

PERCEPTION ON PRIVATE SECTOR CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT: CASE STUDY IN UNIVERSITI TENAGA NASIONAL (UNITEN)

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ABSTRACT

In this fast growing world, university students need more than just a formal classroom teaching. They are expected to be well equipped with practical and soft skills upon graduating. Hence, contributions from private sectors are very desirable to help universities in producing high class graduates. This study investigates the relationship between private sector contributions and the impact towards the performance and development of university students in academic as well as non-academic aspect. The population selected is the final year students in UNITEN Kampus Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah. Set of questionnaires are distributed to 285 samples in order to collect their perception on how they are benefitted from private sector contribution. This research will contribute to Malaysian higher education especially in accounting and business studies and help students in improving their performance and development. The questionnaires distributed were developed by adapting and adopting from Tafreshi (2010). The results indicates that private sector contributions in terms of scholarship program, organizing activity for university students, participation in university program and sponsorship in university activity were proven to help students in improving their performance and development. This study is hoped to encourage private sectors in contributing more to universities especially to UNITEN.

Keyword: Private contribution, Academic performance.

INTRODUCTION

Private Sector contribution is a kind of corporate social responsibility (CSR). It is also well known as corporate conscience, citizenship, social performance or sustainable responsible business. Corporate social responsibility is defined as a business system that enables the production and distribution of wealth for the betterment of its stakeholders through the implementation and integration of ethical systems and sustainability management practices (Smith, 2011). It is a form of corporate self-regulation integrated into business model. Private Sector can contribute to student performance and development in many ways such as in terms of sponsorships.

CSR has gained much attention and acceptance in recent years. The social responsibility of business is not a new phenomenon. It has been on the private policy agenda for centuries. However, over the decade the relationship between the companies and society has been especially highlighted and there has been concerns for an increased reliability understanding and accountability for businesses. This is due to, among the other things, increased globalization and greater concern for environmental issues, human rights and employment issues. These include the declaration of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) that 'presents an opportunity for higher education institutions to promote training and awareness for a more sustainable future (Leitao and Silva, 2007).

Private sector involvement as pictured internationally can improve school performance through competition, accountability and autonomy. As an example, Sweden, a famous egalitarian society¹ is embracing private sector innovation to help improve schooling. Besides, in Netherland, 70% of enrolment comes from private sector. It appears that the schools keep improving.

In Malaysia, private sector contributions in terms of corporate social responsibility are not widely practice. So, this research is to study whether the private sector contributions really give an impact towards students' development and performance in Universiti Tenaga Nasional Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Campus (KSHAS). The development and performance can be classified into academics and non-academics.

Problem statement

Nowadays, universities have transformed from only a centre of traditional teaching and primary research to a key drivers of innovation and major agents of economic growth which is portrayed by Stanford Universities and the growth of Silicon Valley (Bramwell and Wolfe, 2005). A win-win relationship between the university and industry are one of the aspects that must be enhanced in order to have an enrichment in education sector (Bernama 2010).

Based on Education For All Global Monitoring Report published by UNESCO in 2013, current private contributions to education is very low which is 0.1% of the profits of the world's two biggest oil companies, Exxon and Shell (Rose, 2013). The private sector who actually requires workforce of skilled and educated people should be the one who contributes to global education. The policy paper also shows that the education sector in U.S receives much smaller amounts compared to development and health.

Our prime Minister in his speech at the 10th World Islamic Economic Forum (WIEF) 2014 has stated that often, the conversation about education stops at university level. But we can also do more to encourage a lifelong learning. Therefore, we need new and innovative partnerships between educators, governments and private and third sectors to make good the gap.

Significance of the study

This study investigates the Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN) student's perception towards private sector contribution on students' development and performance. This study will help students in gaining experience and getting the information directly from the private sector workers as a driver before students enter into the working field. The contribution of private sector in terms of participation or collaboration in conducting events in UNITEN will give benefit to students because they will be exposed to working culture in private sector and it will help students to motivate and prepare themselves to face the challenge. It will demonstrate to the practitioners the importance of private sectors contribution towards students' performance. This study will give benefits to UNITEN. It is because UNITEN's rating and reputation will improve. They will produce high quality students in academic knowledge as well as soft skills capability. The rating and reputation will increase by the high demand towards UNITEN students from the private sector employee.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Private Sector

Private sector can be defined as a part of the national economic that is not under the direct control of the government. It refers to the individual or companies that manage and control the company for profit purpose. The government does not have any power to control except setting up rules and regulations for the companies in private sector. By that, company in private sector must comply with those rules and regulations. Malaysia Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak (2013) said that the private sector is the engine that drives Malaysia's future growth. "With it in mind, I ask that you remain committed not just to maximizing your returns on investment and equity but also to building a more sustainable economy for Malaysia. As we raise our sights to look beyond developed nation status, I ask that you join us to ensure nobody is left behind" It has been proven by the private sector that they provide many job opportunities to the community.

