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Adapting the Blue Ocean Strategy for Educators: Opportunities for Professional Development in the Malaysian Higher Education Context

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Abstract: Embedding opportunities for professional development to attain greater visibility to achieve and retain the recognition both locally and internationally is important for educators at tertiary level. The challenge to consistently retain the social standing by its ranking is greater for young private universities in Malaysia. By means of the principles of Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS), this research highlighted the opportunities in strengthening the human capital moving towards a professional learning community. The study employed the qualitative research design to explore the institutional support provided for professional development to identify training needs and opportunities to educators, as well as the prospects of adapting the BOS strategy to meet the diverse needs of the professional development of educators. Employing a purposeful sampling method, five key stakeholders in the management position and ten lecturers from a private university in Malaysia were interviewed. These lecturers were specifically selected based on their knowledge and interest in the topic and the other criteria was their willingness to participate in the study. The criteria established directly reflects the purpose of the study. Document analysis of policy guidelines for professional development and the strategies adapted by the universities to enhance professional development was conducted. U Findings indicate that universities are encouraged to transform and cater for the ever-changing customer dynamics and technologies as well as to create demand and value to professional development. Findings point out that the concept of professional development should be broadened, and policy directives should be enhanced for greater visibility. Professional development should be examined as the governing mechanism to determine innovate practices to meet the diverse needs of academics. The conclusion of the study points to the need to broaden the concept of professional development and the implication for the organizational innovation is discussed.

Keywords: Blue Ocean Strategy, higher education, human capital, organizational success, professional development

Introduction

Higher education is one of the most important sectors to propel Malaysia's talent development in spearheading Malaysia's socio-economic growth in line with the 11th Malaysia Plan (11MP) as well as Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint (2015-2025). Professional development for academics is imperative for educators to remain competitive among other institutions of higher learning (HEIs). Higher learning institutions lead in the transformation and strategic planning exercise and invest in professional learning community. The performance level of trained teachers indicates the effectiveness of the institutes who intend to achieve the set outcomes alongside the transformation of learnt contents and practices (Noor, 2018).

Various factors such as the trend of online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, lesser number of student enrolment and professionalization of higher education necessitate the need for practitioners to engage in reflection and dialogue to expand their pedagogical approaches. Malaysia has a target to enrol 250,000 in 2025. In this context it is valuable to look to alternative means of professional development for the growth of the educators given the constraints in professional development whereby educators might have little autonomy or time to pursue their growth.

In this regard, the Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) upends traditional thinking and creates different value proportions by reconstructing new boundaries and focusing beyond the existing state (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005). The perspective can shift the focus from the institutions struggle in a red ocean to an understanding of how the department, institution or sector can create new opportunities through focusing on professional development. The concept of the Blue Ocean Strategy was first introduced by Chin Kim and Reme Mauborgne (1991). Many developers create products and resources that are in competition with existing tools which Kim and Mauborgne (2005, 2017) consider as “red ocean”. Universities in red ocean which faces similar competition from other universities should adopt strategic opportunities to remain relevant and visibility. In contrast, the authors propose a “blue ocean shift” which involves looking for opportunities to address unsolved problems. The strategy of the blue ocean shift also differentiates a project by lowering cost and promoting the educational values.

As Kim and Kim (2018) argue, even though academics are typically considered to be experts in their research domains, they have limited knowledge of educational sciences and pedagogical theories and practices. This underscores the need for professional development to make a valued contribution. In other words, educational institutions can renew the existing ways of competing, professional development being one of it. This would add value to the long-term goal of the institution taking into consideration the perspectives on its stakeholders.

Previous research has highlighted the transformative effect of undertaking a blue ocean strategy to invest in professional development of educators. Bovill et al. (2016) argue that teaching strategy is influenced by the educators’ own experiences, and the existing practices and solutions inherited from colleagues. As a result, the perceived risk associated with innovation could be prevalent. Postareff and Nevgi (2015) note that changing their teaching behaviour requires an academician to shift their role from that of expert in their field to novice in another area in pedagogy, which is often an uncomfortable experience. They also draw attention to the “intermediate phase trap”, acknowledging that people in their mid-career have a fear of making commitments and tend to avoid change.

