

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS OF UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA (UiTM) MELAKA BRANCH

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ABSTRACT

Universities worldwide striving to excel in the management of academic achievements, student activities, research and industrial linkages need to scrutinize their critical success factors (CSFs). UiTM Melaka is not an exception. To achieve excellence, one of the key determinants is proper planning and initiatives in strategizing and systemizing the processes involved. The objectives of this paper are to discuss the practices and achievements of UiTM Melaka, and to identify its CSFs. The good practices are such as top-down commitment by the management, bottom-up involvement of staff from every level, cultivating and sharing culture in every program, continuous improvement in carrying out tasks and responsibilities, reward and recognition for outstanding staff and setting a long term goal in connecting the industry and community with academia. Those good practices have showed various promising results. For instance, UiTM Melaka has developed a proper procedure in appointing academic administrators, achieved the highest percentage of student voters among the 34 campuses, enhanced entrepreneurship development among students, secured the highest number of grants for social science, registered 60 product innovations with copyrights and commercialized seven products, published the first edition of consultants directory and generated more than RM200,000 from training and activities organized through memorandum of understandings. The achievements were obtained through CSFs of UiTM Melaka. The CSFs identified were (i) academic affairs administration; (ii) student affairs administration; (iii) entrepreneurship development; (iv) research grant administration; (v) invention, innovation and commercialization; (vi) industrial linkages development and; (vii) internationalization. The CSFs have truly encouraged its staff and students to build the university together. As such, adapting CSFs has aided the management to excel in achieving its goals.

Keywords: Achievement, Critical success factors, Management, Practices, University

FAKTOR KEJAYAAN KRITIKAL UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA (UiTM) CAWANGAN MELAKA

ABSTRAK

Universiti-universiti di seluruh dunia yang berusaha untuk cemerlang dalam pengurusan pencapaian akademik, aktiviti pelajar, penyelidikan dan hubungan industri perlu meneliti faktor kejayaan kritikal mereka (CSFs). UiTM Melaka tidak terkecuali. Untuk mencapai kecemerlangan, salah satu penentu utama adalah perancangan dan inisiatif yang tepat dalam strategi dan mengatur proses yang terlibat. Objektif makalah ini adalah membincangkan amalan dan pencapaian UiTM Melaka, dan mengenal pasti CSFnya. Amalan-amalan yang baik adalah seperti komitmen atas-bawah oleh pihak pengurusan, penglibatan dari bawah ke atas kakitangan dari setiap peringkat, memupuk dan berkongsi budaya dalam setiap program, penambahbaikan berterusan dalam menjalankan tugas dan tanggungjawab, ganjaran dan pengiktirafan bagi kakitangan yang cemerlang dan menetapkan matlamat jangka panjang dalam menghubungkan industri dan komuniti dengan ahli akademik. Amalan-amalan yang baik itu telah menunjukkan pelbagai hasil yang memberangsangkan. Sebagai contoh, UiTM Melaka telah membangunkan prosedur yang tepat dalam melantik pentadbir akademik, mencapai peratusan tertinggi pengundi pelajar di kalangan 34 kampus, meningkatkan pembangunan keusahawanan di kalangan pelajar, memperoleh bilangan tertinggi geran untuk sains sosial, mencatatkan 60 inovasi produk dengan hak cipta dan tujuh produk yang dikomersialkan, menerbitkan edisi pertama direktori perunding dan menghasilkan lebih daripada RM200,000 dari latihan dan aktiviti yang dianjurkan melalui memorandum persefahaman. Pencapaian diperoleh melalui CSF UiTM Melaka. CSF yang dikenalpasti adalah (i) pentadbiran hal ehwal akademik; (ii) pentadbiran hal ehwal pelajar; (iii) pembangunan keusahawanan; (iv) pentadbiran geran penyelidikan; (v) ciptaan, inovasi dan pengkomersialan; (vi) pembangunan hubungan perindustrian dan; (vii) pengantarabangsaan. CSFs benar-benar menggalakkan kakitangan dan pelajarnya untuk bersama-sama membina universiti itu. Oleh itu, menyesuaikan CSF telah membantu pengurusan untuk cemerlang mencapai matlamatnya.

Kata kunci: Pencapaian, Faktor kejayaan kritikal, Pengurusan, Latihan, Universiti

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Critical Success Factor (CSF) has brought the best practice for university excellence. It is a management term for an element necessary for an organization to achieve its mission. It is a critical factor or activity required for ensuring the success of a university in academia.

Underpinning this concept has been the ongoing commitment of the UiTM Melaka management, staff and students in order to meet the university's vision to establish UiTM as a premier university of outstanding scholarship and academic excellence capable of providing leadership to Bumiputeras's dynamic involvement in all professional fields of world-class standards. This is aimed at producing globally competitive graduates of sound ethical standing.