Factors Influencing Private Sector Contributions

Private sector will contribute to students based on a few factors. These factors are important because it will determine whether the companies are interested to contribute to the students or not. The company will be more interested to contribute if their contribution will give positive impact back to their company.

Demographic

Private sector contribution usually depends on the location of the university and the students. The company prefers to contribute or involve in the university that are located near them. This is due to the cost that they need to bear. To avoid or reduce the cost, the private sector companies highly involve or participate in the university event that is near to them.

Normally, university that is located in the city such as Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru or Penang will receive the highest participation or contribution from private sector companies. This is because the university is near to the company office and they are able to be reached at their location with lower cost and shorter time.

Ranking, Reputation and Popularity of the University

Ranking and reputation of the university gives a huge impact to the contribution of the private sector company. Private sector companies usually will contribute to the university that has a high ranking, reputation and popularity. When it comes to the ranking, reputation and popularity, university that meets these requirements will receive participation or contribution from the private sector companies easily. It can be considered as a part of the private sector companies' marketing strategy. The participation in a higher ranking university will also increase their reputation among the university students. For an example, many of the large companies from private sector such as BDO Malaysia, Job Street, Money Tree and others participate or contribute to Malaysian Accounting Students Convention 2014 held at Universiti Malaya.

Students' Previous Achievement

Furthermore, the private sector company provides a scholarship or education loan for selected students based on the academic achievement. The private sector companies provide scholarship for various level of education such as Foundation level, Undergraduate level, Post-graduate level or PhD level. Students must comply with the requirements before they can make an online application. Usually, when the students had been offered a scholarship from private sector companies, they will work with the company within several years after completing their studies. It depends on the term and condition set by the scholarship provider. Some of the private sector companies that provide scholarships to students are ECM Libra, Amcorp Group, Astro, Maybank, Maxis, UEM Group, Samling Group, Kumpulan Media Karangkraf, Kuok Foundation, British Council, Intel Malaysia, OYL Group and many more.

Academic Performance

The main reference to measure the level of students' academic performance is the CGPA. CGPA is an instrument for graduation and can be considered a meaningful measure of students' performance. Students are generally aware of their CGPA since they receive regular feedback throughout their academic lives, most of the literature is based on the measurement of CGPA for students' academic performance (Ebenuwa-Okoh, 2010).

Non-academic Performance

Merit-demerit system is a system whereby the teachers record the students' behavior and their achievements. Merit stands for "Meritable actions" which is the students earned points. While demerit stands for value of an infraction. By doing infraction, the students are losing points and may get a penalty. The system is actually aimed to assist the students in attaining good discipline standard and to monitor individual conduct.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

A research has been done and an assessment of the intervention revealed that the scholarship had a number of positive consequences and several outcomes for students including students' credit accumulation and semester-to-semester retention (Richburg-Hayes et al., 2009). The financial provider will keep overseeing the students' academic progress. It has been cited as an important factor in the success of the perpetual education fund (Lough, 2010). However, the individual background that are related with receiving a scholarship such as being from a low income family or having good high school grades are also related with university results (Dooley, Payne and Robb, 2013). Different students possess different characteristics that require a different way of input collection in order to perform in examinations. For example, some students perform better in morning classes compared to evening classes while some prefer visual learning techniques more than reading a textbook. All the decisions that students make will determine whether their academic performance will improve or not (Conrood, 2008).

H1: Scholarship programs has a significant relationship with students' performance and development

The collaboration between employers and higher education for both students and educators keep educators up to date and give students extra point of support in pursuing their dreams. The content in the course syllabus is insufficient for the students to succeed, so they need interpersonal skills to compete with others (Bray, Green & Kay, 2010). For example, every year Deloitte has been organizing a competition for university students called Deloitte Tax Challenge. This competition will bring up hidden talent of the students besides enriching them with a real situation in current corporate world. This program is also a platform for them to have an opportunity to get a position in that firm. Based on an exploratory study in Germany, the students who underwent the on the job training and work integrated learning programs in companies and social institutions are guaranteed to achieve the necessary credentials for success in their professional careers by the incorporation of companies as active partners.

