

## Establishment of Research Universities in Malaysia

In 2004, the Ministry of Education\* formed an Ad Hoc committee comprising researchers from Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) to formulate the establishment of research universities (RUs).

The committee in their concept paper states the mission of a research university as follows:

"The mission of a research university is to be an engine of growth of the nation where scholars and students exchange ideas as well as conduct research in a conducive environment that nurtures exploration and creativity to discover knowledge and create wealth, leading towards an improved quality of life."

The goals of the RU include to be a leader in innovation, to produce Nobel Prize Winners and to generate world class research outputs.

Following this development, IPPTN interviewed the Vice Chancellor of USM, Y. Bhg. Prof Dato' Dzulkipli Abdul Razak, the Vice Chancellor of UKM, Y. Bhg. Prof Dato' Dr. Mohd. Salleh Yasin and the Director of Institute of Research Management and Consultancy in UM, Prof. Rasad Muhammad to gather their views on several issues related to the establishment of RUs.

The three universities supported the establishment of RUs and agreed that such an establishment was important in order for Malaysian universities to be competitive globally. But they

also believed that more importantly universities should emphasise research, regardless of whether or not they are called RUs, whilst not neglecting teaching. Rasad, for example, stated that he believed the teaching component in universities must have research input even at undergraduate level as it would influence the quality of graduates. Dzulkipli too saw a vital link between research and teaching. As he put it "the whole idea of researching is basically to pass it back to the general population. There must be a push on teaching".

In gaining RU status, a number of requirements have to be met. For Mohd. Salleh, these requirements included



Prof. Dato' Dzulkipli

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increasing the quantity of research, having more qualified lecturers, increasing the number of postgraduate enrolments, procuring more research grants as well as cultivating research culture among students and academics.

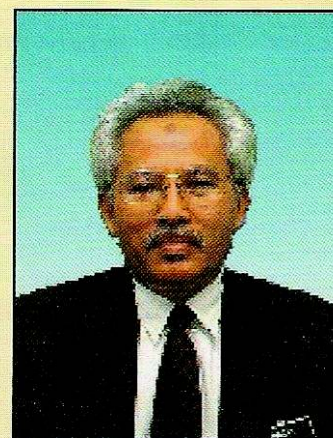
RUs would also have to create a very high international benchmark. According to Dzul kifli, to create such benchmark, the RUs in Malaysia must identify their niche areas.



*Prof. Dato' Mohd Salleh Yasin*

involve producing world class research outputs, securing more research grants from industry and generating high impact research publications.

Incentives appear to be a key factor in sustaining the concept of RU. Among many others, as RUs, universities will offer better chances of promotion and consultancies. Rasad pointed out that UM would allow researchers to keep 75% of the royalty



*Prof. Rasad Muhammad*

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*- Prof Dzul kifli*

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Universities also need to be self-sufficient. Dzul kifli added that USM was trying to build a “commercial arm” so that it could generate enough fund to pay its own professors and researchers at an attractive market value. Similar to USM, UM and UKM have been actively intensifying their research output.

In all the three universities, a lot of efforts have been made to ensure that their universities become centres of excellence globally. One of the strategies adopted in their endeavour to become world class is to form cluster research where a group of researchers from diverse disciplines work together on certain prioritised areas of the nation.

Even though it is a challenging process, all three respondents interviewed believed that with proper planning, the establishment of RUs was sustainable. Dzul kifli, stated that USM had a “big plan” and there were sufficient intellectuals in the university to develop a model which would enable it “to launch itself and remain among the top.” For Rasad and Mohd. Salleh, the planning would

gained from their consultancy projects. Minimum teaching hours would also be reduced to encourage more research efforts, an approach which was also mooted by the Vice Chancellor of UKM. As for USM, Dzul kifli said that researchers might be allowed to set up their own companies. In addition to monetary gains, this flexibility would enable them to be in touch with the industry.

In general, the respondent from each university agreed that the elevation of Malaysian universities to the status of RUs with excellent track records in research activities and outputs will bring Malaysia closer to the world’s best. All the three universities are clearly gearing up to achieve their own vision of a world class centre of educational excellence. However, as the separate interviews reveal, there are still many issues and challenges that need to be addressed before the universities in Malaysia can evolve to full-fledged world-class RUs.

\* The Malaysian government recently created a separate ministry to be in-charge of higher education.

Munir Shuib and Ambigapathy Pandian

# Malaysia - China Relations in Higher Education, in Light of GATS

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Many countries have now signed up to the Twenty-first Century's much vaunted 'Knowledge-Economy', pledging to deploy higher education more and more actively in the service of economic growth. Yet, there is a clear contradiction here, as demand for higher education is rapidly outstripping the capacity of the state to provide the funding required, something that is partly a product of global economic re-structuring. Hence, in the context of massification of higher education, there is an on-going re-balance of public and private higher education, including in countries such as China and Malaysia.

But it is not merely domestic private higher education that is growing. Indeed one of the striking features during the twentieth century, most particularly the latter decades, has been the growth of international higher education, notably the spectacular rise of students from one country, studying in another. The increasing globalisation of higher edu-

cation continues to breach national boundaries - creating new challenges but also opening up prospects for new alliances, often regional. Hence, higher education policies become a mix of competition and cooperation. This article addresses such competitive and cooperative strategies in higher education between China and Malaysia, as part of a wider study of China-ASEAN relations in higher education, embracing Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam.