Therefore, through CSFs, selected indicators are identified and planned by the university management before execution by the students, staff and community. These indicators are considered critical in strategic planning. Through this stage, an alignment is been made to make sure approaches taken to achieve these goals can be performed by all parties. The management provides guidance to ensure the parties perform and achieve the outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of ‘Critical Success Factors’ is well established in many fields of activity and the term is used frequently to refer to the elements selected by an organization in order to excel in their arena. It is also applied for higher education institutions such as universities, colleges and polytechnics with different contexts of excellence. Excellence may be equated with the reputation and standing of universities, but much depends on the performances and the varying missions of institutions.

The concept of CSFs was developed in the early 1960s. It was proposed by Ronald Daniel and achieved popularity in 1979 through the efforts of John Rockart. According to Rockart (1979), Ronald Daniel first discussed the idea of CSFs in the management literature, stating that information analysis must focus on “success factors” as a new approach to help achieve organizational goals. He further added that critical success factors (CSF) has a limited number of areas which, if satisfactory, will ensure competitive performance in organisations. However, in the context of the present study, CSFs are the actionable solutions executed by the management of the institutions to address the challenges in providing quality education.

Rockart (1979) developed the idea of identifying the CSFs from the viewpoint of chief executives, pointing out that the process of identifying CSFs help to ensure that these factors receive the necessary attention and are carefully managed by an organization. Rockart and Bullen affirmed that “CSFs are the few key areas where ‘things must go right’ for the business to flourish and for the manager’s goals to be attained” (1981, p.7). Otherwise, Pinto and Slevin described CSFs as “factors which, if addressed, significantly improve project implementation chances” (1987, p. 22).

There are numerous views suiting different purposes and different areas of quality assurance and stakeholders’ involvement when identifying key success factors. The concept is vague enough to offer plentiful grounds for both theoretical and practical research. In the view of university, it is important to consider key success factors as a social phenomenon based on theoretical and cultural considerations. There is a need to identify key success factors through the lens of different key stakeholders, including academic staff and students, society and management. In this context, it is possible to define standards of performance which permit the recognition of excellence. This will elucidated the level of the quality of service provided and achievement attained by university.

PRACTICES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN UITM MELAKA

Academic affairs administration: Academic administrator appointment procedure

Academic administrators, such as *Ketua Pusat Pengajian (KPP)* and *Koordinator Fakulti (KF)* are valuable assets to UiTM Melaka. The appointment of academic administrators is important because they are the individuals who monitor the entire administration process of faculties, centers or even the entire UiTM Melaka. Thus, in order to maintain an open, transparent and systematic appointment of academic administrators, a committee was formed. The committee is responsible to develop, conduct and maintain a procedure for academic administration appointment.

The procedure comprises three (3) phases which can be further divided into six (6) steps. In the first phase, it starts with sending emails to all members of UiTM Melaka to nominate candidates (Step 1). Then, five candidates with the highest nomination would be identified and informed in Executive Management Committee meeting (Step 2). In the second phase, upon the approval from Executive Management Committee members, the five candidates would be formally informed and fill-up the “candidacy form” (Step 3). In Step 4, candidates who have achieved the marks to qualify them to enter the third phase would be informed in the meeting. In the third phase, the qualified candidates would be interviewed by the executive management members of UiTM Melaka (Step 5). Lastly, the Chairperson of the interview session would decide the best candidate for the appointment the administrators.

With the existence of such procedure, the process of academic administrator appointment would be done in a collective manner. It also ensures that the selected candidate has fulfilled the required criteria. It gives an opportunity to all the members in UiTM Melaka to provide their views and suggestions to the executive management. It is also a way to guarantee that the appointment is an open, fair and transparent one.

Student affairs administration: Campus elections voter turnout

Campus election is an annual event in UiTM Melaka. It gives a great impact to all members in UiTM Melaka, especially the students. Sometimes, campus election is influenced by the current political condition. As such, there are various challenges in managing campus election. One of them is creating awareness of the existence and importance of campus elections. Such awareness is important because it would affect the involvement of students which further affects the percentage of voting among them.

Realizing that campus election is a campus-wide event which involves all academic and non-academic members in the campus, UiTM Melaka has taken several initiatives to ensure a successful election. The management has decided that the entire voting process has to be carried out in campus and must actively involve academic members. In particular, academic administrators such as *Ketua Pusat Pengajian (KPP)* and *Koordinator Fakulti (KF)* were required to analyze the voting rate for every hour; while lecturers were asked to inform the students regarding the election and give them sufficient time to vote. In order to create awareness of the existence of campus election, UiTM Melaka has promoted the event through banner and social media. Candidates are also allowed to hold campaigns in places such as “speaker corner”, student center, college etc. In addition, UiTM Melaka also provided incentive to faculties that achieve the voting rate determined by the management. Transportation services were also available to the non-resident students.