H2: Program organized by corporate firms has a significant relationship with students' performance and development.

Universities can use the help from private sectors to keep their curriculum up to date (Tripoli, 2008). For example, real live case studies to be solved with a live discussion among the students, private sectors representatives and lecturers. As been said by Frank Mantero, it can actually benefit both parties. In terms of graduates' job employment, nowadays, the future employers are more selective and the partnership between universities and business entities will provide work experience opportunities among students population. Therefore, the university careers service and their local partnership should work together to establish a skills supply chain between universities and local business, assimilating placements, internships and employment services (Wilson, 2012). According to the report of Professional Science Master's Initiative (2008), this PSM has been exposing the students to the real industries and had eventually expand the students' knowledge beyond what is taught in classes, integrate the scientific fields at a level of depth and complexity for undergraduates to achieve and integrate study with training in management.

H3: Participation of private sector in university program has a significant relationship with students' performance and development.

Based on the report of President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (2008), in terms of research development, the funding from private sectors is increasingly dynamic because of the intensifying pace of technology development call for enhanced and innovative technology transfer process. However, until the year 2008, in U.S, the findings show that the Federal government remains the primary source to support basic research. This shows that there was still low participation in private sector funding in universities' research. Sponsorship by business and foundations can provide inspired solutions to the funding of higher education. Not only can business provide the necessary funding, but it can also facilitate a more effective and realistic approach to education. However, the issue that may arise is that the sponsoring companies have a different goal than the universities. The primary objective is actually to support the university but some of the companies only focus on the intention to promote their products or services (Reinhard, Osburg & Townsend, 2008).

H4: Sponsorship in university activity has a significant relationship with student's development and performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to complete our research regarding students' perceptions towards public sector contribution, we chose final year (third year and fourth year) students from Universiti Tenaga Nasional Kampus Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah as our sample. The total of final credit hour for Bachelor of Business Administration student is 116 while the total credit hour for final year student in Bachelor of Accounting is 132. Besides, for third year students in accounting department, the total credit hour is between 82 to 117 while for business administration department is between 83 to 116. The total number of final year students is 875. Based on

Sekaran table, a total of 279 questionnaires have to be distributed. Final year students were chosen because they have more experience regarding private sector contribution towards them. Universiti Tenaga Nasional, Muadzam Shah Campus was chosen based on a few factors. Firstly, Universiti Tenaga Nasional is one of the private universities in Malaysia. Secondly, it is the only university located in Muadzam Shah, Pahang. University Tenaga Nasional consists of students from all over the country and even different part of the world. Thirdly, University Tenaga Nasional Campus Sultan Haji Alam Shah is the campus that gathers business course and accounting course in one campus. This study uses primary data instead of secondary data. In order to gather the information regarding the perception of respondents, the data for this study is collected by using questionnaires as data collection method. The questionnaires are constructed to gather the information whether the contribution by private sector towards university students give an impact towards students' performance and development. The questionnaire was adopted and adapted from Soltani-Tafreshi (2010). It is divided into 3 sections. Section A is about the respondents' demographic including their CGPA and SCORUN Point. Section B to E contains 5 questions each which relates to the independent variables while Section F summarizes the whole questionnaires. The respondents are final year UNITEN Students. In order to get the total number of final year students, Letter of Introduction was requested for the university to give out the information. Before the questionnaires were distributed to the students, it has underwent a pilot test. Pilot test is used as a trial in order to test questionnaire for possible barriers to adherence before a large-scale of final survey is launched (Stachowiak, 2008). They were first distributed to ten lecturers and ten students so that the reliability and the relevance of the questions made can be tested. After appropriate amendments were done, the questionnaires were then distributed to the respondents in the class and the respondents were given 10 minutes to complete the questions. The questionnaires consist of 40 questions that relates to the nature and strength of relationship between dependent variable and independent variable.