As what is often now termed the global trade in higher education develops, new questions arise. One of the more insistent is that of deepening inequalities, including between North and South. Clearly, some nations are better placed than others to take advantage of this growing global 'market' for higher education, now conservatively estimated at US\$30+ billion, annually (APEC 2001), with perhaps 1.4 million international students by 2010 (McBurnie

Table 1: Modes of Provision of Cross Border Educational Services

Mode	Exploration	Examples	Size and Potential
1. Cross Border Supply	The service, rather than the person, crosses the border	-Distance education-Education Software - Virtual education (including corporate-training)	Small, but growing Swiftly, with Considerable growth potential, esp. via ICT
2 Consumption Abroad	The consumer moves to the country of the supplier	Students who study in another country.	Currently, the largest-share of international-education.
3. Commercial Presence	The provider uses or establishes facilities in a second country	- Local university, or Satellite campus. - Private providers, including language & IT	Growing phenomenon, with strong likelihood of growth
4. Presence of Natural Persons	Persons travelling to a Second country to provide a service	Professors, teachers, educational consultants	Given rising professional mobility, also likely to grow strongly.

and Ziguras 2001). Already, substantial imbalances exist, whereby rich countries with well developed infrastructure, dominate international higher education – OECD member nations already account for 85% of all international student enrolments (Welch 2004). Moreover, these same countries have developed special skilled migration schemes that add to the problems of brain drain in developing countries. A further form of imbalance is the dominance of English as a medium of instruction – the four main English language providers account for 54% of all international enrolments, and some 70% of students from Asia/Oceania. At the same time, however, it should be remembered that the total number of Putonghua (Mandarin) speakers in the region is approximately the same as that of English speakers – each around 1 billion. The growth in demand for higher education services in Mandarin is only likely to grow.

A major new development in this context is the passage of the Global Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), itself reflective of the rise in service sector trade in many national economies. GATS has developed a typology of cross border services in education, as indicated in the Table 1.

While Mode Two is still the largest, all of the other three modes are growing swiftly.

Regionalism offers a real response to some of the inequalities indicated above, and makes good sense, since Asia accounts for around 45% of all international students enrolled in OECD countries. Moreover, regional responses can offer localised solutions to local problems. Given this, what are the prospects for increased collaboration between Malaysia and China in higher education?

### **China's Higher Education System**

China's economic development, with annual GDP growth of around 10% over the 1990s, has helped fuelled domestic demand for many goods and services, notably including higher education. At the same time, this rising demand for higher education can not be met entirely by existing state run institutions. Adding to these difficulties, which have led to a significant rise in private higher educational institutions (called Minban), are ongoing issues in regard to quality, with staff: student ratios worsening appreciably, as a result of deliberate government policy to increase enrolments by around 30% annually in recent years, without commensurate increases in staff. Thus, whereas the overall staff student ratio in 1985 was 1:4.95, by 2001 it had fallen to 1:13.52. Regional inequalities are increasing, aging of the professoriate a growing problem (almost 90% of doctoral supervisors at state universities are over the age of 56), levels of internal efficiency remain generally low, and academic decisions are often dominated by the large cohort of administrators that abound in Chinese universities. Finance is also a growing concern of academic

leaders in Chinese universities, as financial devolution has increased pressure on institutions to gain funds from local authorities (via taxes), as well to resort to fees (which now account for perhaps 15% of Chinese public university incomes, and as much as 90% of Minban), and develop 'spin-off' companies, perhaps in partnership with local industry. Clearly, however, premier universities in Beijing, Shanghai or Nanjing are far more able to take advantage of this changing financial climate, to supplement the state's budget allocation, than their regional, or less well-known cousins. Internationalisation, too is a major challenge, with China sending and receiving some 85,000 international students each year.

### **Prospects for greater China-Malaysia cooperation in Higher Education**

The Chinese diaspora is another significant source of support to Chinese universities. Well before Hong Kong's Incorporation into mainland China, for example, it had already acted as a bridge to the outside world for many Chinese Universities (Yang 2002), while some of its key billionaires endowed buildings in universities in many mainland campuses.

Theoretically, this leaves Malaysia (and Singapore, for example), well placed to enhance relations with Chinese universities, (whose enrolments totalled 7.2 million in 2001). The fact that ethnic Chinese comprise around 75% of Singapore's total population, and around 26% or so of Malaysia's, (with, in each case, a disproportionate role in the economy), leaves them well-placed to take advantage of prospects for greater collaboration with Chinese universities. Both Malaysia and Singapore have several hundred students enrolled in universities in China, of an overall total of some 85,000 international students. Equally, Malaysia's trade with China has grown strongly over the past decade, (although imports have risen rather faster than exports). Malaysian universities are also members of regional higher education consortia, together with Chinese universities. The ASEAN Universities Network (AUN) including both University of Malaya, and Universiti Sains Malaysia, has initiated dialogue with Chinese rectors, for example, and initiated an exchange programme. The Association of Pacific Rim Universities includes University of Malaya, as well as Peking University, Fudan, Tsing Hua, Zhejiang, and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

It is therefore somewhat surprising to find that, notwithstanding Malaysia's expressed desire to establish itself as a regional educational hub; the Malaysian Association of Colleges and Universities (MAPCU)'s interest in promoting Malaysian higher education internationally; and the holding of an Expo of Malaysian Universities in China recently, that more solid bi-lateral links in higher educa-

tion have not formed. Of the more than 5,000 international enrolments in Malaysian universities, less than 120 were recorded as being from China, while only 632 Malaysian students were enrolled in Chinese universities in 2001. Little evidence was found among Malaysia's public sector universities of ongoing programmes of staff or student exchange, twinning, branch campuses, or research collaboration. The private sector fared little better. Inti College has had a campus, the Beijing Inti Management College (BIMC), operating in Beijing since 1994. The China programme students study at BIMC and later apply for further study in Inti's partner universities in UK, Australia or in the main campus in Malaysia. Little if any evidence was found of formal staff and/or student exchanges, or research collaboration.

