Analysis of Administration Strategies in Fostering Student Leadership: A Case Study of USM Residential Colleges
(Memperkasakan Pemimpin Hari Esok: Strategi Pentadbiran untuk Memupuk Bakat dalam Kalangan Pelajar Universiti Sains Malaysia)

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ABSTRACT

In a fast-paced world of constant change, the task of nurturing talent among university students is important for developing future leaders and drivers of excellence. This study analyzes the administrative strategies used in the residential colleges of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) to promote student leadership. By examining various initiatives, such as leadership programs and training as well as support for extracurricular activities, this research emphasizes diverse strategies to enhance student engagement and leadership skills among USM students. Data were obtained through surveys and interviews with students across the Engineering Campus of Universiti Sains Malaysia to provide insights on the effectiveness of these administrative approaches. The findings indicate that the administrative framework can support and significantly contribute to the development of a leadership culture among students at the university. This case study emphasizes the importance of strategic planning in educational institutions to develop leadership qualities among students that can prepare them for the challenges ahead in their academic and professional lives. Through a combination of academic excellence, extracurricular activities, and motivational programs, the administration of USM creates an environment that supports the exploration and development of student talents. The focus is to nurture leadership abilities, critical thinking, cooperation, and discipline to prepare students to tackle complex global issues.

Keywords: Talent development; university administration; student development strategies; Desasiswa USM.

ABSTRAK

Dalam dunia yang serba pantas dengan perubahan demi perubahan ini, tugas untuk memupuk bakat dalam kalangan pelajar universiti adalah penting untuk membangunkan pemimpin dan pemacu kecemerlangan pada masa depan. Kajian ini menganalisis strategi pentadbiran yang digunakan di kolej kediaman Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) untuk menggalakkan kepimpinan pelajar. Dengan meneliti pelbagai inisiatif, seperti program dan latihan kepemimpinan serta sokongan untuk aktiviti kokurikulum. Penyelidikan ini menekankan strategi yang pelbagai untuk meningkatkan penglibatan pelajar dan kemahiran kepemimpinan dalam kalangan pelajar USM. Data diperoleh melalui tinjauan dan temu bual dengan pelajar seluruh Kampus Kejuruteraan, Universiti Sains Malaysia dalam memberikan pandangan mengenai keberkesanan pendekatan pentadbiran ini. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa kerangka pentadbiran dapat menyokong sekaligus menyumbang secara signifikan kepada perkembangan budaya kepemimpinan dalam kalangan pelajar di universiti. Kajian kes ini menekankan kepentingan perancangan strategik dalam institusi pendidikan untuk membangunkan sifat kepimpinan dalam kalangan pelajar yang dapat mempersiapkan mereka untuk cabaran-cabaran akan datang dalam kehidupan akademik dan profesional mereka. Melalui gabungan kecemerlangan akademik, aktiviti kokurikulum, dan program berbentuk motivasi, pentadbiran USM mewujudkan persekitaran yang menyokong penerokaan dan pembangunan bakat pelajar. Tumpuannya adalah untuk memupuk kebolehan kepemimpinan, pemikiran kritis, kerjasama dan disiplin dalam menyediakan pelajar untuk menangani isu global yang kompleks.

Kata kunci: Pembangunan bakat; pentadbiran universiti; strategi pembangunan pelajar; Desasiswa USM.

INTRODUCTION

Talent development is to identify and nurture the unique skills and potential of individuals and is crucial for both individual and organizational success. Effective talent development strategies often involve a combination of training, mentorship, hands-on experience, and personalized career planning. Many universities have dedicated talent development programs to support the growth of their students, faculty, and staff. These may include workshops, leadership development initiatives, and opportunities for cross-functional collaboration. University administration is university administrators who are responsible for the strategic direction, operations, and resource management of higher education institutions. This encompasses areas like academic affairs, student services, finance, facilities, and human resources. Effective university administration requires balancing competing priorities, managing complex budgets, fostering stakeholder engagement, and continuously adapting to evolving student and societal needs. Student development strategies are comprehensive student development strategies that aim to support the academic, personal, and professional growth of university students. This can include academic advising, career counseling, mental health resources, co-curricular activities, and leadership development opportunities. The goal is to create a holistic learning environment that empowers students to reach their full potential both inside and outside the classroom.