As a result, UiTM Melaka has achieved the targeted voting rate of 85% in the previous campus elections carried out on 21st September 2016. In particular, Kampus Bandaraya Melaka (KBM) recorded a voting rate of 95.69%, followed by Kampus Jasin Melaka (KJM) 91.76% and Kampus Alor Gajah (KAG) 85.96%. The overall voter turnout for the entire UiTM Melaka was 88.70%.

Entrepreneurship development: Tunas Mekar Program

UiTM Melaka is active in promoting entrepreneurial activities. For instance, it has provided various supports to Tunas Mekar Program, a program designed to promote and increase the number of its graduates involved in entrepreneurship activities. The program was initiated by former Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in 2006, aimed at training unemployed Bumiputra graduates to be successful entrepreneurs, increase the Bumiputra’ participation involvements in economic activities and solve the problem of unemployment in Malaysia.

In order to achieve this objective, the program is implemented in five phases (Ariffin, 2010). The first phase focuses on enhancing graduates’ entrepreneurial characteristics. In the second phase, graduates begin their attachments with entrepreneurs and are exposed to practical implementation, such as marketing, operations and finance. Then in the third phase, graduates are exposed to the technicalities of running their business of interest. For example, if a student is interested in shrimp farming, he or she will learn everything about the technical aspects of shrimp farming from the entrepreneur that he or she is attached to. While in the fourth phase, graduates will prepare their business plans based on the knowledge transferred from the program. They will also be enrolled into an incubator program organised by SME Corp to further refine their business plans. Lastly, in the fifth phase, they will start to look for avenues to finance their project. The entire program takes about six months to one year to complete.

Several initiatives are important to make this program a successful one. First, involvement of business counselors is crucial. Each business counselor is in-charge of one graduate. This is done to ensure proper focus is given. Second, graduates are expected to play multiple roles. On one hand, they are

expected to act as in-house consultants who provide ways and means to improve the entrepreneur's performance. On the other hand, they also act as graduates who understudy the entrepreneur's business. This two-role concept is the uniqueness of Tunas Mekar program because it ensures mutual benefits to both graduates and entrepreneurs.

Research grant administration: Research management unit (RMU)

UiTM Melaka has put-forth various efforts to encourage its staff to conduct research and produce high-quality research works. For this purpose, Research Management Unit (RMU) is formed especially to promote, manage and administer international and private research grants in UiTM Melaka. The objectives of RMU are: (i) to promote grant offered by national and international funders; (ii) to provide administrative support in the process of completing the grant application and; (iii) to enhance the number of grant applicants per campus.

For the purpose of increasing the number of grant application, the following activities are important. The RMU Coordinator is required to disseminate call-for-proposals of international and private grants via official UiTM email to all researchers. To further promote the grant application, a committee is formed. The main functions of this committee are to organize grant briefing sessions and conduct research proposal preparation workshops for those interested researchers. In addition, the committee also provides assistance for preparation of proposals and assesses the proposals if required. The committee continuously reminds the researchers on the important dates through emails. The researchers then submit their proposals (soft-copy) through MyGrants system, and provide a hard-copy (if required) to the Division of Research and Industry Linkages (PJI) for record keeping. Successful applicants will be awarded with grant offer letter.

By practicing frequent reminder (sending email to all lecturers) triggered most of the lecturers to keep and stay alert on the submission deadline. Successful grant holder from the previous cycle shared useful tips to make sure submitted proposals have a high chance to secure the grants. Most initiatives administered by the committee encouraged lecturers to apply grants. As a result, number of successful applicants (FRGS) from UiTM Melaka increase and was the campus that secured the highest number of grants (Social Science) compared to the other branch campuses in 2016. The initiatives handled by the PJI Committee truly encouraged the lecturers to apply grants from various providers. This really helps the university to cultivate research culture among lecturers in UiTM Melaka.

Invention, innovation and commercialization: Intellectual property (IP) registration

Innovation, patent and commercialization signify the main elements of intellectual properties (IP). They are important in leading the academicians towards academic excellence. UiTM Melaka has taken several strategies and mechanisms to create a proper documentation and records of IP and nurture a culture of empowering innovation, patent and commercialization.

UiTM Melaka has adopted a focus strategy, whereby steps have been initiated with the "gentle reminder" emailed to UiTM Melaka staff regularly; together with the template and related forms to be updated by the "innovators" and inventors" respectively regarding to the details of their products; as well as one – to - one approach. Meanwhile, a good collaboration also has made with the Research and Business Unit (RIBU), UiTM Shah Alam in synchronizing the data collection. On the other hand, such mechanisms are materialized like organizing innovation competition internationally (RIID and MIIEEx), seminar, sharing session and Business Matching session with the industrial players; together with the recognition like *Anugerah Pencapaian Rektor*. In addition, a joint venture with the Melaka State government is crucial throughout a smart partnership.