### Conclusion

The prospects for regional collaboration in higher education, especially with China, and including in Mandarin, are only likely to grow. Malaysia's competitive advantages of geographical proximity, and ethnic and linguistic compatibility give it the potential to enhance existing sporadic links. With the dismantling of pre-existing quotas and other limits on Malaysians of Chinese extraction within Malaysia, and the ongoing march of China away from a formal

adherence to Communist orthodoxy, can Malaysia seize the historic opportunity to build stronger bridges with the vast and dynamic Chinese higher education system?

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## Appropriate or Appropriating English ? : The Standard of, and Future For, Language Teaching in Malaysia.

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The status of English in Malaysia is an issue that has created passionate discussion around a perception of decline in standards and a concern for Malaysia's international position in the global market where English is one of the dominant global languages. The issue is also linked to a perception that the standard of language teaching in other languages, such as Bahasa Malaysia, has declined over the years.

In many respects Malaysia is not alone in this anxiety about language performance. Other nations, like Australia, Canada and the United States seek to maintain high standards of proficiency in English as well as their strengthen

usage and competence in their community languages. In Australia this concern about standards often manifests itself in intemperate complaints to the national broadcaster, the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation), that the pronunciation, grammar and accents of the announcers are not what they should be. In most cases the people complaining yearn for the clipped English accents of the 1950s rather than the contemporary Aussie drawl and vernacular expressions that many Malaysians will be familiar with.

In some ways there are similarities about some of the issues in Australia and Malaysia because as former colo-

nies both countries have developed their own hybridized and localized forms of English that emerge from the social, cultural and linguistic environment of the specific countries. Both countries have appropriated English and modified it to reflect a specific character and the needs of the people.

The sort of anxieties and complaints that emerge in Australia are a response to the dynamic nature of English as a global language and the fact that there is no longer a standard form of English. There are now a host of different global Englishes in different countries and regions as well as new forms of language emerging from the new technologies of communication. English

has specific local hybridisations that are the direct legacies of the British empire that ensures that English has unique and specific character that makes it different across the globe. English is spoken and written differently in the Caribbean, in Africa, on the Indian subcontinent, in the North America and even within the British Isles itself. In a way the original owners of English, the inhabitants of the British Isles, have lost the monopoly on the language as it is changed and used by more second language speakers than first language or so called "native" speakers of English.

These differences are also being subject to change through information and computer based technology. The nature and character of written language is being reshaped by "Netlish" which is the term used to describe English on the Internet and email communications. Writing through these new technologies now involves abbreviated spelling, minimal punctuation, shortened sentences and the inclusion of graphics and signage as part of the new forms of computer mediated English. For those who believe that these developments are temporary, the escalating growth and popularity of the abbreviated spelling SMS short message systems used via mobile telephones suggests written English is changing profoundly. New spelling such "CU" for "see you" and others that mix symbols and the alphabet have infiltrated common written language in many places. In addition the impact of Hollywood style popular culture has introduced new forms of expression through pop music, movies and television as well as sport and recreational pursuits. For example the basketball expression "time out" and its now familiar crossed hand sign now has a common usage outside the sport and is a good example of the way in which the new Englishes are emerging.

These developments have a strong impact on the teaching of English. While English is characterized by a dynamic hybridized, quality language teach-

ing remains static and does not have the methodologies or the flexibility in curriculum material to adequately respond to these changes. It is really not fair to hold teachers "feet to the fire" and blame them exclusively for the quality of language proficiency. Part of the problem for language teachers is that these dynamic and changing qualities of the language are not reflected in the training programs for teachers, the curriculum and teaching materials, the infrastructure and resources they use for language teaching. Much of

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the material they use is outdated and does not build on a response to localized English. Some of it is absurdly nostalgic and Euro-centric and completely irrelevant to speakers in an Asian context. Although this is changing, progress is slow and will require changes in thinking about English language teaching.

Malaysia is not alone in facing this problem. Countries like Australia have problems in the teaching of Asian languages where there is a shortage of competent teachers in key languages such as Mandarin, Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Malaysia and other regional and global languages such as Spanish and Hindi. It is not helped by the Australian government's recent cuts to programs supporting the teaching of Asian languages in schools. Like Malaysia, teachers need better training, resources and professional support in their schools, technical colleges and universities. In Australia, language teaching is shrinking at the university level with many universities are closing their language departments or amalgamating with other universities in the face of government cuts.

Malaysia and Australia need to look not only to revitalize language teach-

ing by providing incentives for teachers to take on the role, but also to have the skills to develop a curriculum that builds on both the localized varieties of English and the emergence of cyber English. Proposals to reintroduce English medium schools or the introduction of bi-lingual education in Malaysia will not be successful unless teaching, and the resources to do the teaching, respond to the local context of English and the localized experience of students. This means that language teaching will need to respond

to the internet, popular culture and the localized experience of students with "Manglish" and use that to build experience and confidence in using English.