Desasiswa USM refers to the student residence halls at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), a leading public research university in Malaysia. Student housing is an important component of the overall university experience, providing students with convenient accommodation as well as opportunities for community building, peer learning, and extracurricular involvement. USM's Desasiswa system likely includes various amenities, support services, and programming to enhance the residential life experience for its students.

Various research studies have discussed the potential impact of talent development programs to support the growth of their students, faculty, and staff. As Sanne Nijs, Christina Meyers and Marianne van Woerkom (2024) said in their book "*we identified the competitive and individualized environment as a context factor that shapes how talent management is conceptualized, implemented and experienced in academia*". All agreed that the talent development programs have become paradoxical in an organization that has generating and exchanging knowledge as its core mission, so little attention is given to (inclusive)

talent development. In general, neoliberal assumptions (Bal & Dóci, 2018; Makarem et al., 2019) heavily underlie the talent development practices in our studied university and were further promoted and enforced by the university by widely adopting individualized and competitive systems, leaving limited room and time for inclusive talent development and for supporting individuals in assuming responsibility for their own talent development (Barlow, 2006). To understand more closely how talent development is experienced in such a competitive context, we looked at the importance of an integrated administrative framework that not only upholds academic excellence but also promotes overall student development. The overarching goal of these talent development initiatives is to invest in the growth and well-being of the entire university community, ultimately enhancing the institution's impact, innovation, and long-term success.

Whitton, Nicola & Langan, Anthony (2018) also said that in an increasingly neoliberal Higher Education sector, there is increased pressure on institutions to enhance learner engagement and student satisfaction. Many academics believe that students expect their university learning experiences to be enjoyable, and discourses of game-based learning reflect this, with a dominant narrative highlighting the fun of educational games. Whether students expect learning to be fun or see a relationship between fun and games is under-explored. To address this, we investigated student perceptions of fun in Higher Education using a thematic network analysis based on data from interviews and a survey with 40 undergraduate students from the council of residents called Majlis Penghuni Desasiswa Jaya Lembaran Utama (MPDJLU). Here, we highlight five themes that encapsulate what students perceive to be a fun learning experience: stimulating pedagogy; administrative engagement; a safe learning space; shared experience; and a low-stress environment. These aspects are not unique to games, and we conclude by considering the relationship between administration and fun, and alternative playful approaches. So, talent has not to be separated activities used for enjoyment and fun. Michael J. Tews, John W. Michel and Albert Bartlett (2012) also mentioned that fun coworker interactions, fun job responsibilities, and formal fun activities have long been promoted as a key mechanism for enhancing organizational effectiveness. The roots of the modern workplace fun movement can be found in the writings of Peters and Waterman (1982) and Deal and Kennedy (1982), who encouraged managers to develop corporate cultures that promoted play, humor, and fun. We also believe that it is necessary for administrative staff and students to create a more relaxed environment,

to minimize stress and to reduce their anxiety, which are related to mental health issues amongst university students and staff.

As a fresh approach in cultivating talent effectively, we have organized talent development programs as activities in the educating process of empowering tomorrow's leaders. During the experimental approach, we have carefully planned the assessment methods that can strengthen the development of students' proficiency in their talent. At the same time, we are giving opportunities for the students to explore leadership aspects throughout the activities. Through this talent development approach, we believe that students will gain self-confidence and personal satisfaction while automatically developing future leaders and innovators.

In the following subtopic, the methodology employed is mainly described. This is then followed by a section on data analysis of the outcomes and effects of the talent development approach adopted. Lastly, some concluding remarks are presented.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Developing the next generation of leaders is a key priority for universities worldwide. As a leading public research institution in Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) has placed a strong emphasis on nurturing the talents and leadership potential of its student body. This review examines the existing literature on effective administrative strategies for fostering student talent development within the university context.

The Role of Universities in Talent Development. Universities play a vital role in shaping the skills, knowledge, and character of young adults as they transition into professional roles and positions of influence. Researchers have highlighted the unique opportunities that the university environment provides for talent cultivation, including access to diverse learning experiences, influential mentors, and leadership development programs (Smith & Wolverton, 2010; Brungardt, 2011). Effective talent development strategies at the university level can have far-reaching impacts on individual students as well as the broader communities they will go on to serve.

