

The Challenges of Malaysia Educational Leaders During the Covid-19 Movement Control Order (Mco)

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Abstract

Trials and challenges of world education come alternately. In general, when something unexpected happens, leaders need to be proficient in it adapting to sudden changes, improving the decision, creative, decision making through collaborative action (collaboration) and trustworthiness. Every leader in an organization needs to know and take risk management strategies to continue to be implemented in a new work culture. The covid-19 pandemic crisis is a risk that leaders need to face. Therefore, in addressing this world of the pandemic, new challenges for leaders need to be flexible and various. This paper is a suggestion or policy paper to be adhered to by a new leader or academician in facing this tragic situation. In summary, the level of readiness and sensitivity of educational leaders to change the ever-changing world environment needs to be always high and dynamic in shouldering the responsibility of performing daily tasks. Trials and challenges of world education come alternately.

Keywords: *Malaysia, Covid-19, Academic, Leader, Risk Management*

Introduction

The world is shocked by the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic which is causing a variety of things in the daily routine changes. Start with an emphasis on hygiene up to the Movement Control Order (MCO) which is enforced by most countries in the world including Malaysia. The Malaysian government has enforced the MCO starting from March 18 to March 31, 2020, for PKP Phase 1, PKP Phase 2 from 1 to 14 April 2020, extended to PKP Phase 3 starting from 15 to 28 April and then PKP Phase 4 begins from April 29 to May 12 and it still on until today.

MCO can not be sure when it will end, even new MCO phase may occur if each individual does not support and does not comply with government recommendations. Cooperation from various parties is very important to support the effort of the government in jointly curbed the spread of this COVID-19 epidemic throughout the period MCO.

During the implementation of MCO Phase 1, only 22 service sectors were allowed operating and reduced to 10 during PKP Phase 2 (National Security Council, 2020). This closure covers educational services to which all education institutions needs to operate in different ways to ensure goals and agendas education can be preserved. Educational institutions began to implement learning and online training, management and administration are also mostly done from home, modification of learning modules according to the suitability of delivery changes and much more. Sudden changes require education leaders to face normal new and address changes that occur effectively in ensuring goals and the education agenda can be preserved during the MCO period.

Goals And Agenda of Education in Malaysia

The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) Vision:

"Quality education, educated people, prosperous country"

MOE Mission:

"Sustain a quality education system to develop the potential of individuals for meet the aspirations of the country "

The Philosophy of National Education (NEP) is the mainstay in setting goals and education agenda in Malaysia. The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has set a vision and mission in line with NEP and education policy. The education system in Malaysia, has a same goal, from the preschool education to post-secondary education, namely;

- (i) to produce a loyal and united Malaysian nation,
- (ii) to produce people of faith, virtuous, knowledgeable, skilled and prosperous,
- (iii) provide resources manpower for the needs of national development,
- (iv) provide educational opportunities to all Malaysian citizens (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2017).

Hence all multiple layers of MOE staff is responsible for achieving the vision and mission that has been set by the MOE.

The Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013-2025 has also been identified 11 shifts that need to be made to produce the desired change towards achieving educational goals. Every shift should have an impact on at least one of the five system outcomes, namely access, quality, equity, unity and efficiency. Quality becomes the main focus across all shifts because the quality is important dimensions that need immediate attention.

Crisis is a Risk

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis is a risk that leaders need to face. According to Bob Boyd, president and CEO of Agility Recovery who provides the service consultants and recovery solutions of business companies affected by the crisis explain that,

“not having a strategy for how you’re going to communicate during a disaster event is a fundamental weakness” (Maurer, 2014).

Accordingly, during the period of COVID-19 MCO, risk management is one of the key elements that need to be emphasized for any affected organization.

Every leader in an organization needs to know and take risk management strategies to continue to be implemented in a new work culture. In the face of a crisis, leaders are integrated with the people organizations need to set direction and control risk (MS ISO 31000: 2010 Risk Management - Principles and Guidelines).

Leaders need to have deep capacity analyzing risk focusing on upward assessment; (i) the probability of an event or the event occurs,

(ii) the effect or impact of an event or occurrence on an organization.

In general, risk management is:

- a. identify key threats and vulnerabilities to the organization;
- b. analyze what functions of the organization are critical in terms of operations;
- c. identify the resources needed to protect the functions of the organization the critical;
- d. set up a crisis management team and appoint specific individuals within the team who is responsible for the communication aspects of the organization.



Figure 1 shows the key actions that can be implemented in risk management.

When faced with a risk, a leader can identify an action appropriate whether to accept, avoid, transfer or reduce risk. Action leaders in managing risk require leaders to make changes in management and leadership.

The Role of Educational Leaders in the Face of Change

The world is increasingly challenging and complex. Any changes and planning need to be in nature easy to change (agility). This means that each role of the education leader needs to change accordingly current needs known as the millennium.