For students in the future, the trick will not be to speak one English but be able to work across a range of Englishes. In this region the acquisition of English will also often be "scaffolded" around other languages. For example, the cross-coding and use of Bahasa Malaysia with other languages in conversation can be an advantage in acquiring early proficiency in English. Rather than impeding acquisition, multi-lingualism can support the acquisition of English rather than impede it.

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# Ethics in Research: Brief Notes

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## Introduction

Life has its purpose. Most of us will agree that we must do something good, serve society, and contribute to the human welfare and well-being. From young we were taught about the rights and wrongs, the proper and improper way of doing things and the norms and misnorms in life. We were then put through the process of education where we were supposed to acquire knowledge, skills, academic experience and other positive attributes. Either by design or default we then find ourselves in the academic world.

As we walk through the campus, down the hall of academic buildings, we will most likely meet people hunched over their computers with strained eyes, or somebody in the lab mumbling to themselves, or lecturers/academic advisors and fellow students 'hard at work'. They are students and academicians doing research, perhaps.

## What does a researcher do?

A researcher collects and analyses data, replicates and extends his earlier work and communicates his results. Besides that, he/she also relies on the work by other researchers through:

- collaboration
- review and criticise existing research results
- training and supervision of students and associates

## Scientific Research

Outstanding achievements in the history of mankind grew out of the struggles and victories of individual scientists. These brilliant people obtain their scientific experience through their deep insights into the workings of nature. They possess 'scientific mind' (not superstitions) that are always seeking answers to questions. The pursuit and production of knowledge through scientific research is an undertaking that offers enormous intellectual rewards while also performing a very important social function. Scientific findings create technology which in turn influences science (e.g. the invention of microscope further creates new areas of inquiry).

The scientific research enterprise, like anything else, built on a foundation of trust. Society trusts that the results of a research reflect honest and laborious attempts by the scientist to describe the world accurately and without bias. The scientist, meanwhile, trusts that the results reported by other scientists are valid.

In the public eye, scientists have a unique and critical mission to discover, to explain and to contribute to human welfare. Over the past years, we have witnessed an unparalleled level of scientific productivity which stems from the results of the complete trust that has characterised science and its relationship with society.

Researchers must be extremely clear about the methods used to gather and analyze data. Others will be judging not only the validity of the data but also the validity and accuracy of the methods used to derive those data. We must also clarify the procedures used to obtain our results so that others can validate them. Many experimental techniques have been designed to minimise the influence of bias in research. These include statistical tests of significance, proper phrasing of questions on surveys and many more. By adhering to these techniques, we produce results that others can systematically verify, and replicate, thereby creating a scientific consensus. Researchers also share data and research finding. Research findings are documented, presented in seminar and conferences, or published in academic journals. New scientific findings are being scrutinised, reviewed and debated by peers and other fellow scientists, before they can be accepted as scientific facts and knowledge.

## Integrity in Research

To ensure scientific progress and maintain society's confidence and support for science and research, it is incumbent upon scientists to uphold the integrity and quality of scientific research. In recent years, challenges to the quality and integrity of scientific research are becoming increasingly apparent. There have been cases of scientists being guilty of fabricating data, falsifying results, stealing ideas and plagiarism.

## Misconduct in scientific research

Misconduct in scientific research would damage the integrity of science. Some of the common misconduct or mistakes are:

- **Error and negligence.** All scientific results are susceptible to error, thus honest mistakes, if discovered, have to be rectified. Mistakes due to negligent are unforgivable. These mistakes often arise due to haste, carelessness and lack of attention.

• **Deception.** This happens by ways of making up data or results (fabrication), changing or misreporting data/results, stealing ideas or work of others (plagiarism), and copying sentences/paragraphs from others.

• **Publication malpractice.** This is when a publisher publishes the same research findings in different papers or he writes a series of shorter, less complete papers.

• **Conflicts of interests.** This happens when a scientist tries to satisfy clients or sponsors of a research fund.

It is therefore imperative that the scientific community devote themselves to exemplify and transmit the values associated with ethical scientific conduct. We must ensure the highest standards of integrity in scientific research. Data selection, if any, has to be done with care. We can throw out the noise (i.e. omit erroneous data). Sharing of research materials / ideas is acceptable with the right permission and/or acknowledgement. In publishing, what matters are not the numbers of papers, but the level of significance the contribution makes to the respective field of knowledge.

## Conclusion

Scientific research involves the discovering of truth. Therefore the methods involved must be 'truthful'. It is meant to facilitate verification of scientific observations. Research must also be meaningful. The object of research is to extend human knowledge of the physical, biological or social world beyond what is already known, for society.

# Difficulties of Public University Reform in Malaysia

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## Introduction

In the early 90s, the Malaysian government began to reform its education policies and legislations to liberalize its tight controls and introduce various types of higher education in an attempt to democratize higher education. Under the new legislations, private institutions are allowed to award their own degrees while the public universities have been corporatized, which began in 1998. Other changes also took place. For example, public universities, which previously relied on Malay, the national language, as the primary medium of instruction, were requested to begin offering more courses in English. Various quality management and assurance measurements have been introduced both by the government and the university. Also, the contentious ethnic quota on admissions to the public universities was abolished in 2002.

Some of those changes and reforms can be observed in other industrialized countries such as USA, UK, and

Australia. Numerous studies have been conducted on the transformation of universities, and scholars have pointed out the impetus for university reform includes changing economic structure, demography, values of education, increasing pressure to produce new knowledge, the influence of globalization, changing financial resources, and the development of information and technology. However, even if the same reform takes place, depending on other elements of the nation, it would push the university to different directions. Sheldon Rothblatt (1995:25) explains, "I would argue on historical grounds that universities can only be as flexible, as responsive, as progressive, as enlightened, as vital as the broader political traditions of their societies allow".