Comprehensive Student Development Frameworks. Many universities have adopted comprehensive student development frameworks to guide their approach to supporting students' academic, personal, and professional growth. These frameworks often include elements such as academic advising, career counseling, experiential learning, leadership training, and holistic wellness resources (Kuh et al., 2005; Keeling, 2006). Research suggests that institutions that take a systematically integrated approach to student development tend to produce graduates who are better prepared for the demands of the 21st-century workforce (Kift, 2015).

Talent Development Initiatives at Universiti Sains Malaysia. As a research-intensive university, USM has demonstrated a strong commitment to empowering its students and cultivating their leadership potential. The university's student development strategies have included initiatives such as the Sustainable USM leadership program, which provides undergraduates with opportunities for hands-on community engagement and project management experience (USM, 2020). USM has also leveraged its residential college system, known as Desasiswa, to foster co-curricular learning, peer mentorship, and a sense of community among students (Che Omar et al., 2018).

Literature underscores the vital role that universities play in developing the next generation of leaders. By adopting comprehensive, integrated approaches to student talent development, institutions like USM can empower their students to reach their full potential and make meaningful contributions to society. Further research is needed to evaluate the specific impacts and best practices of USM's talent development initiatives.

Françoys Gagné (2015) proposes (a) a formal definition of academic talent development (ATD) inspired by the principles and practices adopted in education, music, and sports and (b) seven constitutive characteristics of exemplary talent development programs. He develops his proposal around an enriched K-12 curriculum as its keystone component. Other characteristics recommend that school administrators make this curriculum available on a daily basis, as early as the kindergarten level, to selected high-achieving students; they would belong to full-time high-ability groups. The author argues that most current so-called gifted programs, mainly exemplified by pullout classes and regular classroom enrichment, have little to do with 'proper' academic talent development. The article ends with a brief survey of existing ATD programs and a look at future implementation problems.

Rustiawan, Rubadi, Safariningsih and Zen (2023) in their study: Talent Management Concepts: Analysis Recruitment, Program Training, Mentoring, and Leadership, state that talent management has become an important part of growing the skills of workers. Competency management is a process that ensures a company's ability to fill key positions such as future leaders and tasks that support the company's

core competencies. Skills required by workers in the workplace continue to grow and develop as your corporatizations so that the organization or business can continue to acquire production of products that are constantly evolving and can compete with your second business in the constant global competition running in the 21st century.

Tarique, Ibraiz, Schuler, Randall S. (2010) in their study: Global talent management: Literature review, integrative framework, and suggestions for further research, state that the environment for most organizations today is global, complex, dynamic, highly competitive, and extremely volatile, and is likely to remain so for years to come. In addition to these external conditions, most organizations are also facing several global challenges including those related to talent flow; the managing of two generations of employees, viz., older or mature workers and younger workers; and a shortage of needed competencies. One major result of these challenges for organizations is that they must be global and that they should be systematic in managing their human capital if they wish to have any hope of gaining and sustaining a competitive advantage in the years ahead.

Jacobi, Maryann, and Others (1987) in their study: College Student Outcomes Assessment: A Talent Development Perspective, suggested that an institutional program of assessing student outcomes should be based on a coherent philosophy of institutional mission and should reflect a conception of what constitutes effective performance of that mission. Two commonly used approaches to defining excellence are discussed, reputational and resource approaches, but a "talent development" approach is proposed in which assessment focuses more on changes or improvements in students' performance from entry to exit. Talent development assessments may be conducted with either standard, commercially available assessment instruments or with locally designed instruments developed on campus. Reasons why assessments may not live up to their potential as management tools are addressed, including inadequate conceptualization or political barriers.