Moreover, often the salaries of academics depend on their publications and amount of teaching hours, not on the quality of their teaching (Graham, 2015; Kim & Kim, 2018). Similarly, promotion and reward schemes are still mainly connected to achievements in research and administration (Fahnert, 2015). Hence, professional development is crucial for high-quality in tertiary educational institutions. According to Megginson and Whitaker (2017), professional development practices are a major investment that academics can make for their own development.

Inspiration can be drawn from the approach on rethinking the values, rather than focusing on how to be slightly better in the competition of a zero-sum game (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005). Malik et al. (2015) state that professional development could involve all types of facilitating knowledge opportunity, from university degrees to formal assignments, conferences, and informal learning opportunities. Fahnert (2015) explains the mechanism of how the professional development of academics becomes an indispensable part of the student-centred approach.

According to Megginson and Whitaker (2017), the need for professional development arises because the professional success of individuals no longer lies in the job or organization they work for, but in the skills, knowledge, and experience that they acquire and have within themselves. Within the university, the condition for an internal red ocean is prevalent on all levels. The growth layer in the professional development process is crucial to academicians to remain competitive and to establish themselves to establish a research profile and to remain relevant. As for the private universities, which are dependent greatly upon enrolment, it will be incumbent to maximize their share of the existing market. One solution is to find ways of pushing the existing

boundaries to attract students. This implies finding value innovations which is embedding opportunities in professional development as the educators are a part of the valued stakeholders by focusing on making the competition irrelevant by developing its staff profile.

Furthermore, because of globalization, students have increasing opportunities to choose from the most suitable higher education institution (Aškerc & Kočar, 2015). Thus, competition between universities has become much severer.

Additionally, it is often argued that if research has a higher priority, teaching may not get enough attention and resources from universities or academics (Blackmore, 2016). For example, the European Commission (2013) notes that even though this paradigm has shifted slightly in recent years, in many European higher education systems, there is still inadequate attention paid to teaching in comparison to research. Many voices across the literature recognize the lack of equal importance to both research and teaching and hence this research will look at the need to establish professional learning community contributing to a skilled human capital increasing the university's visibility in Malaysian context. The following research questions were investigated:

- How does the institutional professional development support could help to identify training needs and opportunities for educators in the Malaysian context?
- What are the prospects of adopting BOS strategy to meet the needs of the professional development of educators in the Malaysian context?

Literature Review

1. Blue Ocean Strategy Concept

The Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) was developed by Kim & Mauborgne (2005) which aimed in pursuing discrimination and low cost at the same time to open up new market space and create new demand. It is about creating and conquering an indisputable market space, thereby making competition irrelevant. This is based on the view that market boundaries and industry structures cannot be taken for granted and can be reconstructed by the actions and beliefs of industry players (Hasan et al., 2017). Blue oceans denote all the industries not in existence today – the unknown market space, untainted by competition. The capability to create an indisputable market space and make the competition overcome by established struggles irrelevant is the key to the competitiveness of companies adopting the paradigm of the Blue Ocean Strategy. This strategy "moves" and "expands" the market for potential customers, so that value is generated differently in a market that has moved from previous market contest (Hurriyati et al., 2019).

BOS is an all-inclusive systems approach organized to provide sustainability strategy. Hence, it is achieved by keeping all functional activities and operations of organized together (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005). The four stages of BOS creation are: abandoning industries that do not create benefits or value for buyers, reducing industries that do not create value for buyers, elevating industries that exceed standards and satisfy customers. products and create new demand in industries that have never been offered before. By doing this, imitating companies whose principles underlie innovation and creativity will be avoided. In this sense, senior managers should focus on value creation (Koca & Sagsan, 2020).

2. Blue Ocean Strategy in Higher Education

BOS is a growth strategy for an established organization or start-up. Therefore, BOS can serve as a guide in planning future growth for the university. This is a sustainable strategy because it considers the entire system of profits, prices, and costs (Hasan et al., 2017). Some universities accept the fact that although migration of new customers, improved technology, and financial reality, it is very difficult to do conversion based on retrospective infrastructure (Dennis, & Lynch, 2015). Considering all interested stakeholders, universities should plan and internationalize so that they can reach their goals by supporting and encouraging companies innovate and to embark on a stronger management action measure (Koca & Sagsan, 2020).

