

Chapter 14

Sustainable Education: A Buzzword of Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The sustainable development (hereafter, S.D.) aims a growth that could satisfy the wants and needs of present generation without affecting future generations. Accordingly, this study investigates the role of HEIs in S.D. by selecting the case of Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS, Malaysia. The study adapted the universities sustainable development initiatives checklist/index for qualitative analysis of the main website, operational documents, and practical initiatives of the university for S.D. The findings revealed that the university has good and meaningful contributions towards three dimensions of S.D. i.e. economic, social and environment. The study proposed an improvement in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and implementation of S.D. framework for universities. The findings have significance and practical implications for academia, regulatory bodies, policy makers, and HEIs. Also, the findings are significant in association with new economic model (NEM) and vision 2020 of Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

It is the issue of everybody to concern with society and its welfare. The individuals, larger or smaller groups, formal or informal entities, public or private firms, governmental or non-governmental organizations considered as the key stakeholders of society must always have aspired to champion societal concerns (Amoako, Agbola, Dzogbenuku, & Sokro, 2013). Sustainability has a broad sense and can be viewed as the relationship of organizations with the society as a whole, and the need for organizations to

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align their values with societal expectations (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Elkington, 1997; Roca & Searcy, 2011). In reality, it is a standard that organizations can impact their environment with the potential to build a sustainable development (Helg, 2007). However, it is grave that society educates everyone to be responsible. As concerning to all societal actors, universities are considered are the ones educating the future leaders of a country. What these educational institutes teach and do not teach may make or break the nations' future and well-being (Amoako et al., 2013).

The most accepted definition of sustainable development (S.D.) was firstly coined by the Brundtland Report which claims for a development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987). The main contribution of this pioneering concept highlighted that the human well-being depends on the health of the environment, in other words, on society, economy and environment are inextricably connected (Delai & Takahashi, 2013). Sustainable development is three nested and interrelated domains where the largest is the environment that provides ecosystem services and natural resources, in the middle is society and the smallest is economy (Baxter, Boisvert, Lindberg, & Mackrael, 2009). Hence, S.D. comprises of three main dimensions: environmental, social, and economic.

S.D. has become a globally accepted concept and become a guide to interacting with nature and society. In order to overcome the challenges of S.D., it calls for a paradigm change at all levels including education sector (Disterheft, Caeiro, & Azeiteiro, 2013). To support this argument universities have been charged with the key roles in promoting and implementing sustainable development (UNESCO, 1992). Moreover, many scholars see the impact of universities on S.D. has vastly greater than any other single sector of society because universities educate the coming generation of decision-makers, influencers, and leaders (Lozano, 2006). Due to societal impact universities are seen as multipliers for distributing S.D. principles with the ethical obligation to systematically integrate S.D. into their institutions (Cortese, 2003). Hence, a number of universities have responded and showing good progress in the implementation of S.D. in universities. “The emerging fields of sustainability in universities is Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) which can be seen as an evolving scientific foundation for the advancement of sustainability, including the transition to sustainable universities” (Disterheft et al., 2013). ESD is being part of the sustainability discourse and policy-making process since very the beginning, it has been influencing the debate on learning objectives, contents, pedagogies, and competencies necessary for the paradigm shift to S.D. (Disterheft et al., 2013). During the last decade, there is an increasing trend in higher education institutes to engage in incorporating and institutionalizing S.D. into their curriculum, operations, research, outreach, assessment and reporting (Lozano & Young, 2013).

However, in spite of many steps and policy making for S.D. number of universities are engaging with S.D., while, most of them are continued to be traditional. Consequently, they are still lagging behind to contribute in a holistic manner for a broad spectrum of stakeholders requirements (Lozano, Lukman, Lozano, & Huisingh, 2013). The current study has an objective to investigate S.D. initiatives of a university with a focus on three dimensions economic, social and environmental. The study will answer the research question that how a university could contribute for S.D. The study selects University Technology PETRONAS (official name as Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS - UTP) Malaysia as a case. The remaining sections of the paper consist of a brief literature review, a Malaysian perspective, a case study of UTP, conclusion and recommendations.

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