METHODOLOGY

This study examines the use of different activities to empower tomorrow's leaders from student's talent development. The experimental student talent development approach has been planned based on the ideas shown in FIGURE 1.
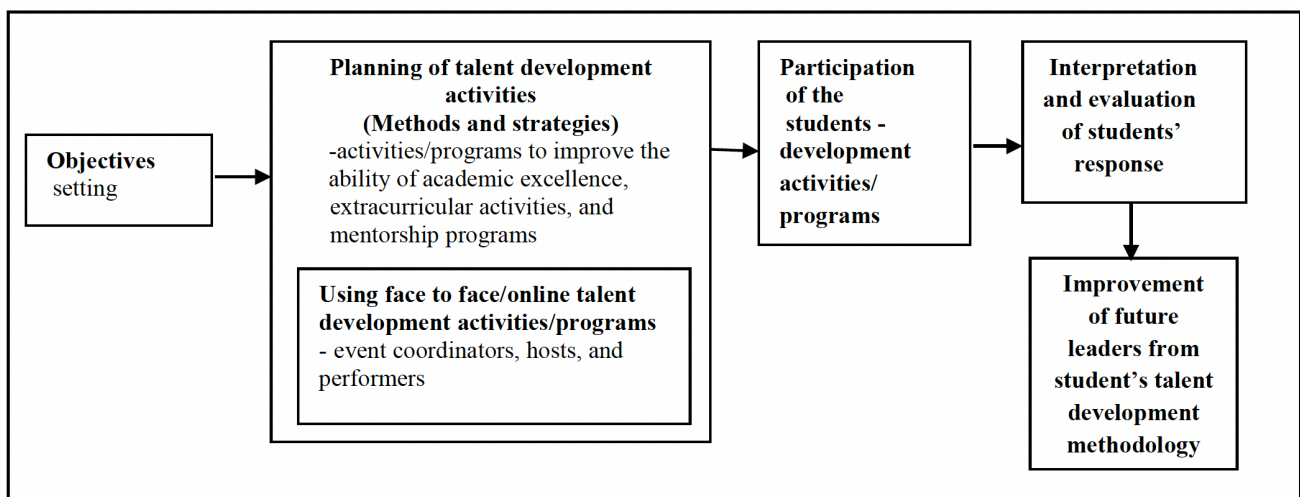

FIGURE 1. Idea of administrative strategies for cultivating talent for tomorrow's leaders.

Data Collection

The researcher used the analytical descriptive method to conduct this study. A survey will be carried out to gather enough data about the talent development activities among the undergraduate USM students, then their participation and response will be evaluated. This will help to determine whether the undergraduate USM students are interested or not in talent development activities.

Population

The population of this study is 40 students at Desasiswa Jaya Lembaran Utama in Engineering Campus, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in the 2nd semester, Academic Session 2023/2024.

Instruments of the Study

A research instrument is a tool used to obtain, measure, and analyze data from subjects around the research topic. Researchers decided the instrument to use based on a mixed method. The instruments used to collect data for this study are students' questionnaires, interviews, and the observation of the students' performance and interaction.

TABLE 1. Details of the programs with cultivating talent in Majlis Desasisiswa Jaya Lembaran Utama (MPDJLU), Universiti Sains Malaysia on Academic Session 2023/2024.

No.	Project Title/ Program	Talent/Attribute	Date	Strategic/ Objective	Exco	Program Director
1	KEM KEPIMPINAN MPDJLU 23/24	Value, Attitude & Humanities, Leadership	17-19 November 2023	Cultivating leadership values among MPDJLU members	Exco	Syuhada
2	ANUGERAH SANJUNGAN DESASISWA (ASD)	Value, Attitude & Humanities, Leadership	6 January 2024	Welcoming MPD guests from other scholarships with professionals	Exco	Khalish
3	LET'S GREEN WITH US	Value, Attitude & Humanities, Leadership	16-31 December 2023	Informing the students about USM's policy of the No Plastic Campaign	Cultural Exco	Syamim
4	SUKAD I	Value, Attitude & Humanities, Leadership	5-7 January 2024	Honing and highlighting the talents of students in sports events as well as fostering sportsmanship in athletes	Sport Exco	Wafiq
5	Merchandise "no plastic day"	Teamwork, Professionalism, Confidence	1 January 2023	Fostering the spirit of caring for the environment in students in order to maintain sustainability and be free from environmental pollution	Entrepreneurship Exco	Karl

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of using the list of programs organized by the administration of Desasiswa Jaya Lembaran Utama are judged based on:

i. Direct students' feedback and
ii. Students' programs/activities.