Universities have the policy directives and performance indicators the opportunities for capacity building to develop competencies and enhance professional development. However, such development is sometimes impeded due to administrative tasks and demands from the academics. The constraints could be

associated with some of the red ocean aspects confronting the academics. According to Koca and Sagsan (2020), the higher education industry needs to resolve the state of progress and the integrity of the stagnant environment by adopting and implementing the idea of the BOS. The strategy provides a solution to this problem by analyzing what the industry will be like by looking into the unknown market areas rather than looking at their current state compared to their competitors. Implementation of BOS of higher education institutions would enable comparing in the characteristics of universities, especially on the aspects that will benefit the university (Fitri, 2021). Successful implementation of the BOS can provide enormous economic implications needed to prevent the higher education industry from collapsing. A framework that guides value innovation can aim for low operational cost while adding value to many customers. Therefore, in higher education, the stakeholders in the context of university-state could create work models as underlying the blue ocean mindset could have a positive impact and collaboration (Bragança, 2016).

3. An adaptation of the Blue ocean strategy concept for Professional Development in Higher Education

After diving into business literature in various industries, it has been found that the Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) has shown success in creating a valuable proposition (W. Chan Kim & Mauborgne, 2014). However, in educational spectrum of the industry, there are very few applications regarding the BOS. The currently existing literature shows impactful results in the implication of the blue ocean strategy in an education spectrum (López-Sieben, Peris-Ortiz & Gómez, 2014). Noticeable improvements in the higher educational institutes have been observed, and value was added adopting the BOS (Bragança, 2016).

The main aim of using the BOS is to create a demand and fill a gap that is not there rather than competing. A study conducted in 2018 illustrates this analogy perfectly, where researchers have fundamentally created their own strategy and invest in their research funds in a smarter way; where the Blue ocean strategy have not only supported their decision in creating a digital guiding tool for learning, but also helped them to conclude that involving games in the classroom can also be integrated by creating materials offline that could potentially include lesson sheets where games are used (Carrillo et al., 2018).

In contrast to the BOS, the red ocean entails that the industry boundaries are defined and accepted, and the competitive rules of the game are known. In blue ocean, competition is irrelevant because the rules of the game are waiting to be set. The organizations caught in the red ocean follow a conventional approach, racing to beat the competition by building a defensible position within the existing industry order. The creators of Blue Ocean did not set the competition as their benchmark. They instead created a leap in value for buyers and thus their organizations, thereby opening new and uncontested market space (Halligan, 2006).

On the other hand, the Red Ocean Strategies, are the strategies that everyone is using. Universities can stand out unless they find a strategy that gives them a wide-open blue ocean ahead (Moon, 2014). Kim and Mauborgne (2004a) point out that organizations not only have to outplay their competition, but find what customers seek and also execute and communicate the blue ocean strategies for reducing risks. The main idea is to find out what customers seek when they buy a product or service, and then provide solution. Likewise, organizations face steep challenge when they go for BOS implementation involving four hurdles of cognitive, limited resources, motivation, and politics (Wallace, Castaneda & McGregor, 2009). A good strategy could equally focus on execution and how it is communicated. In BOS, there are three simple characteristics or yard sticks used to evaluate strategies which are the focus, divergence, and compelling tagline (Canopus Business Management Group, 2016). BOS encourages operational ideas and collective design from pioneers, migrators, and settlers, and executes them corporately to create new value and eliminate ineffective outsourcing (Rosales, 2010). Kim and Mauborgne (2004b) mentioned effective BOS should be about risk reduction and not about risk taking. In other words, to change the organization's strategy according to the BOS model, an organization has to shift its focus from competition to new opportunities and attach importance on present noncustomers.

In sum, professional development provided to classroom teachers are typically presented in a face-to-face format, although this method is not the most effective. The one-size-fits-all approach is problematic as, "teachers are not a homogenous population but represent diverse perspectives, experiences, expertise, receptiveness to new ideas, and potential for leadership roles" (Taylor et al., 2010). Most educators hope for professional development that will align with their experience and their roles in the university.

