

Developing Youth Leaders: Institutional Social Bonding Influence and Positive Youth Development

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to identify the factors contribute to Positive Youth Development (PYD) among Community Colleges' students comprising the 5Cs namely Competence, Confidence, Character, Connection and Caring and Compassion. Moreover, the study highlighted the domains from institutional social bonding that might influence the development of youth at Community Colleges to be a positive leader. The Ecology of Human Development theory, the Developmental Science theory and Social Bonding Theory provide the foundation for this area of study. The framework form Institutional social bonding and 5C's of PYD elements are recommended. Leadership and PYD are related theoretical based approach in youth development. A youth leadership potential can be unleashed through the development of the 5Cs that lead to positive outcomes. Social bonding with school or institution will nurture and develop the positive characteristics of a leader through involvement, attachment, commitment and trust between both elements.

Keywords – 5Cs, positive youth development, youth leadership, community colleges, institutional social bonding

INTRODUCTION

Developing youth is a continuous effort that began in youth starting from childhood until they become adolescence as preparation for successful adulthood (Larson, 2000; Granger, 2002; Catalano et al., 2004). Youth must be seen as a resource (Damon, 2004) to the nation and should be developed with proper trajectory because they are the inheritors and future leaders (Kress, 2006; Turiman et al., 2008). Youth should be developed in line with their strengths, talents and potential because they will contribute to the community (Larson, 2000; Park, 2004; Benson & Scales, 2009.2012; Lerner, 1992; Lerner et al., 2005). Skills, talents and character identified will develop youth to be an exceptional leaders (Kress, 2006). Leadership is one of the youth developmental outcomes which youth need to develop, having positive character and values in order to become an effective leader. Leadership can be learnt and acquired by anybody, including youths who possess unique views and perspectives that needs to addressed (Mortensen et al., 2014). Youth is an asset and agent of their own development within the context of a community

(Benson et al., 2006), a nation who need to be developed using appropriate approaches so as to prepare them as leaders of the future.

Youth is an asset to all countries in the world including Malaysia. In Malaysia, 51% over 31 million people are in the youth population category (Department Of Statistics Malaysia, 2015). This number shows how important the role of youth as partners in nation building is. There are several target groups of youth in Malaysia, namely youths in school and higher education institution, at-risk youth and others (Malaysia Youth Policy, 2015). However, this study focused on youths studying at Community Colleges (CC). Since year 2000, almost 80,000 graduates have been trained at CC (DOCC, 2012) and eventually they will be involved in the development of our country such as in sectors like automotive, oil and gas industries, hospitality, entrepreneurship and so forth. They are expected to play positive roles in society, practice good citizenship, and generally have a positive impact on society (DOCC, 2012). The role of CC is to develop youth not only to be an employee, but also to be capable of becoming a leader (Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint, 2015) in their respective fields. Therefore, appropriate approaches need to be cultivated and factors influencing them to become a positive youth must be identified.

Positive Youth Development (PYD)

PYD is a new vocabulary in defining youth development introduced in the 20th century (Theokas et al., 2005). PYD perspective is a model that explicitly deny the concept of assessing the deficiencies that emerge in adolescence and replace it with a concept that emphasizes the strength that is internally embedded (Lerner, Abo-Zena, Bebiroglu, Brittian, Lynch & Issac, 2009). Every individual have their own potential and flexibility to be developed (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009). Thus, it is in line with the assumption that youth are resources to be developed rather than problems to be managed (Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray & Foster, 1998; Shek & Merrick, 2015). The approach that derived from development theory is focused on human strength and competency and yet, not fully denying the deficit perspective as well as prevention. Thus, it is focusing on understanding the elements that will support individual development which include family, community and society (Theokas et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2014).

All youth have the potential to be a leader with a set of skills and attitude to apply both as transactional and transformational leaders (Fertmen & Van Linden, 1999). This is synchronized with the development of leader with the characteristics introduced by scholars in youth development. To be a positive decision maker having good interpersonal skills, youth need to developed and equipped with positive development elements suggested by Lerner et al., (2005) and Roth & Brooks-Gunn, (2003) which is 5Cs that includes Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character and Caring as the basis of a healthy, successful development of individuals and the way to idealized personhood. According to Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray & Foster (1998), 5Cs were linked to the positive outcomes and it is fully integrated since PYD needs healthy development (Geldhof et al., 2014). Competence is a positive attribute in specific areas including social, academic, cognitive and vocational; Confidence is a positive self-worth and self-efficacy; Connection is a positive bond with people and institutions; Character is possession of correct behaviours, morality and integrity; Caring and compassion refers to having a sympathy and empathy for others (Lerner et al., 2005; Roth et al., 2003; Geldhof et al., 2014). Possessing 5Cs (Bowers et al., 2010) enable youth to contribute to self, family, community and civil society. This sixth C will emerge (Lerner, 2004; Lerner & Steinberg, 2009; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007).

According to Geldhof et al., (2014) PYD are strongly correlated with contribution and less correlated with depressive system. The emerging of the sixth C shows that youth are capable to be a leader (O'Donoghue, Kirshner & McLaughlin, 2002) to contribute to the community using their PYD elements. The influencing factor will be discussed here is Institutional Social Bonding (ISB) which is the factor that will affect the development of a leader in order to possess the 5 characteristics of PYD.