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of the respondents

Demographic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	75	26.3
	Female	210	73.7
Age	Less than 20	7	2.5
	20 to 23	223	78.2
	More than 23	55	19.3
Race	Malay	218	76.5
	Chinese	11	3.9
	Indian	46	16.1
	Others	10	3.5
Course	Bachelor of Accounting	163	57.2
	Bachelor of Business Administration	122	42.8
CGPA	0 – 2.50	7	2.5
	2.51 – 3.00	68	23.9
	3.01 – 3.50	143	50.2
	3.51 – 4.00	67	23.5

Scorun	0 – 20	6	2.1
	21 – 40	30	10.5
	41 – 60	70	24.6
	61 – 80	59	20.7
	80 and above	120	42.1
Financial Assistance	Yes	211	74
	No	74	26

Reliability Results

Reliability analysis measures the overall consistency of the items that are used to define a scale. As a result, we are given sample size, number of items and reliability coefficient. In this analysis, Cronbach’s Alpha Model is used. The internal consistency is said to be higher if the Cronbach’s Alpha is closer to 1 (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). Based on the table above, the questionnaire was reliable as the Cronbach’s Alpha shows the value of 0.935. Since the reliability of more than 0.8 is considered to be good, this study indicates that the Scholarship Program, Organizing activity for university students, Participation in university program, and sponsorship in University activity items are in acceptable level.

Table 2: Reliability Test Result

Cronbach’s Alpha	N of items
0.935	5

Normality Results

Table 3: Normality Test Result

	Kolmogorov – Smirnov		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
SP	0.142	285	0.000
OA	0.177	285	0.000
PU	0.172	285	0.000
SU	0.195	285	0.000
OVERALL	0.204	285	0.000

- SP = Scholarship Program
- OA = Organizing Activity for University Students
- PU = Participation in University Program
- SU = Sponsorship in University Activity

Based on the results obtained from the table, the normality results of the study reveal that the Kolmogorov-Smirnov values are all less than 0.05 since all variables shows significance value of 0.000. Since the variables are not normally distributed or the relationship between the variables is not linear, researcher use the Spearman rank correlation method.

Correlation Analysis

The objective of correlation is to identify the relationship between two variables which means to identify the relationship between independent variable (IV) and depended variable (DV). The relationship could be positive relationship or negative relationship.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis Result

		CGPA	SCORUN	SP	OA	PU	SU
Spearman’s rho	CGPA	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.247**	.102	.093	.039
		Sig (2-tailed)	.	.000	0.87	.116	.517
		N	285	285	285	285	285
	SCORUN	Correlation	.247**	1.00	.186**	.185**	.167**

		Coefficient					
		Sig (2-tailed)	.000	.	.002	.002	.005
		N	285	285	285	285	285
SP		Correlation	.102	.186**	1.000	.586**	.547**
		Coefficient					
		Sig (2-tailed)	.087	.002	.	.000	.000
		N	285	285	285	285	285
OA		Correlation	.093	.185**	.586**	1.000	0.781**
		Coefficient					
		Sig (2-tailed)	.116	.002	.000	.	.000
		N	285	285	285	285	285
PU		Correlation	.039	.167**	.547**	.781**	1.000
		Coefficient					
		Sig (2-tailed)	.517	.005	.000	.000	.
		N	285	285	285	285	285
SU		Correlation	.026	.131*	.575**	.694**	.742**
		Coefficient					
		Sig (2-tailed)	.665	.027	.000	.000	.000
		N	285	285	285	285	285

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Hypothesis Testing

According to the four hypothesis that has been developed, it shows that all hypothesis have a significant positive effects towards students' performance and development

H1: Scholarship programs has a significant relationship with students' performance and development

Based on Table 4 above, Scholarship Program has a positive significant relationship with scorun ($r=0.186$, $p=0.002$, $n=285$). However, the correlation was rather weak as the correlation coefficient is far from 1. This shows that the scholarship given to the students can help their development in terms of non-academic performance. This is because financial assistance helps students to afford activities which will enhance the development of their interpersonal skills as well as avoiding them from worrying about financial problem (Soltani-Tafreshi, 2010). They receive a sufficient amount of allowance and tuition fees, therefore, there are fewer tendencies for them to do part time job. Instead, they participate in the university's activity which eventually increases their scorun score. Therefore, H1 is accepted.

H2: Program organized by corporate firms has a significant relationship with students' performance and development.

Besides, the factor of Organizing Activity for University Students has a positive significant relationship with scorun ($r=0.185$, $p=0.002$, $n=285$). The correlation is also weak as the correlation coefficient is far from 1. The p-value signifies that private sector contribution in terms of organizing activity for university's students has a positive impact on students' non-academic performance. According to Tripoli (2008), higher institution when team up with private institution can develop new education programs and also change the way some functions operate in the university. This will eventually lead to a better quality of human capital produced by that university. Therefore, H2 is accepted.

H3: Participation of private sector in university program has a significant relationship with students' performance and development.