In this study, the researchers explored how blue ocean strategy can be used to skilled human capital to attain greater visibility and the importance of moving towards a professional learning community. This study is also an attempt to understand how the university's participatory planning process for professional development helps to achieve the university's goal by exploring the phenomenon from the points of view of the participants in their social context. The research focuses on process, meaning and understanding.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design. The product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive. The focus is to explore and give descriptive details of the data collected and hence the qualitative method was deemed appropriate. The qualitative method allows the researcher to explore complexities beyond the scope of more controlled approaches. Qualitative research "implies a direct concern with experience as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone'" (Sherman & Webb, 1988).

The study commenced with data collection which involves face-to-face in-depth interviews the stakeholders to elicit their responses on how blue ocean strategy could be used to enhance a skilled human capital. The semi-structured interviews allowed for immediate follow-up questions. Extensive notes were made immediately after each interview finished and the subsequent interviews were designed to elaborate topics and interpretations with the participants. This research employed a purposeful sampling method for the selection of participants in attempt to obtain information rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). The criteria established for purposeful sampling directly reflected the purpose of the study and guide in information-rich cases. A total of five key stakeholders in the management position and ten instructors were invited to participate as experts in the face-to-face in-depth interviews.

The participants were informed with the analysis to confirm the data (member-checking). The interview followed a protocol (Patton, 2002). The interview questions were constructed based on the related literature review and validated by two content experts who had a PhD in Education field with at least 5 years of experience teaching at the universities in Malaysia. This is to improve reliability and relevance of the interview questions.

In the next stage of data collection policy documents pertaining to professional development were analyzed. Qualitative data obtained were analyzed to identify the contextual considerations for the policy pathway for professional development of the academicians. These documents included the performance measure systems (PMS) for the employees in which the key indicators related to professional development were analyzed. Analyzing the documents provided a good understanding of the process by which the documents came into being. They are also provided a great stimulus to generate further questions for generating interview questions. The documents related to the (PMS) were analyzed and the key indicators for professional development and the data was codified into themes. Follow-up interviews were conducted with the participants to confirm and verify the findings.

All the stakeholders were selected from one private university in Malaysia, and this is the limitation of the study. Findings of the face-to-face in-depth interviews with these stakeholders indicated the strategies adopted by the institutions for professional development and the contextual considerations of the institution. The data analysis was carried out through thematic analysis. The data was codified into themes and a summary was provided.

Findings and Discussion

After the analysis of the findings from the interview and PMS documents, the data was categorized into three main themes: (1) Current conditions of the institution and PD, (2) The potential of adapting the Blue Ocean Strategy for PD, (3) perspectives towards PD.

1. Current Conditions of The Institution and Implementation of Professional Development

The findings on the institutional support for professional development was extracted based on two sub-themes; 1) the policy directives given by the institution, and 2) the need to broaden the concept of professional development.

Policy directives by the institution for greater visibility

An analysis of the PMS documents indicated that an educator's competency captured under 10 categories such as i) Analytical thinking, ii) Commitment to organization, iii) Effective communication, iv) Efficient management, v) Customer oriented, vi) Teamwork, vii) Conflict management, viii) Integrity, ix) Voluntary initiative and x) Result oriented. Such an analysis is deemed important as it outlines the aspects relevant to professional development in higher institutions. The term 'academic' is not as clear-cut as common-sense usage may suggest (Williams, 2008) as it often shoulders two distinctive roles such as research and teaching in the university context. Based on the glossary included in the document, educators opined that competition and the pressure to maintain standards is the only way for academics to stay relevant. Thus, according to educator 1 about the competency dictionary:

"The institution is in competition rather than interested in adopting blue ocean strategy. Also, if they choose to adopt a blue ocean strategy then I would like to know the target. Would the target be to get more students enrolled or to promote academics to be actively engaged in professional development?"

(Educator 1)

Interviews with policy makers indicated that many of them have to follow a certain agenda or even a benchmark that the university has already set. Also, this highlights the presence of marketization of higher education institutions. As mentioned in Olsen (2007), universities are increasingly also seen as 'service enterprises embedded in competitive markets', adding to their other roles.