Reflecting Malaysia's case in line with this idea gives one perspective to analyze and evaluate the recent university reforms. This study focuses on the reforms related to public universities because public universities are caught in the midst of different expectations,

pressures and social environment. As the national institution, the public university has the responsibility to be accountable to the society and has the duty to follow other national policies. At the same time, as an independent academic institution, it should detach itself from the society and protect the academic freedom and its institutional autonomy. In Malaysia's case, the existence of the ethnic and national language issues makes it difficult to change the balance of power between the government and the university. Reflecting the researcher's personal understanding of the issue, this study seeks to highlight some of the difficulties of the public university reform in Malaysia by making clear the dilemma that the university faces.

## Methodology

In researching this topic, in addition to analyzing newspaper and magazine articles, the Government's publications, academic journals and books, the researcher met and interviewed numerous academics from pub-

lic universities in Malaysia in order to get a better first-hand understanding of the processes and implications of public university reform. As Burton Clark states (1998:7), "Whether they [the traditional academic departments] accept or oppose a significant transformation is critical," to foreseeing the consequences of the reform because individual academic plays an important part of the university's activities and structural changes alone would not solve the issues and transform the university.

The interviewees include academics from various faculties, different generations and ethnic backgrounds, and those with and without administrative responsibilities. The style of interview was open-ended, and if necessary the same person was interviewed for a second time. The following questions were posed with the aim of eliciting views on several major issues:

1. Please describe the structural changes that have taken place at your institution.
2. What do you account for the university's corporatization, and has this been of benefit or detriment to the institution?
3. What are some key issues that your university currently faces, and what do you suggest are some of the best ways of tackling these issues?

It should be noted that the purpose of using these interviews is not to generalize about Malaysian academics. Nevertheless, the comments do provide some insightful understandings of what is happening in Malaysian public universities.

## Findings

### The ethnic and national language issue

One of the challenges for the public university is how to retain the academic standard and academic freedom within the restriction of ethnic and language policies. For example, all interviewees agreed that using English in the university would bring the quality of education to the international level. However, it has been part of their job to promote the usage of the national language. The challenge is, therefore, to strike a right balance between the usage of English and Malay in their programmes.

### The public university as the guardian of fundamental studies

As a result of corporatization and expansion of market-oriented education, the public universities are under pressure to consider how to generate income and because

students' tuition is the single largest income, they have to introduce courses that attract more students. As students are usually vocationally oriented, those courses tend to be market-driven. Some interviewees pointed out that the subdivisions in the faculty and department as the influence of those pressures. An interviewee said, "Universities are starting to have all those strange degrees [with specific names such as Development Studies and Management, English and IT] which basically have no philosophy in its academic activities." Yet, on the other hand, one of the important roles of the public university is to protect fundamental studies to enrich the nation's academic culture, which might not bring money into the university. With the government's financial support, almost only the public universities can afford to maintain quality research activities. Finding the balance between academic freedom in the curriculum and vocational types of studies is a critical role of the public university.

## Discussion

The above-mentioned difficulties are only part of the whole experience of Malaysia's public universities which are faced with many conflicting pressures. The only way to survive is to strike a right balance.

From the interview, it is clear that academics are aware of the issues that public universities face, however, they do not seem to be involved in the university reform process. The lack of information, communication, and involvement has left academics ignorant of the reform. For example, asked about the corporatization, interviewees without administrative position often stated that they were not sure of the process and idea of the corporatization. On the other hand, those with administrative position usually offered clear answer about the process. Therefore, there is a need for sufficient dialogue and discussion between the government and the university, the university administration and academics, and within the society, which is currently missing in Malaysia.

Academics overwhelmingly agree that it is important to have the right kind of leadership in place, one that prioritizes integrating various services and functions of the university and able to lead the way into the future. While corporatized universities may have stronger, more centralized administrative decision making mechanisms, academics believe that, most importantly, the university needs strong academic leadership. The two important levels of leadership include the Vice-Chancellor and the academic heads. The VC is the person who decides the overall policy of the university based on discussions, while the dean and the head of the faculty or department decides its own structure and research objectives. One interviewee explained the role of the good academic head as follows: "A good head

should be able to decide to what extent we would get involved with money making and to what extent we should be engaged in pure academic activities.”

### Conclusion

The government recently created a separate ministry to be in charge of higher education; the Higher Education Ministry with its own minister and deputies.

This shows that transformation of higher education in Malaysia is still an ongoing process. From the research conducted, it became clear that any policy can be interpreted and carried out in different ways depending on internal and external factors. Therefore for an effective reform, there is the urgent need for the discussion within the university as to how to implement the policies. The public universities have reached a turning point and it is that academics are given some autonomy to make their own decisions as well as opportunity to discuss and contribute to the future development of their own institutions. Quite a number of the academics interviewed are of the opinion that it is very necessary to have a strong academic leadership in order to survive this turmoil of public university reform. It is also about time that each academic is able to give considerations to the situation that he/she is in and make his/her own decisions.

i. This paper is an abstract of the MA thesis, **Dilemmas of Public University Reform in Malaysia** submitted to the Australian National University.

ii. The establishment of the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act 1996, the National Accreditation Board Act 1996, the National Council of Higher Education Act 1996, and the amendment to the Education Act 1960 and the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971.

iii. For example; Clark Kerr, *The Uses of University*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, Harvard Univ. Press, 1995,) (the first edition was published in 1963) Burton R. Clark, *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities: Organizational Pathways of Transformation*, (Oxford, NY, and Tokyo, IAU Press, 1998) and Simon Marginson and Mark Considine, *The Enterprise University: Power, Governance and Reinvention in Australia*, (Language Policy and National Unity, New Jersey, Rowan & Allanheld Publishers, 1985).