Participation of Private Sector in University Program also has a positive significant relationship with scorun ($r=0.167$, $p=0.005$, $n=285$). The correlation is weak with the correlation coefficient far from 1. According to Wright and Lotto (2009), there were a high percentage of employers who have a high need for training programs in critical thinking, ethics, professionalism, creativity and lifelong learning.. If those employers participate in giving those training to university students, those students will graduate with well- equipped skills that subsequently benefit the employers back. Hence, H3 is accepted.

H4: Sponsorship in university activity has a significant relationship with student's development and performance.

The last factor which is Sponsorship in University Program has a positive significant relationship with scorun even though the coefficient correlation is weak ($r=0.131$ $p=0.027$, $n=285$). By providing sponsorship towards university's programs, students can get the benefit in improving their enterprise skills. According to Wilson (2012), universities that attracted research sponsorship from international companies had given a positive benefit in intellectual property and job creation and innovation. The university should also review the strategy they used in developing students' enterprise skills both through formal curriculum and through optional study or practice. Thus, H4 is accepted.

On the other hand, according to the results, all of the factors have no significant relationship to CGPA. This result contradict to previous research which shows that the scholarship has a positive impact on students' academic performance in terms of students' credit accumulation and semester-to-semester retention (Richburg-Hayes et al., 2009). The study done by Nnamani, Dikko and Kinta (2014) also resulted in a significance relationship between financial adequacy and CGPA. However, the research done by Ebunuwa (2010) produced the same result as our study which stated that there was no significant relationship between gender, age, financial status and academic performance of the students.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine the private sector contribution towards students' performance and developments in UNITEN Muadzam Shah Campus. The overall result in this study is the students who receive contribution from private sector have a good performance and development. This means that, private sector contribution really gives impacts towards student performance and development. This research will give advantage to the students when they enter working life since the students are already familiar with the real working life by joining events that were organized by private sector. Thus, they can apply and practice what they had learned in class. They can experience the real working life before they graduate and can prepare mentally and physically. Furthermore, this study can help in producing good quality of human capital. Nowadays, Malaysia needs more high quality of human capital in order to increase economic condition and compete with other countries. The good quality of human capital comprises a human that has a good quality of education and has a great soft skill. Without these qualities, it is hard for the students to compete in this challenging world. Besides, this research can give more awareness and attract private sector to contribute towards students' development and performance. This contribution will give benefits to both parties either the private sector as the contributor and the students as the person who receive the contribution. Private sector will receive the benefits in terms of good image among public and receive taxation exemption. Moreover, as the research was conducted in UNITEN Muadzam Shah Campus, it will give positive impact to UNITEN ranking. If the private sectors contribute to UNITEN programs, it will help with promotions and give good image to UNITEN. It can also attract new students to study in UNITEN if the UNITEN has a good ranking among other higher institutions.

Limitation

In order to collect data regarding students' perception towards private sector contributions, the questionnaires were distributed and there were several limitations that we faced when the activities were conducted. First limitation was the small population size that limited our sample size. Our focus is the final year students in UNITEN KSHAS which consist of accounting and business administration students only. The intention of focusing on final year students due to the fact that these students have more experience in joining and organizing events that related to public sector and thus have more knowledge regarding this area of research. Second limitation was students' cooperation when distributing questionnaires. As we conducted the activities before the class started, the number of students that come early are low and this slowed down the process of collecting the data. There were students that came late and answered the questions without understanding the topic and simply tick the answers. This action affected the result of research as the data were not reliable. Other than that, the attendance of students are lower than expected. In one case, number of students registered in that class is 60 students but only 20 students were present on the day we collected the data.

Recommendations

There are lots of potential avenues that can help future research. Some of the recommendations are made to overcome the limitation of this study and some are to increase the accuracy of future research. Firstly, in future, larger sample size is needed to get more accurate and reliable data. The larger sample size can be done by conducting a research with other universities in Malaysia. Furthermore, this research can be done in other countries too as the private sector in other countries are more active in contributing to student development and performance. However, to achieve larger sample size, more time needs to be consumed in conducting the research. With the increase in time consumed, it will give more opportunity for the researcher to be more focus in their research. Second, there is an obvious need to examine the relationship between private sector with the student performance and development. However, in future research, instead of studying the private sector contribution towards student performance and development, we should examine what is the students' contribution towards the private sector. Third, we can use another method to gather students' perception rather than using questionnaire. As a human being, students have a lot to say, it is not enough just by using questionnaire because it will limit the student perceptions. Hence, to gather student perception, face to face method and interview session will be more reliable.

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