Such sentiments are echoed by the educators who opined that ranking is important for universities to be competent and sustainable to stay afloat. Hence, universities come up with new programs and ranking is synonymous with quality. The educators mentioned that the KPI (key performance index) is the motivating factor to enhance professional development. The staff are given training and workshop but however the emphasis on the core responsibility to teach takes precedence and the educators have little or no time to engage in research. In the higher education industry, the state of progress and stagnation environment completion should be solved by adopting and implementing blue ocean strategy mindset (Selskab, 2017). Apart from teaching and learning universities should also take into consideration all stakeholders and plan and prepare a sustainable internationalization. They could then reach their goals by supporting and encouraging innovative enterprises and taking solid regulatory measures. To achieve all this, the stakeholders need powerful leadership (Timol & Kinser, 2017). This result in universities was captured in the 'network governance narrative' (Ferlie et al., 2009). Although this might seem like a negative change in the institutional aspect, but it suggests that by offering a high-quality educational product that satisfies both the consumers of educational services (students) and the consumers of the product of the Higher education institutions (labor market and rankings) (Dimitrova, 2013).

The interviewees, both policy makers and educators, have agreed that competitiveness can have its pros and cons. For instance, competitiveness can enhance international relationships of the university, it can motivate educators to think outside the box and help the university to stay in the marketplace. But on the other hand, competitiveness may lead to extreme burnout for the educators which may lead to loss of passion for teaching. William (2008) noted that in some cases, the faculty intensified their collaboration activities for scientific progress and fund-raising purposes. It results in most academics engaged in a mixture of both basic and applied research which contributed to the role conflicts and work overload.

When interviewees were asked on what strategic policies can help skilled human capital to achieve greater visibility for sustained organizational success, they had different ideas of how they expand the skilled human capital to achieve better. As educator 2 opines:

"The policy that I think institutions should be looking to promote efficiency of the staff, like their willingness to develop themselves professionally. One of the strategies the constitutions should consider should be they give more time and opportunity to their human capital so to grow and move towards professional development, they really need support and time and understanding."

(Educator 2)

As mentioned by Mazzola et al. (2011) and McInnes (2000), heavy workloads and job insecurity were also identified as stressors. In Darabi et al. (2016) study, it was mentioned that “there was a strong consensus among all respondents that some administrations tasks should be removed from them. Administration negatively affected their productivity, frustrated and exhausted them. Reducing administration was the top of the three changes that academics felt would most improve their working life. Many academic staff pointed out the importance of teaching rather than research and administration in their role. More discretion in academic work, which is directly linked to more competent line management. So, putting in consideration the human capital of the employees can really push the company's growth further.

Meanwhile, policy makers have had different input for this, and they work with other departments to enhance their visibility and quoted that:

“The reputation and name of the university, in terms of networking if its overseas. We have also the department to put linkage between the university and outsiders. The university is indeed doing something, but it stops at the supervision of providing opportunity and getting attention from the public”.

(Educator 1 and 2)

Recently, academic roles encompassed teaching, administrative roles and academics have varying roles and therefore require different skills which adds to the complexities of professional development. While general directions are outlined for professionals in policy guidelines most of the educators highlighted the lopsided emphasis on teaching and the increasingly high visibility accorded to research.

Broaden the concept of professional development

Analysis of the documents also highlights the opportunities to educators to conduct research with information disseminated through the heads of research and information on the application of grants and funds for research collaborations indicating a robust scholastic support from the university. Besides professional development should be ongoing, effective and given considerable time and feedback and hence universities should broaden the concept of professional development and confine it to only focus on research and publication. According to educator 4:

“As an educator the first priority is teaching. I may concentrate on other areas like research but priority should be given to teaching and being an educator. The second thing as an educator is that the amount of time to develop in my area of expertise like publication and the contributions from that expertise should be noticeable and significant.”