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## Employer Expectations of Linguistic And Literacy Related Skills Of Tertiary Students In Malaysia: Implications For ESP Teaching

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### Introduction and background

This study was conducted in anticipation of eliciting answers to two pertinent questions in relation to the linguistic requirements of an entry-level workforce:

1. to identify the types of linguistic skills that employers value in potential employees among graduates from local, public tertiary institutions;

2. to discover other language and literacy-related skills that employers value in their employees.

As it stands, local tertiary level students are required to take up an English language proficiency course during the course of their study. This is often a general proficiency course or a course in English for Academic Purposes (EAP). These courses are usually conducted for students from

various disciplines of study. It is the contention of this study that although such basic proficiency courses and content based courses are relevant in the context of a continuing language education from secondary schools, they are not adequate in preparing students to meet the language and literacy requirements set by potential employers, especially in the private sector.

Hence the researchers argue that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) could be implemented at tertiary level classes with a wider curriculum content that goes beyond the basic skills of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking in order to meet the requirements of providing the workforce of a developing economy. Skill-based ESP courses unlike content specific courses, use materials that are not grounded in any one specific academic discipline, but cover a range of topics (e.g. global warming or health and fitness). They provide the students with a range of skills with which they would be able to acquire the necessary knowledge needed in a specialized area of employment when the need arises.

ESP is not confined to teaching specialised varieties of English and not just a matter of teaching content words and content grammar for specific disciplines (Hutchinson and Waters, 1993:18).

Furthermore a content based curriculum such as EAP at the tertiary level will only be sufficient to inform the student in a narrow specialized area which the student may not find useful in the event that he or she does not get employment in the area of training or specialization. For example a newspaper article reported that physics graduates are in demand for selling telecommunication products like hand phones and WAP devices whereas chemistry graduates are preferred for selling pharmaceuticals and engineers for selling machine parts (NST, 26.6.01). In light of these findings content based ESP or EAP courses at the tertiary level may not be beneficial to students.

### **Language Needs of an Entry-Level Workforce**

English language courses currently conducted in universities nationwide are either proficiency-based or EAP-based. Proficiency courses often seem like an extension of what was taught in schools where the focus is

always on reading, writing, listening, speaking and grammar. EAP courses on the other hand are more content based. Nevertheless both courses are able to fulfil the universities language requirements. However they are inadequate in preparing students for employment. Their narrow focus on traditional language skills and specific content areas fail to take into account contemporary language and linguistic-related skills such as higher order critical and creative thinking skills, problem solving and computer literacy to name a few. These skills are pertinent in addressing the needs of a new working environment which is constantly changing in various dimensions. For instance, jobs that existed in the industrial age are being replaced by new types of job and work requirements that did not exist before. Globally there is a shift from manufacturing to service industries, and also a shift within both manufacturing and service sectors toward jobs that require information processing and analytic skills rather than brute force (Castells:1996). The service industry itself is undergoing dynamic change whereby work is outsourced to distant locations; a concept which came into existence only in the last decade. Even in established industrial nations, the manufacturing industries are changing rapidly. New forms of manufacturing and service are arising which depend on careful application of science and technology. customized production, marketing and distribution; access to real-time networked information; and a high level of national and international communication among teams (Carnoy et al., 1993). The interaction of the values and work ethics fostered by 'post-Fordism' and 'fast capitalism' (Gee, 1994) with rapid changes in technological implements have produced a new language of work.

In realization of the dramatic changes that are occurring to global economic movements and its attendant effects on the daily working lives of people, this study proposes that ESP literacy pedagogy should move

beyond its traditional boundaries and embrace approaches, techniques and skills which are relevant to today's workplace literacy demands. Based on this understanding the theoretical framework employed by this study proposes a curriculum which utilizes a variety of linguistic and literacy skills that are deemed as important in the workplace especially in nurturing a competent, knowledge-based workforce capable of continuous learning and relearning. The skills framework proposed, which incorporates learning skills, thinking skills, interpersonal skills and information technology skills, allows students to acquire knowledge and skills that would help them in turn to garner new knowledge and new skills. It sees learning as a process in which the learners use skills and knowledge already acquired to make sense of the flow of new information in the workplace (Hutchinson, Alan and Waters, 1993:72).

To put it in simple terms, being fresh and inexperienced the entry-level workforce needs these survival skills in order to establish themselves in the new environment. Once established the same skills can be used to learn new skills to further advance themselves towards profitability for themselves as well as the organisation to which they are attached. Thus the framework advanced by this study could promote a win-win situation for both employer and employee.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In order to test their hypothesis the researchers had developed a framework of workplace-oriented linguistic and literacy skills. They believe that this framework could prove to be essential in meeting the requirements of nurturing the workforce of a dynamic and developing economy such as Malaysia. Most of the skills items were developed based on several reports documenting the need for job readiness skills which were adapted and modified to suit the Malaysian context.

