

"Enhancing student competency through “Big Brother-Big Sister” program"

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Back ground

Higher education institutions have the main responsibility for providing individuals with the advanced knowledge and skills required for positions of liability in government, business and professions.

Length of study , student's average of GPA, and waiting time to get a job, are the most common indicators to measure flourishing of higher education institution. Most of Higher education institutions have assumptions that their graduations will be absorbed by market when student has high GPA and their length of study is short. In fact, graduates who have high GPA did not get a job easily.

In this time, fresh higher education graduates should be fighting harder than before. There are some assumptions to explained this condition:

1. Every year the number of higher education graduations are increase
2. As an impact of economics crisis, number of well trained employee who loose their job also increased
3. Students GPA are not reflect their real quality

Feed back from users suggested that higher education institutions should preparing students with some skill such as communication skill, problem-solving skill and other competence to complete student's academic competency.

As an effort to complete the student's competence, the Higher education institutions should be always updating their formal curriculum and develop hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum generally is not considering as an important part on teaching and learning process in higher education. Most of us only focusing on formal curriculum and not realize that formal curriculum will not succeed since there is no support from hidden curriculum .

Mostly in universities have student union activities which prepare some programs to provide and develop student's interest. Although some research showed that students who participate in extra-curriculum activities have more interpersonal competence and conflict management and more confidence, usually the activities do not systematic and sometimes only depend from the students who have special interest and have no special/focus objective. One method to confront those situation is propose an activity called big brothers and big sisters program.

What is big brothers and big sisters program ?

A purposeful arrangement which is set up together by senior students and teacher to assist younger students in non formal academic activities. They are planned with assigned responsibilities. In this program, the position of senior students or teachers are as big brothers or sisters.

This program has similarity with mentorship or mentorship-like. Some experts suggest that this program can used to help students who may face obstacles in realizing their potential. A lot of students need supports, encouragements and opportunity to develop their competence to communicate, express their ideas, feeling, and to solve problems.

This program is a valuable option to enhance student's competency as Reilly (see Classmen & Classmen, 1997) mentioned that one of student's desire is *study on my own*.

Roles of Big brothers and sisters

The roles of Big Brothers and Sisters (BBS) on this program will mentioned below

- as a teacher,
- as an expert,
- as a guide
- as an advisor
- as a friend
- as a role model

Who should be a big brothers or sisters ?

The success of a program will be determined by an older expert who will become the big brothers or sisters. Not everyone who is an expert can be a big brothers and sisters; expertise and skill in a field are necessary but not sufficient. Other characteristics can be considered for big brothers and sisters recruitment , including :

- ♦ willingness and eagerness to share expertise
- ♦ patience and understanding
- ♦ sensitivity to others developmental needs
- ♦ flexible, creative, problem solving skills

Advantages of the program

There are some advantages in using Big Brother and Big Sister Program since the program could be :

- a. meeting student's special needs
- b. career exploration and development
- c. enlargement of potential
- d. psychosocial encroachment
- e. interactions with the larger world
- f. shared rewards
- g. community and school collaborations

Closing stages

Big brothers and big sisters program can be a prevailing experience and commonly has a long-lasting impact on both partners in the relationship. Although it requires commitment, hard work and negotiation, but in return it will offers opportunities for sharing mutual interest, facing appropriate challenges and increasing a keener understanding of living skill. This program should be an available option for educational strategy to enhance student's competencies, and hopefully one of the university challenges: educate future leaders will be attained.

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