Discussion on the results is presented as shown below:

a. Survey Results from Students of Desasiswa Jaya Lembaran Utama.

A survey to students of Desasiswa Jaya Lembaran Utama who were involved in the programs organized by the administration of Desasiswa Jaya Lembaran Utama was also conducted at the end of the 2nd semester, Academic Session 2023/2024. Table 2 summarizes the results of the survey.

TABLE 2. Survey of Desasiswa Jaya Lembaran Utama Students' Projects/Activities

No.	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total No. of Respondent
1.	I feel that I'm growing professionally	2.9%		8.6%	48.6%	40%	40
2.	The programs organized by Desasiswa Jaya Lembaran Utama do to help me grow professionally.	2.9%		2.9%	40%	54.3%	40
3.	Desasiswa Jaya Lembaran Utama do to help you grow professionally.	2.9%		2.9%	34.3%	60%	40
4.	I have the opportunity to do challenging things at university.	2.9%		2.9%	37.1%	57.1%	40
5.	I see a path for me to advance my talent development in the future career.	2.9%			45.7%	51.4%	40
6.	Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do.	2.9%		17.1%	45.7%	34.3%	40
7.	My role is an excellent fit with strengths.	2.9%		20.0%	34.3%	42.9%	40
8.	Our organization offers enough training opportunities to keep my knowledge and skills up to date.	2.9%	2.9	8.6%	34.3%	51.4%	40
9.	My job enables me to learn and develop new skills.	5.7%		2.9%	40.0%	51.4%	40
10.	I can specify my job skills to develop my talent.	2.9%		5.7%	48.6%	42.9%	40

11.	In the last month, I have had opportunities to learn and grow.	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%	45.7%	45.7%	40
12.	Either my manager or a mentor encourages and supports my development.	2.9%		14.3%	40.0%	42.9%	40
13.	The feedback I receive helps me grow and develop.	2.9%		5.7%	51.4%	40.0%	40
14.	My direct manager gives fair and practical feedback to help me improve my work.	2.9%	2.9%	5.7%	48.6%	40.0%	40

The results in TABLE 2 contains the percentage satisfaction of students from the talent development programs organized by the administration of Desasiswa Jaya Lembaran Utama, Universiti Sains Malaysia. 14 questionnaires were asked in the survey. The survey questions were taken from Neyda Abdi (2024) in her study: 14 Professional Development Survey Questions You Need to Ask. From the result of the survey, it is shown that overall feedback from the respondents is 'Strongly Agree'.

Talent development programs from the students of Desasiswa Jaya Lembaran Utama, Universiti Sains Malaysia support the growth of students' leadership development through workshops and opportunities to build skills like communication, teamwork, and problem solving and experiential learning programs to provide real-world applied experience. Career counseling and job search assistance are provided to prepare students for post-graduation employment. Mental health and wellness resources are also available to support students' overall well-being.

After talent development programs, students were found to be able to see a path for their advanced talent development in the future career because they had adopted leadership development skills like communication, teamwork, professionalism, confidence, lifelong learning, scientific thinking, problem solving, critical thinking, values, attitude and humanities.

for cultivating talent among Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) students can be made to empower tomorrow's leaders as shown that the development of student talent is crucial for fostering future leaders and innovators. Recent findings indicate that students exhibit a strong interest in developing their talents, which is a positive sign for educational institutions aiming to nurture this potential. To capitalize on this interest, various strategies and initiatives have been implemented to enhance student engagement in talent programs.

Although this is a first attempt by the administration of Desasiswa Jaya Lembaran Utama in trying out different strategies to empower tomorrow's leader by organizing talent development programs, the positive feedback received from students has given the top management and excos confidence and motivation to continue the variety of programs along the year 2024.

The experience of conducting the programs also indicates that students' participation in the leadership development process is a crucial factor in this 21st-century sustainability of the global economic environment. In this context, the students and administrative staff are essential to know how to improve their communication and leadership style in order to empower tomorrow's leaders with administrative strategies for cultivating talent among Universiti Sains Malaysia students.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis carried out based on the response from the students, the following conclusions about the analysis effectiveness of the administrative strategies

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