## Respondents and Instruments

In order to test the relevance of the framework a questionnaire was formulated and sent out to potential employers in the retail, manufacturing, finance and service sectors which employed large numbers of graduates. The questionnaire was designed specifically with the intention of evaluating the category of skills that employers value in potential entry level employees with tertiary qualifications. The questionnaire has two sections. The first section gathers information on the type of business and the respondents' designation. The second section had seven parts. Each part deals with a sub-skill from the prototype framework of skills correlating to one item in the questionnaire. Specifically these are Reading Skills, Writing Skills, Listening and Speaking skills, Numeracy Skills, Thinking Skills, Learning Skills and Basic Computer Literacy. Seventy questionnaires were mailed and 90% were duly returned and analysed.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis highlighted the type of skills that employers value in their employees. The skills outlined in the conceptual framework were either relevant to, or matched the expectations of employees.

## Reading Skills

Skills listed:

1. Ability to note salient details and facts.
2. Identify and summarise principal and subsidiary ideas.
3. Be aware of inconsistency in written material.
4. Verify information and evaluate the worth and objectivity of sources.
5. Interpret and use quantitative information.
6. Read and follow instructions in a manual.
7. Read and understand information contained in charts, graphs and schedules.

8. Read and understand concise instructions, directions and memos.

In the reading section, respondents generally agree that sub-skills 1 - 8 are all important to different degrees. However there seems to be a preference for sub-skills 2, 6 and 8 which were ranked as most important. The aforesaid sub-skills are all pertinent to workforce efficiency especially in the supervisory, administrative and management departments where good reading skills would be an important attribute.

## Writing Skills

Skills listed:

9. Gathering information for a purpose.
10. Organize information in a logical and coherent manner.
11. Use standard English (British variant) syntax, vocabulary and spelling.
12. Use correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
13. Attribute references correctly.
14. Use reference books such as a dictionary, thesaurus and encyclopaedia.
15. Write legibly.
16. Able to translate text from Bahasa Malaysia to English and vice versa.
17. Ability to transfer linear information to graphic information and vice versa.
18. Use relevant information to compile a report.
19. Write concise and clear instructions, directions and memos.

As for writing, the skills considered important were using correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, writing concise and clear instructions, directions and memos, and gathering information for a purpose. Skills ranked as least important are sub-skill 13 - attributing references correctly, sub-skill 14 - using reference books and sub-skill 17 - ability to transfer linear information to graphic. An interesting point to note is sub-skill 16 - the ability to translate from

Bahasa Malaysia to English and vice versa. 3.33% of the respondents find this skill to be not important. None of the respondents find it to be a most important skill and 66.67 % find it to be 'only quite important. This leaves room for further research on the role of Bahasa Malaysia and English in the workplace.

## Listening and Speaking Skills

Skills listed:

20. Communicate in standard English (received pronunciation)
21. Understand the intent and details of oral communication.
22. Understand and give instructions.
23. Identify and summarise correctly principal and subsidiary ideas in discussions.
24. Obtain, verify and clarify information through listening and questioning.
25. Participate effectively in discussions.
26. Awareness of group norms, protocols and taboos in local speech communities.
27. Use of persuasive arguments.
28. Conduct seminars, talks, deliver a speech.

In the listening and speaking section skills identified as most important were; participating effectively in discussions, use of persuasive argument and the ability to verify and clarify information through listening and questioning. Generally all the skills seem to be ranked between the three important categories except sub-skill 28 - which 60% consider as important while 3.33% consider to be least important.

## Numeracy Skills

Skills listed:

29. Understand simple probability and statistics.
30. Calculating using information in charts, graphs and tables.
31. Estimate results and judge accuracy.

32. Determine the cost, time or resources necessary for a task.

The findings reveal that not all numeric skills are considered as most important. Though all the sub-skills are ranked within the three important categories only 30% find sub-skill 31 - estimating results and judging accuracy as most important. In fact 3.33% find sub-skill 30 - calculating using information in charts, graphs and tables and sub-skill 31 as least important.

### Thinking Skills

Skills Listed:

33. Generates new ideas, critical analysis and evaluation, decision making, creative thinking skills.

34. Specifies goals and constraints, generates alternatives, considers risks, and evaluates and chooses best alternative.

35. Recognizes problems and devises and implements plan of action.

36. Organizes and processes symbols, pictures, graphs, objects, and other information.

37. Discovers a rule or principle underlying the relationship between two or more objects and applies it when solving a problem.

In the thinking skills section the majority of the respondents identified three important skills. First is the ability to generate new ideas, critical analysis, evaluation and decision making. Second is the ability to specify goals and consider, generate and choose the best alternatives. Third is the ability to recognize problems, devise and implement plans of action. It is interesting to note that none of the respondents find sub-skill 36 - Organizes and processes symbols, pictures, graphs, objects, and other information as a most important skill.

### Learning skills

Skills Listed:

38. Learns through drill, practise, mastery learning and direct instruction.

39. Learning by observing others performing a function or task.

40. Direct assisting in learning how to apply knowledge to solve problems.

41. A combination of reasoning, coaching, and open ended discussion.

42. Learning how to behave in appropriate situations and use different intelligences; brainstorming, synectics, lateral thinking, and creativity by design.

43. Use interpersonal skills to accomplish task.

44. Activity based learning, hands on sessions, seminars, workshops, and do it yourself.

45. Learning through thinking about the learning process and how they fared as well as how they can improve.

Learning skills are important for a workforce that needs to continually change and adapt to fluctuating market forces and the work environment. Whenever new equipment or procedures are introduced, employees need to learn and adapt. In realization of the potential importance of these skills, majority of the respondents have listed them under the most important, important or quite important category.

