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## **Seven habits of highly effective people among school leaders in Riau Islands, Indonesia**

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**Abstract---**School leaders play an important role in leading schools effectively in order to improve the quality of students and teachers, schools performances and to raise the standard of education in the country. This study was conducted to explore the practices of seven habits of highly effective people among school leaders in Riau Islands, Indonesia. This study used a qualitative methodology with a case study design. The key subjects were four school leaders of secondary schools in Riau Islands, Indonesia. There were also four groups of schools informants comprising a senior assistant, teacher, school staff, student and chairman of the Parent Teachers Association from each school of the selected school leaders. Data was collected through interviews, observations and analysis of relevant documents and reports and analyzed through several stages of coding, categorizing, cross-case analysis and interpretation using N-VIVO12. The findings of the study showed that the school leaders practiced seven habits of highly effective people (Covey, 1989). However, the findings of the study showed that school leaders in the Riau Islands faced problems

in implementing the third habit (*Put first things first*) because sometimes the tasks that need to be performed were overlapping, so, they faced a dilemma in prioritizing to meet the demands of all parties.

**Keywords**---Seven habits, effective, school leaders, success, effectiveness, Covey

## 1. Introduction

Effectiveness has a broad meaning and can be used in a variety of contexts, yet it indicates the extent to which an individual or organization is capable of achieving a desired goal. According to Drucker (1985), an individual's effectiveness can be seen through his or her achievements in career and personal life.

School effectiveness is usually assessed through success and performance in examinations, student achievement outcomes and job satisfaction among staff. The success of a school can also be seen through the effectiveness of the system, values, climate, spirit and culture practiced by the school citizens. School leaders are among the important parties in ensuring school success (Jamilah, 2018; Siti Julaiha & Jamilah, 2019; Nashat & Jamilah, 2020). They must possess the characteristics of effective people. To be effective school leaders, they must change paradigms and make quantum leaps to remove the key obstacle that is resisting change. They need to change themselves and attitudes by choosing the right habits to practice as a way of life.

The book entitled *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* was written by Stephen R. Covey in 1989. In his book, Covey (1989) states seven habits to be effective and successful in personal life or career. The seven habits of highly effective people are *Be proactive, Begin with the end in mind, Put first things first, Think win/win, Seek first to understand then to be understood, Synergy* and *Sharpen the saw*. As the book has extensive coverage, it has become one of the world's best-selling books and a reference for many. Covey's book has sold over 50 million copies and been translated into 50 languages since it was published. Covey (1989) has defined habit as the intersection between knowledge, skills and desire. It refers to knowing what we want to do and the reason why we want to do it. Habits need to be acquired, learned and improved. Thus, in order to produce good habits, the dimensions of knowledge, skills and desire need to be given attention. According to Covey (1989), the seven habits of highly effective people contain fundamental principles of human effectiveness that encompass both moral ethics and personality. An understanding of the seven habits will be the foundation of lasting and lifelong happiness and success (Jamilah, 2018; Nurfarah & Jamilah, 2018, Siti Julaiha & Jamilah, 2019; Nashat & Jamilah, 2020). Nevertheless, to implement all seven habits, one needs to undergo a paradigm shift, where they need to change the way they see, make perceptions, understand and interpret.

An individual must learn to be independent, proactive and learn to help to the interdependence between social environments to achieve success. They are responsible for every action and if they cannot achieve it alone, it is necessary for

him to cooperate with others. There are two stages of the change process that a person must go through to achieve the status of the most effective person, namely the level of personal winning (independence) and general winning (interdependence) (Covey, 1989). Habits 1, 2 and 3 are essential for a person to win a personal self. While Habits 4, 5, 6 and 7 are important for winning together in interpersonal relationships. A positive and strong personality is easy to make an impact and can build good and harmonious interpersonal relationships.

The practice of seven habits of highly effective people enhances interaction and facilitates affairs in school. The training of seven habits of highly effective people organized has a high impact on attitude change, job satisfaction, effective communication between team workers, focus on organizational goals, cooperation and conflict management. According to Kaw (2003), from the seven habits' trainings held, the goals and qualities (professionally and personally) of the respondents studied were enhanced. During a seminar he attended in the United States, he interviewed participants who were educators and he found that all participants agreed that the practice of the seven habits of highly effective people (Covey, 1989) affects the improvement of leader competencies and skills in organizations. According to Suren & Jamilah (2019), the application of these seven habits encourages leaders to communicate well and improves the ability to interact in groups and this is important to establish effective multilateral communication. Many studies have proven the effectiveness of the seven habits of highly effective people (Covey) and many have agreed that practicing these seven habits has impacted an individual's career and personal relationships (Covey, 2014; Jamilah, 2007; Baile and Collinwood, 2008; Jamilah, 2018; Nurfarah & Jamilah, 2018, Siti Julaiha & Jamilah, 2019; Nashat & Jamilah, 2020).

School leaders need to equip themselves with knowledge, skills and positive attitude. The Indonesian Ministry of Education has implemented various strategies to ensure that the school leaders to be appointed are among those who are qualified and competent (Maryono, 2015). They are required to attend a few series of training, seminars, courses and other related activities. One of the compulsory courses they are required to attend is the Principal Professional Qualification. This course is offered to school leaders for the purpose of equipping themselves with the required competencies (Maryono, 2015). Logically, with the knowledge and skills gained from experiences, training, seminars, courses and others activities should help them become competent leaders and able to lead the school to achieve success, but unfortunately, several studies conducted in Indonesia found that there are incompetent school leaders who are unable to lead and do not contribute to the school performances (Sumintono, Elslee, Sheyoputri, Na Jiang, Ifa, Misbach & Jumintono, 2015).