(Educator 4)

To add, the university also supported the professional development by organizing mentoring activities such as talks and seminars and an informal chat session such as ‘tea for thoughts’ where educators can meet and engage in dialogue to explore further opportunities for collaboration and networking. While some found these sessions useful others felt a ‘power-imbalance’ as they were all at different stages of their career. Hence such mentoring sessions were isolating than uniting the academics besides time constraints being another factor that hindered them from engaging in such dialogues.

Aside from that, the educators also reported that they have to be experts in subject and pedagogic knowledge and the student evaluation at the end indicating individual achievement can only partially fulfil institutional requirements. Teaching excellence in academic practice should be not only for teaching but for research activities. However, some novice researchers cited time constraints and lack of institutional support to conduct research. Says educator 6:

“What keeps me going is the teaching aspect, when the student can understand is the most important thing as our aim is to produce good graduates. Research is just for survival. Ranking can benefit the university, and among us we also can compare. But for the educators doing the work, it will be a burden, like research, ... it gives us more headache than before to keep up with the ranking. Then it makes us think, do we help the student? or do we help you to sustain the ranking?”

(Educator 6)

Similar sentiments were expressed in research conducted by Filander (2016), who posits that scholars have been pressured to prove their ability to attract funding and produce papers. As a result, universities have new workplace cultures, where basic research and teaching are increasingly under managerial control, surveillance, and authority.

Many academics also pointed out that a research-intensive environment should be sustained through university wide professional development programs for academics to be able to focus on research and professional development. Some academics shared interest in teaching and focusing more on teaching and learning. They regarded research as an important criterion but opined that professional development should not be measured only in terms of research output. Opines educator 6:

“If everything turns out to be a competition then the quality will be affected and bring negative impact to students’ performance. Some are not ready for collaboration and hence networking becomes difficult to establish.”

(Educator 6)

Remmik et al. (2013) showed that reflective novice academics who aspired to be good teachers actively sought instructional development opportunities. These academics did not juxtapose research and teaching but regarded both as vital aspects of university careers. The views of the educators indicated two polarities whereby one who viewed that professional development should include a broader definition and not confine to research while the senior practitioners strongly associated research as synonymous to professional development. As one educator 7 opines,

“I work a lot with different groups to get research grants and collaborations and hence focus less on teaching. As research output increases our academic standing in the academia”.

Hence there are conflicting notions on professional development depending on the stage they are at and the expectations on professional development from the educators varies.

The shift to the Blue Ocean Strategy for professional development

The idea of the BOS was foreign to most of the interviewees, and their institutions did not adapt this strategy. Although they were not very familiar with it, after reading it and explaining it to them they all thought it was a fascinating strategy, where finding own market and own niche and eliminating competition seems like creative concepts. Although most educators did not have a concrete idea of how an institution operated by a BOS would be like, but all of them thought it would be a great idea if their universities adapted the BOS:

“It is good for staff to work with an organization that adapt the BOS. The pros you don’t have much pressure to compete regarding the stress of the plan and understanding other competitors. The cons are that you need to come up with very new and creative ideas that can allure costumers which perhaps can be difficult at first”.

There were some worries regarding implementing the BOS, as the interviewees suggested that in some institutions it would not be suitable because they are all about control,

“It is about up down hierarchy, so if any institute is serious about adapting this strategy, they need to be more relaxed and trusting towards their staff”. So, if the institute is micromanaging their staff, it is believed that it won't be an ideal strategy.

Darabi et al. (2016) mentioned that the main sources of stress are related to cuts in funding and resources and related job insecurity, increased workloads, unhelpful management practices and a lack of adequate recognition and reward.

The interviewees agreed with adapting a new strategy. The purpose of adopting a new strategy regarding an institutional environment is to enhance the aspects of the professional development. The educators believed that finding a niche from an educator's point of view are quite beneficial; where it may discover a learning need that lots have neglected. One example given by an educator in the Education Department, who started to work with the Architecture Department to find a new niche among their department and hers. She believed that this helps them find the blind spots in each other's field, while staff can undergo staff training. According to Merilee and John, (1989) professional development refers to many types of educational experiences related to an individual's work. Doctors, lawyers, educators, accountants, engineers, and people in a wide variety of professions and businesses participate in professional development to learn and apply new knowledge and skills that will improve their performance on the job (1989), where this aligns perfectly with what was said, perhaps learning knowledge that might be out of the existing career scope can help tremendously with the professional development.