Institutional Social Bonding (ISB)

The role of institutions in developing bonding with youth is an enormous task to prevent students from being exposed and committed to various delinquent activities (Tunggak, Ngadi & Naim, 2015). Hirschi (1969), via the social bonding theory, asserts that an individual will not engage in delinquent activities when there are ties between parents, peers and school / institution. When youth are bonded to activities and programs planned by institutions, their leisure time will be filled and it will avoid them from negative behaviour. The bonding created between youth and institution will cultivate leadership talents among youth when they are actively involved in leadership programs as institutions and schools are agents of social bonding and in promoting positive youth development (Catalano et al., 2004). Schools are created to provide social and academic environment pertaining to the development of youth to prevent high risk problems and to support positive behaviour (Whiteside-Mansell et al., 2015). Studies done by Debnam et al., (2014) suggest that school environment is an important setting for promoting youth development.

ISB is a relationship that emerge between students and institution through commitment, trust, involvement and attachment. There are a number of study measuring student attachment that is being a part of school or institution and they are highly associated with students positive outcomes (Jenkins, 1997; Hawkins et al., 2001,; Moutan et al., 1996; Brown and Evans, 2002). Young people will do better at school when they feel connected to school, that they belong to it, and having supportive teachers, systems and friends around (Libbey, 2004; Li et al., 2016). Youth can already demonstrate their leadership abilities within their families, school and communities (Fretmen & Van Linden, 1999). The role that played by students in the school is not only enhance them to learn and be involved in academic program, but it also enable them to lead a classroom, small or big group, the uniform club and so forth, which apparently formed as their leadership training ecosystem (Martinek, Schilling & Hellison, 2006). School is not only a place for teaching and knowledge acquisition, but also a place to be spent for non-academic activities as well so as to produce positive and health youth (Libbey, 2004; Rosenfeld, Richman & Bowen, 2000). The role of institution to upgrade the academic and non-academic activities should not be underestimated. The most place that students spend almost eleven month a year (Gomez & Ang, 2007) should be recognized as an agent in developing competence, character, confidence and all positive elements. ISB is one of the factors that influence the development of youth's positive characteristic as well as playing a vital role in developing leadership value.

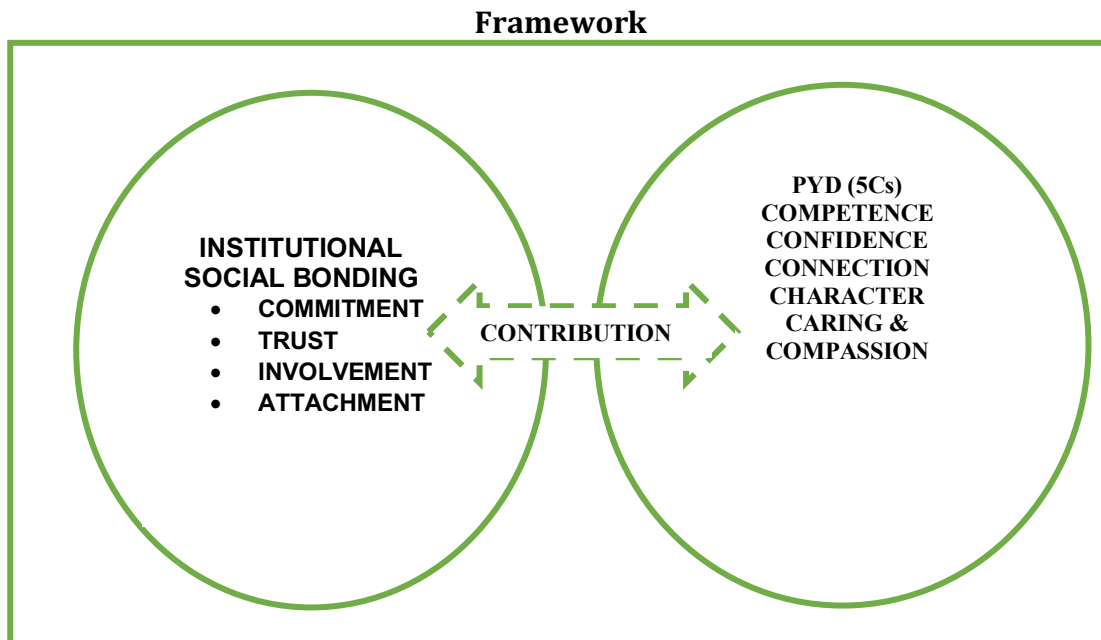


Figure 1 : The contribution from institution towards development of youth and youth will contribute to the institution when they are equipped with the 5Cs

The figure above shows that the domain of ISB influence the development of youth towards a better personhood and the emerging of sixth C (Contribution) will emphasize the positive contribution by the individual towards their social institutions. Youth that are equipped with 5Cs will be more efficient leader to attach, involve in activities and planned program and committed with the policy. Therefore, the elements of 5Cs will enhance youth developments towards a better future. This study will identify the factors that contribute to the PYD among community colleges youth in Malaysia. Research in PYD for diverse youth and context will enhance richer results and outcomes for the development of youth (Holsen et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

Leadership and PYD are related concepts and approach in youth development in order to nurture youth in becoming a positive, talented, and strong leader (Wheeler & Edleback, 2006). Youth and leadership can never be separated because youth are already and will always be involved in the development of the organizations, community, and nation. They need to be trained, taught, given the chance and spaces to be involved in leadership activities. Their strength, views, ideas should be fostered to cultivate leadership potential among them. A youth leadership potential can be unleashed through the development of the 5Cs that lead to positive outcomes. Youth leaders with clear vision and futuristic will be able to make changes for the betterment of our future. Social bonding factor in school will nurture and develop the positive characteristics of a leader through involvement in various activities, participation in classroom, club and campus activities. Through the influence of these factors, the formation of 5Cs element in future positive leaders will become a reality.

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