## **2. Methodology**

This study used a qualitative methodology with a case study design. The key subjects were four school leaders of secondary schools in Riau Islands, Indonesia. There were also four groups of schools informants comprising a senior assistant, teacher, school staff, student and the chairman of the Parent Teachers Association from each school of the selected school leaders. Data was collected through interviews, observations and analysis of relevant documents and reports.

The interview questions used were adapted (with permission) from a survey conducted by Suren & Jamilah (2019). Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain clear information and opinions from the participants of the study (Chau, 2014). All interviews were recorded using tape recorders and written, and then analyzed through several stages of coding, categorization, cross-analysis and interpretation using N-VIVO12.

### 3. Findings

The findings of the study presented and discussed in the following sub-sections are based on themes that emerge from the interviews conducted. The results showed that the school leaders studied practiced seven habits of highly effective people introduced by Covey (1989). The findings supported the researches conducted by Jamilah (2018) and Suren & Jamilah (2019). However, the findings of this study showed that school leaders in the Riau Islands faced problems in implementing the third habit (*Put first things first*) because sometimes the tasks that need to be performed are overlapping and they faced a dilemma in prioritizing to meet the demands of all parties..

#### 1. Habit 1 : *Be Proactive*

School leaders in the Riau Islands, Indonesia were very proactive, they were responsible for themselves and did not blame the atmosphere or circumstances for the response that had been taken. They took the initiative to do positive things and ensured their actions were based on sensible choices and not influenced by feelings or emotions. They carried out tasks and responded to various situations calmly and confidently. They had high efficiency and prioritized value and quality in whatever field they were involved in.

#### 2. Habit 2: *Begin With The End In Mind*

The school leaders in the Riau Islands, Indonesia had a clear vision and mission about life. They had build a personal mission statement (goal) according to the values and principles of life, disciplined and ensured that the actions taken coincide with their self-images.

#### 3. Habit 3: *Put First Thing First*

The school leaders in the Riau Islands studied were able to manage time wisely, performed important things and did not like to procrastinate. They made decisions and acted according to the decisions that had been made. They believed in efficiency and effectiveness in performing diverse roles. However, there were times when they could not manage their time well because they had to respond to various needs from various parties. They faced a dilemma in placing priority to meet the demands of all parties, whether from the organization, family or themselves if the demands were to be implemented simultaneously.

#### 4. Habit 4 : *Think Win-win*

The findings of the study showed that school leaders in the Riau Islands, Indonesia worked collaboratively with all parties. They seek mutual benefits in every interaction, ensuring all parties are satisfied with the results and committed to what has been done. They believed that one's success is not derived from the failure of another. They created a healthy work environment and used an

approach to a system that benefits all parties towards the formation of a collaborative culture. They also created a harmonious home environment where they do a good job to parents, spouses, children, siblings and relatives.

#### 5. Habit 5: *Seek First To Understand Then To Be Understood*

The school leaders studied had the ability to use empathetic listening. They listened carefully to understand while communicating with others. They were able to analyze a conversation before answering or giving an answer. They strived to understand each other and convinced that differences were not a barrier to communication and progress rather it leads to synergy. By understanding the different situations, they made better and creative decisions. They focused on effective communication processes because they believed the positive relationships contribute to productivity and quality in pursuit of the school goals.

#### 6. Habit 6: *Synergy*

Findings of the study through interviews conducted found that the school leaders in Riau Islands had establish honest relationships, cooperation and unity. They saw the differences of others as an opportunity in solving problems and gaining opportunities. They were open-minded to new alternatives and solutions to a problem and took into account the individual differences mentally, emotionally and psychologically. They looked for the good in others (even their enemies) to improve their own views and perspectives. They put effort to get involved in every activities organized by their school and communities.

#### 7. Habit 7: *Sharpen the Saw*

From the study conducted, the school leaders in the Riau Islands focused on four dimensions, namely the physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual dimensions. They are healthy, fit and energetic in carrying out tasks. They took care of their bodies by eating a balanced diet, getting adequate rest and exercising regularly. They also emphasized healthy spiritual development by performing worship and doing good deeds. They believed that strong and high morals were among the characteristics that must be present. As for the intellectual dimension, the school leaders always strive to sharpen the mind with continuing education, reading, writing, organizing and planning. They tried to improve the quality of leadership and equip themselves with knowledge and skills in line with current demands.

### **4. Conclusion**

The results of this study showed that school leaders in the Riau Islands, Indonesia studied practiced seven habits of highly effective people (Covey, 1989). Through this study, it is hoped that there will be a knowledge sharing about the seven habits introduced by Covey. In addition, it is hoped that the practice of these seven habits is understood and practiced not only among school leaders but also among teachers, parents and students. It is hoped that with the practice of this habit, there will be a change in attitude among school citizens to be effective human beings and appreciate cooperation with each other, all of which will contribute to improved quality, productivity of school citizens and improved school performance.

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