When it comes to research and development, the BOS Shift has several advantages over traditional strategic planning. These advantages can be adopted by the institutions which include:

- Recognizing previously unidentified topics for research from the perspective of multiple stakeholders
- Creating collaborative research experiences
- Generating and capturing a new demand for research and development
- Moving past cost-benefit analysis to focusing on creating a value for end users.
- Aligning research activities to become more efficient, effective and have an increased impact on the end user (Liu, 2008).

The current red ocean practices are identified as overburden the educators with many teaching hours, administrative tasks and long regular meetings that are redundant. Also, another red ocean currently identified is educators are at different stages of their career and who require different opportunities for professional development. By allowing some competitive strategies universities can gain prominence and consolidate its growth and enhanced its visibility in a global scale. The blue ocean practices for professional development considers mentoring practices to strengthen professional development. Mentoring can help mentees to improve their writing skills and the preparation of grant applications. Engaging in a mentoring relationship can also "provide some dedicated research time and the incentive to use that time for research related activities" (Johnston, & McCormack, 1997). Participants also expressed that such a practice would help to enhance collegiality and encourage the novice researchers to enhance both their teaching and learning as well as their research skills. Such practices can increase productivity and keep up their work quality which may be otherwise compromised due to time pressure.

The study infers those appropriate policies and strategies will enhance the growth of professional development of its educators and provide an opportunity for universities to have strategic positions. Providing different opportunities for professionals at different stages of career path and developing frameworks will address the current red ocean and help transitioning towards the blue ocean. It is confirmed by numerous studies that investing in human resources increases the performance of the enterprise (Hurwitz, 2002).

Perspectives towards professional development

When policy makers and educators were questioned on how they can or are helping with retaining the development of the university and its ranking, both parties have given very different answers. The quality of educators is highly correlated with the quality and ranking of the university. One of the interviewed policy makers said:

“It is not only about the students but as well as the sponsorships and mass media. Ranking has become like an attraction to the University, it will attract lots of people from the industry and attract speakers from organization as well as sponsors. Ranking itself effects the efficiency of the university”. With that said, ranking can be beneficial for both, students, and educators. Educators could get more opportunities for publications and workshops, whereas students could have better education quality and perhaps a higher job opportunity.”

(Educator XX)

Where educators mainly focused on doing right by their students, giving high quality education, and constantly learning to develop and give the best they can. Whereas policy makers thought about development of the university as a whole supply chain, where everything is intertwined with one another. Ranking issue become of an extreme importance to the university and its reputation. This can lead to the contextual considerations that should be accounted in professional development. Most of the interviewees had unique ideas on how to enhance professional development on the staff, such as enforcement of at least 50 hours of professional development in a year, where this can ensure the organization that their staff are developing professionally. Instructing departments to provide the lecturers with writing which can help with recognition of the university, such as publications, can be a successful form of networking for the university to get noticed by the public.

The boggling global expansion of easier access to higher education has increased demand for information on academic quality and has led to the development of university ranking systems or league tables in many countries of the world (David & Maarja, 2005).

Conclusion

The study envisages on the importance of professional development and to realize this intention by redefining the concept of professional development to encompass the entire staff by adopting a blue ocean strategy to empower educators. The study underscores the objective of identifying the training needs of the educators and has outlined the aspects of professional development stated in the policy documents. The implications that emanate from this study is that institutions should broaden the concept of professional development. The study also outlines the prospects of adopting BOS from the educators’ point of view. It can be concluded that organizational innovation will help to create sustainable blue ocean practices to meet the diverse needs of the professional needs of educators. Despite the opportunities that exist to enhance the skills of the professionals, implementing a sustainable approach could greatly foster development. Such an initiative may benefit the diverse pool of educators at various stages of expertise which is integral for the visibility of the institution.

Acknowledgement: We would like to thank all our participants. This work was supported by the UCSI University, Malaysia under the Research Excellence and Innovation Grant (REIG-FOSSLA-2020/023).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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