### Basic Computer Literacy

Skills Listed:

46. MS Words

47. MS Excel

48. MS Publisher

49. MS Power Point

50. Adobe Macromedia Applications

51. Send and receive E-Mail

52. Use voice mail

53. Serve the web to down load specific or relevant information.

63.33% of the respondents perceive skill 46 - knowledge of MS Words as the most important computer sub-skill. This is followed closely by sub-skill 47 - knowledge of MS Excel and sub-skill 51 - send and receive e-mail. 40% identify sub-skill 49 - knowledge of MS Excel as most important. Most of the other sub-skills are perceived

as either quite important or least important. However a disturbing factor is sub-skill 53 - surf the web to down load specific or relevant information, which 43.33% find to be only quite important and 16.67% of the respondents find to be least important. Despite the emphasis on K-economy more than 50% of the respondents do not seem to consider the ability to surf the net for particular information as a most important skill.

### Conclusion

ESP at the tertiary level is not teaching English per se. It is preparing students for life-long learning. English is conceived as a tool for the teaching of skills that would sustain them and the language for life and for work. The language itself cannot be divorced from the needs of a global work environment where students need to be trained in the use of the implements of a borderless world. Teaching content-based courses with specialized focus in narrow areas of academic disciplines constitutes a myopic approach to the real work environment of 'post-Fordism' which calls for multiple literacy skills in order to survive in the multiple and divergent life worlds of the new millennium. The skills and abilities outlined in the conceptual framework interact and compensate one another. They represent a web of assets which are summoned to accomplish the task of equipping tertiary students with work force capabilities.

This study has endeavoured to shed some light on the types of linguistic and literacy-related skills that employers would deem necessary for an entry-level workforce with tertiary qualifications. It would be beneficial to the students if tertiary-level ESP syllabus and curriculum planners could emphasise on the skills marked as 'most important' by the respondents who consist of potential employers. The study has also provided empirical evidence in support of a broad skills-based curriculum for ESP at the tertiary level rather than a narrow content-based curriculum.

Nevertheless, the study has its limitations, especially in terms of the number of respondents and sectors involved. Further studies need to be done involving larger number of respondents and sectors. It would also be of interest to identify sector or industry specific language and literacy needs.

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## ASEAN-EU University Network Programme UNCOFIN Project (University Cooperation for Internationalisation)

The aim of the project co-coordinated by University of Alicante, Spain, is to strengthen EU-ASEAN university cooperation. Target groups have been chosen from International Relation (IRO) staff from 8 ASEAN universities; with USM and UKM representing Malaysia. The European part of the consortium which constitutes this project is drawn from members of the Mediterranean region, BENELUX and Continental Europe. Both geographical and cultural diversity are represented in the consortium, but perhaps more significant is the diversity of IROs management and experience that each partner brings from their own country; diversity of social context, diversity of universities structures and diversity of local environmental problems. The three main activities in the project will be managerial expertise transfer by European partners (with workshops on subjects selected by ASEAN partners), IRO exchange of experiences and dissemination of results.



**One for the album...** UNCOFIN Project Coordinator, Michelle Grindle (sitting third from left) with the participants.

The programme organized *International Conference on Cooperation Programmes between the European Union and Third Countries X-incs* and *Workshop on Fundraising Activities* in Saarbrücken, Germany on 27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

## PUBLICATIONS

### Two New Monographs are available

IPPTN has just published two new monographs entitled *Kajian Pengangguran di Kalangan Siswazah* and *Pencapaian Akademik (Konsep Nilai Ditambah) dan Kebolegunaan Tenaga (Employability) Siswazah Institusi Pengajian Tinggi*.

*Kajian Pengangguran di Kalangan Siswazah* is jointly written by Prof. Morshidi Sirat with a number of other researchers including Prof. Abdul Majid Mohd Isa (UMS), Prof. Madya Rosni Bakar (UUM), Prof. Madya Abdul Aziz Buang (UTM) and Dr. Mohd Hafiah Piei (MIER).

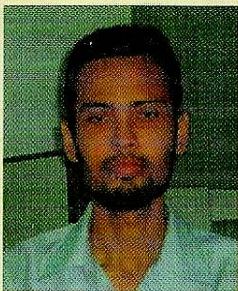


The monograph, which contains findings and recommendations regarding problems of unemployment among graduates in Malaysia, is available in CD. The CD may be purchased from IPPTN's office at the price of RM 10 per copy.

*Pencapaian Akademik (Konsep Nilai Ditambah) dan Kebolegunaan Tenaga (Employability) Siswazah Institusi Pengajian Tinggi* is jointly written by Prof. Morshidi Sirat, Prof. Madya Rosni Bakar, Mr. Lim Hock Eam and Mr. Mohammed Nasser Katib. This monograph is available in hard copy which may also be purchased from IPPTN's office at the price of RM 5 per copy.



## UPDATES



Mr. Md Harashid Harun, IPPTN's manager left the Institute on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2004 to join the School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia. He was very instrumental in the publication of the *Bulletin of Higher Education Research*



Ms. Nor Azreen Zainur has been appointed as IPPTN's Assistant Registrar effective 1<sup>st</sup> June 2004.

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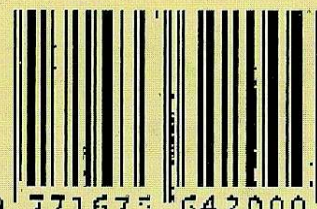
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