“The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence. It is to act with yesterday’s logic.” (Drucker, 2017)

Leaders need to be prepared in all aspects when dealing with a changing world to adapt to any situation (Drucker, 2017). According to Fullan (1998), the role of educational leaders in making a change can be generated and preserved in the following five (5) actions:

- (i) solve an environmental problem that complex,
- (ii) practice effective communication,
- (iii) have flexibility,
- (iv) Dodge Risk, Moving Risk, Decrease Risk Accept Risk and apply the latest technology, and
- (v) combine old and new concepts.

This leader action was added to the sixth based on recommendations from Hall and Hord (2014) which explains that in implementing a change, educational leaders need to be a facilitator of change through the dimension of concern for others, competence organizational and strategy change.

Further, explore the role of education leaders based on the actions that have been suggested by Fullan (1998) as well as Hall and Hord (2014) are as follows the following, but for this journal article, we will only discuss three of it;

1. Solve Complex Environmental Problems

1.1 Role

Today’s volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous (VUCA) world needs leaders always ready, sensitive to change and dynamics in management and leadership. When something unexpected happens, leaders need to be proficient in it adapting to sudden changes, improving the decision - making process making), creative, decision making through collaborative action (collaboration) and can trustworthiness (Drucker, 2017).

Leaders also need to prepare themselves from all aspects to adapt to any situation in an ever-changing world. The important thing that needs to be emphasized is the efficient and accurate execution of tasks time. Moreover, leaders no longer rely on one choice alone in making a decision.

1.2 Challenges

Traditional leadership has been no longer appropriate nowadays especially during the COVID-19 crisis. Effective leadership is influenced by three components namely, leaders, followers and context (Yukl, 2013). Components of leaders and followers influenced by complex and unpredictable work relationships occur in organizations. The

world of VUCA demanding wisdom and a new approach to leadership (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015).

Therefore, in addressing this world of VUCA, new challenges for leaders need to be flexible and various. Thus, it demands on all leaders to master various skills (multi-skill) and has spiritual characteristics. Although the spiritual sense has a meaning broad, according to Roothaan (2007), spirituality emphasizes the aspect of behavioural openness conduct, intention and high awareness.

Besides, the work culture in the office has also changed during the period of PKP, where working from home has become the new norm. This situation demands the efficiency of execution of remote tasks, availability of appropriate facilities and equipment, time management, and the integrity of each individual. So in this PKP situation, the spiritual maturity of the leader is very important so that durability and drastic action give a truly characteristic appearance charismatic leader.

1.3 Impact

Comparison of a situation is usually seen whether it is in the form of simplicity or complexity (simplicity vs complexity). The collision of these two conditions will affect existing management. Leaders need to adapt to environmental factors of moderation (simplicity) with complex management requirements. However, simplicity able to create a new platform for an organization to move forward.

Simplicity also opens up space to express ideas in a dominant system (Westley et al., 2011). This can be seen when faced with a pandemic situation COVID-19 which requires every leader and follower in the leadership chain to always in moderation whether when communicating, making decisions, and planning in difficult circumstances.

Simplicity is also able to open space to elements of creativity and innovation by today's leaders so that it can make an impact on the success of an organization. Therefore, aspects of creativity and innovation are needed for dealing with the current situation so that it can provide a solution to the phenomenon of the new one.

2. Practice Effective Communication

2.1 Role

According to Amir Aris and Ahmad Rozelan Yunus (2016), effective communication has four characteristics namely understanding, enjoyment, maintaining the target's beliefs and the presence of action which followed. Communication is the foundation that drives and coordinates activities all the functions that exist in an organization.

With the existence of communication channels in an organization, each individual or group is not only able to interact, understand and exchange information with each other, but also be able to establish cooperation persistent among staff. Accordingly, the travel efficiency of an organization is closely related to the extent to which communication channels can be provided and implemented.

The COVID 19 situation demands leaders to communicate information effectively to ensure that tasks can be performed well and smoothly. This includes instructions or a reminder that the members of the organization are always updated with the latest information at once assist in compliance with laws and directives currently in force. Besides, leaders need to build confidence and strength among the citizens of that organization led by them through various mediums of communication. In this case, the knowledge and skills they use of ICT applications are very important for the delivery and reception of information.

2.1 Challenges

There is no denying that there are barriers and obstacles that result in the communication process which occurs cannot be carried out as usual. When the occurrence of PKP in a pandemic COVID 19, communication that usually faces -to -face between leaders and citizens his organization has changed to online communication has increased abruptly. Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) as well as the industry consists of the telecommunications, broadcasting, postal and courier sectors as well as certification authorities digital signatures are committed to ensuring the continuity of its operations when confronted COVID-19 pandemic (Bernama, 19 March 2020).

MCMC also explained its importance in ensuring that Malaysians continue to have access to a wide range of communication services throughout the MCO. Telecommunication operators need to plan continuity plans business to ensure networking, online applications and customer service operate as usual.

At the same time, new skills are also required to communicate internally this line can be fully mastered and accepted in a new culture leading to the need towards the digitization of society. In this case, each needs to always develop self-competence in the use of the latest communication by having skills, attitudes and characteristics needed for the individual to be able to cope with any obstacles and obstacles that may occur so that the communication process can always be implemented effectively in any situation (Kapur, 2018).