As a result from the above practices, 60 product innovations were registered with copyrights, and seven (7) products were successfully commercialized. It is worth mentioning that since 2009, UiTM Melaka has been organizing international innovation competition. These strategies and mechanisms needed

lead towards such a continuous improvement in updating a proper documentation and record; together with the effort of creating an innovative society in UiTM Melaka.

Industrial linkages development: Consultants Directory

Industry is one of the important stakeholders of UiTM Melaka. Thus, UiTM Melaka pays high attention on maintaining a good linkage with the industry. The UiTM Melaka Consultants Directory (1st Edition) is a database for quick and systematic reference of experts and consultants attached to UiTM Melaka. It serves as a platform for lecturers to market their skills, potentials and products based on the need, choice and preference of clients that require assistance and expertise from the experienced professionals in various related disciplines. The existence of this directory is able to create awareness among the lecturers as a starting point in registering their consultancy projects with the university and is expected to increase the registration rate as compared to previous years.

The directory contains list of consultants from seven faculties and three academic centers in UiTM Melaka; which are the Faculty of Business and Management, Accountancy, Art and Design, Hotel and Tourism Management, Communication and Media Studies, Computer and Mathematical Sciences, Plantation and Agro-Technology, Academy of Language Studies, Academy of Contemporary Islamic Studies and the Department of Law. Data of the consultants were gathered from the registration form of their consultancy projects from year 2009-2015 as well as through the one-to-one approach, namely emails and phone calls in completing the data collection.

The directory is available as a link to the official website of UiTM Melaka to cater the preference of the 'e-generation' as wifi, wireless and internet connections making it portable and user friendly and also available in hardcopy particularly for the less savvy clients that could serve as a platform to publicise the field of expertise of UiTM Melaka's lecturers and promoting them to be actively involved in consultation projects in a win-win situation apart from expanding their network and know-how to attract more collaborations both for the short and long term benefits. The hardcopy of the directory would be available for sale and this in turn could be the income generation for the university as a whole. This ultimately could facilitate the journey of UiTM Melaka lecturers in their pursuance of academic excellence and professional advancement for the benefit of their career prospect but also contribute back to the university and the society at large.

Internationalization: Memorandum of understanding (MOU)

Internationalization is another crucial aspect of a successful higher-learning institution. Memorandum of Understanding Unit (MoU) was initiated by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Shafinar Ismail, Deputy Rector, Division of Research and Industrial Linkages in the year of 2014. Its main niche is on internationalization, in which to develop relationships with institutions outside of Malaysia to make UiTM Melaka well-renowned. Though initially there were skeptics and financial constraint, consistent accomplishment could be seen through determination, persistence and perseverance.

Establishments of contacts and networking with the Islamic Development Bank and a few Islamic State Institutions in Indonesia such as Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Mataram, Palembang, Medan and Semarang, and others have brought mutual benefits for all parties involved. These Islamic State Institutions received fund from Islamic Development Bank which assure their financial capability in joining programs offered by MOU engagement.

As a result, it has made Islamic State Institution of Mataram upgraded into an Islamic University, reciprocally, UiTM Melaka has generated more than RM200,000 from training and activities organized. Concurrently, a number of lecturers from UiTM Melaka have been appointed as consultants in different fields of expertise. Apart from collaborations with Universities and Islamic States Institutions in Indonesia, UiTM Melaka has also involved in MoUs and exchange programs with a few other universities in Brunei Darussalam, Turkey, and Australia. Joint efforts with institutions in United Kingdom and India

are put forward to be the future prospective. All these efforts have made significant success due to the high demands and expectations. This strategic affiliations includes lecturer exchange programs, students exchange programs, summer programs, training, joint research, joint publication, joint workshop which conclude win-win situation for all parties.

CONCLUSION

Based on the practices and activities discussed in the above section, it can be said that UiTM Melaka did not obtain its achievements just by luck. There were several critical factors that brought UiTM Melaka to its success. The critical success factors of UiTM Melaka are summarized as below (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Critical Success Factors (CSFs) of UiTM Melaka

This paper contributes to both body of knowledge and management practice. The CSFs found in UiTM Melaka are similar to those identified in the existing literature. This paper enriches the literature by determining CSFs of a branch campus of a giant and comprehensive university. From the practical side, it highlights the critical factors that require extensive attention from the executive management of higher learning institutions. It is hoped that the CSFs identified in this paper could serve as a guideline in administering a higher learning institution and provide some insights on ensuring its success.

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