community, and positive by other members. The most important is the value of judgements of individuals or in other words the different perspective of individuals. Vanclay (2002) measures social impact based on people's way of life, their culture and their community. Whereas Di Nucci and Spitzbart (2010) define social impact from the perspectives of degree of satisfaction, level of participation and level of behavior.

Table 2.

Level of Impacts

Level	Measurement focus	Questions addressed
1 - Reaction	Participant's perceptions	What did participant think of this program/facilities? (e.g. program – content, delivery method; facility – tangible, assurance)
2 - Learning	Knowledge/skills gained	Was there an increase in knowledge or skill level?
3 - Behavior	implementation	Is new knowledge/skill being used transfer to others? (e.g. practice new behavior, motivated etc)
4 - Results	Impact on community	What effect did the program/facilities have on the community? (e.g. improvement in quality of life, satisfaction level etc)

(Source: adapted from Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2006)

In this study, we relate and measure impact based on Kurt Lewin's philosophy of learning (Schein, 1995). According to this scholar, learning changes occur in skills, in cognitive patterns (knowledge and understanding), in motivation and interest and in ideology (fundamental belief). Learning is change, knowledge and also behavior. The changes are directed more towards reinforcement than to alteration of patterns of knowledge and behavior. More specifically, the impacts are measured based on Kirkpatrick's model of evaluation: reaction, learning, behavior and results. For instance, the community responses to using facilities/ services or attending programs provided by the studied units are valued according to the suitability of the concept (Table 2). How we adapt the concept into this study has also been discussed in the methodology.

3. Methodology

This paper presents partial findings on UTM impacts as neighbors as part of their social responsibility. The scope of the actual research covers facilities and services provided by UTM. The services are categorized into: (a) UTM, within its boundary, is seen as utilizing its facilities for providing services, and (b) UTM, outside its boundary, is seen as utilizing its expertise for providing services such as aids for the community in need. In this paper, the partial findings on the second category of services namely voluntary services on community engagement, and finding on sports facility (i.e. stadium) are presented. Content analysis is used based on data gathered from 2008 - 2014 from various sources such as annual report and corporate document. However, data for sport facility only utilized document gathered from 2014 onwards since the stadium was newly constructed and open for public access after that date. Data was coded according to their uniqueness as 'facilities' and 'services' entail distinctive characteristics according to various units that provide facilities and offered services. The findings on focus group discussion (FGD) were to support and explain the impact levels. We borrowed the model of programs evaluation by Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) to categorize the data into themes as below:

Table 3.

Data Themes

Reaction Level 1	Learning Level 2	Behavior Level 3	Outcomes/Results Level 4
Satisfaction in using facilities Satisfaction in receiving services/ attending program (facilities and services)	Community capacity or capability gained from attending program (Services only)	Behavior changes Contribution to others based on what have they learned (facilities and services)	Value to community Improve quality of life Greater life satisfaction Higher community morale (facilities and services)

Note:

Reaction – to what degree participants react favorably to the learning event

Learning – to what degree participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills and attitudes based on their participation in the learning event

Behavior – to what degree participant apply what they learned during learning event to others

Results – to what degree targeted outcomes occur as a result of learning event(s) and subsequent reinforcement

(Source: adapted from Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, 2006)

Within the data analysis, number of comments was less important than quality of comments. The meaning of the comments retained its importance regardless of number of comments.

4. Findings and Discussion

a) Findings on Sports Facilities

The UTM has had a considerable positive impact on the availability of sports facilities in Johor Bahru. For instance in 2014, UTM stadium facilities had been visited and used by more than 50,000 people coming from various communities of Johor Bahru and nearby area. This had contributed to approximately RM25,000.00 in term of profit for UTM based on the sport facilities. Despite the income received and the obvious impact contributed by the university to the community, UTM is absorbing some of the cost. For example, if they used XY Sports Complex, a gross

amount that will be spent by the community is expected to be more than 30 % as compared to UTM. The implication is that UTM has played higher roles in providing and promoting a healthy lifestyle not only for its own students and staff population but also to the neighboring community in the Johor Bahru area.

Table 4.