2.2 Impact

The pandemic crisis COVID-19 and PKP faced have led to increasing competence in the use of the latest communication (Google Meet, Skype) indirectly among the citizens of the organization. Therefore, organizations need to plan to ensure readiness the infrastructure required in line with the increasing use of the latest communications.

So, leaders should be aware of the need for staff in their organization to master effective communication techniques (Helmi Akhtar & Ilhamie Abdul Ghani Azmi, 2017). Failure mastering effective communication will result in a delivery system, sharing and the discussion of information to organizational citizens is less clear or maybe confusing in turn having a significant impact on the management of the organization. Leaders too should equip themselves with the knowledge of conveying or writing messages on social media which is clear and transparent, as well as being careful not to be misunderstood.

This is to ensure the leader able to maintain image and reputation while communicating online. Message delivered through social media there is necessarily no tone

and emotion, thus opening up a wide space for the occurrence of misunderstandings in the discussion.

3. Have Flexibility

3.1 Role

The implementation of PKP requires not only moderation in any action but also flexibility in all actions. Flexible actions will ensure functions and roles played by educational leaders will always be in line with current needs. Flexibility is an action including a willingness and ability to respond quickly against changing circumstances and expectations especially at a time when the world is facing these difficulties (Doyle, 2020).

The actions of the leaders and citizens of the organization flexibly modify their job approach as well as step out of the job description routine quickly according to stakeholder priorities and the unique demands of each situation is right. The flexibility of performing tasks using digital applications is a time trend.

According to the Global Digital Report (2019), Malaysia ranks fifth highest in the world and the top spot in Southeast Asia in mobile social media penetration. Reports follow stated that internet penetration in Malaysia is now at 80 per cent with users spend an average of eight hours five minutes a day online.

3.2 Challenges

The leadership approach in the digital age becomes a challenge to leaders, which requires flexibility between the leader and the led. A leadership approach hierarchical and structured, formal, instruction-based and closed need to be adapted and requires transformation when faced with this COVID-19 pandemic.

Given that the current generation is the foremost group in the digital world, so leaders are ready there is a need to have a leadership approach appropriate to a society hyperconnected through the digital world. According to Heimans and Timms (2019) in a book entitled *New Power in the hyper-connected era* which means access to a digital network widespread anywhere and at any time, individuals are more likely to work in conditions not too formal and most organizations are reinforced network-based and openness.

This in turn encourages the involvement of every member in the organization to communicate actively in the virtual world about various work matters regardless of place and time. It helps increase the potential of the individual while promoting a work culture more open. This borderless relationship, which allows employees to connect with parties management of an organization directly through digital applications, requires to change of leadership approach. Challenges to leaders to practice management and leadership flexibly but still adhere to rules, ethics and integrity towards achieving educational goals.

3.3 Impact

Flexibility in dealing with change especially during the PKP period gives autonomy guided to the leader to perform various actions. Leaders and citizens organizations have freedom in planning the execution of tasks but remain compliant with the prescribed rules.

Freedom and flexibility lead to the generation of new ideas as well as the spark of innovation.

Chances are, some tasks also reduce clutter bureaucracy. The social interactions of society are now also undergoing a phase of transformation from grounded human-to-human face-to-face interaction, to machine-to-machine interaction based on a digital axis. Information is received and disseminated easily. Various shapes of discussions and debates can be seen on social media nowadays.

Involvement social in virtual groups (Whatsapp and Telegram) whether among family members, sharing hobbies, departments and many more makes human beings closer to each other others in cyberspace, even thousands of miles away physically.

Proposed Future Preparations

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the world community aware that the world has changed a lot and demands 360 -degree planning. Some suggestions in preparation for leaders education to meet the needs of the future so that we can survive the possible risks of such a crisis are listed as follows:

- a. Competence of leaders and teachers in terms of ASK (attitude, skill, knowledge) is necessary enhanced, renewed and flexible according to the situation;
- b. ERT (emergency response team) and remedial action needs to be robust and available;
- c. Comprehensive insurance coverage especially disaster aspects and matters which is not difficult to predict;
- d. High -impact research and cross -educational research;
- e. Exploration of the diversity of information and knowledge delivery alternatives;
- f. Development of ICT in the aspects of AI (artificial intelligence) and IR 4.0

Summary

In summary, the level of readiness and sensitivity of educational leaders to change the ever-changing world environment needs to be always high and dynamic in shouldering the responsibility of performing daily tasks. Trials and challenges of world education come alternately.

Therefore, today's leaders need precise preparation transcending the boundaries of human education and civilization. Besides, the leader as well needs to be flexible to current and future needs to be consistent with the demands of the current world. Cooperation and support from various parties stakeholders are indispensable because the ups and downs of leaders lie in supporting their surroundings. Next, aspects related to risk management need to be applied effectively so that the readiness and actions of leaders at all levels of the MOE are more effective.

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