Usage on Stadium Facility 2014

Type and Number of organization	Number of User	Amount charged by UTM (RM)	Amount charged by outsider* (RM)	Impact*
Profit organization (2)	1000	1600	2400	Save 12.3%, RM2496
Non profit (31)	51200	24,800	37,200	Save 50% RM12,400
Total (33)	52200			

*XY sport complex rate: RM300/per 2 hours (day) (RM400/2hours (night)
(Source: Sports Centre, UTM)

Overall responses from the FGD showed that the four participants were satisfied with the facilities provided and attracted to choose UTM because of strategic location, reasonable rental fee, good and advance facilities and also promoted by their friends (Level 1: Reaction). Because of this, they have intention to continue using facilities in UTM and become loyal customers (Level 3: Behavior):

Compared to other places such as XY, I prefer UTM since all sports facilities are available and the location is more strategic and near. Last time I had used the old facilities which were at Kolej Tun Fatimah when I was the UTM student. Compared to present, the facilities are more advance. I would happy to recommend UTM as a good venue for my school's sports day in future.

Though I am now working in Pasir Gudang, I still use facilities here because am familiar with UTM and the location is easy to access by outsiders.

b) Findings on Community Engagement

UTM coordinated more than 40 voluntary projects from 2008 to 2014 (based on available record). These projects not only engaged and strengthen the skills and abilities of UTM staff and students to take effective action and leading roles in the development of their respective communities but it also involved more than 2360 volunteers including students and staffs who gave approximately 1300 hours of their time in various projects that had been conducted by UTM during these periods. These voluntarily projects also include service-learning projects that produce student learning outcomes and curriculum engagement which provided real world exposure via interactions with the members of the community. This implies that while neighbor or communities receive benefit from students and staffs involvement, at the same time they also offer golden opportunities for the students particularly to learn and develop skills and abilities in USR which could be continued by students on their own in later stages due to the experience gained earlier.

Table 5.

Community Engagement (2008 – 2014)

No. of staff	No. of student	Number of projects per duration			Hours of volunteering
		1-3 days	4-6 days	≥7 days	
262	2098	25 projects	11 projects	7 projects	1300*

*Based on estimates of 8 hours per day

(Source: Centre for Community and Industry Network (CCIN), UTM)

The findings from FGD disclosed how UTM impacted community through engaging roles in outreach program with the Breast Feeding Club, Johor. There were four representatives participated in the FGD. The participants shared their experiences by collaborating with UTM in organized a workshop on Malaysian Breastfeeding Peer Counselor on October 2014. As reported by the club representative, 50% (10) participants from the workshop had changed their level of action from becoming ordinary members into active peer support after they attended the workshop. This implies that UTM has lead the event to not just increasing number of volunteers but more importantly has changed their life as peer support or counselor in community. This findings represent the Level 4 (outcomes) based on the Kirkpatrick's model.

In term of the reaction level (Level 1) responded from the workshop, most of the participants satisfied and engaged with the program. Therefore, their behavior level has changed consistently (Level 3):

So far they (especially full time breast feeders) do breast feeding by their own styles, but when they realized the proper techniques and knowledge they became more interested and gave full attention in the workshop. In fact some of them whom their husband joined the workshop, practiced the technique with their couples.

Once we joined the club, we can share our knowledge and services (skills) to others.

We came from different background, some of us are housewife, teachers, executives, doctors, and those who are working in industries. With this differences we shared something interesting related to breastfeeding. We have What's App group, and we can easily ask and share about breastfeeding. It's a kind of good networking.

The results on Learning level (Level 2) can be illustrated from the level of changes in knowledge, skills or attitudes:

When we become a mother sometimes we tend to less socialize and focus more to our family. So, we may experience depression, loneliness and unconsciously our social skill could also decreased. By having this social group could overcome this problem and we gained extra knowledge.

Teachers like us have limited knowledge to our own field. I do not like be in my own world. So, I socialized and joined this club and I gained more knowledge. Some of our members have network with peers or counselor from other state. Thus, we learnt a lot.

5. Conclusion

While study on USR engagement in social responsibilities have become a common practice for many universities, little empirical evidence is available exploring the impact. This paper discusses the university's

role and its impact as a neighbor. It is assumed by providing good facilities to the neighbor and offering community services by involving staffs and students in volunteering projects will enhance social responsibilities awareness and promote good citizenship culture.

Acknowledgment

This study was supported by the following grant sponsor; Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Flagship Funding, Vote No. Q.J130000.2429.02G60.

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