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The Higher Education Department-Missions and Visions



Y. Bhg. Dato' Professor Dr. Hassan Said

Missions and visions

The objectives of the Higher Education Department include to look at the educational policies, organize the setting up of universities, chart the map for higher education and provide linkages between the universities and the central agencies. The Department which was set up in 1996 receives a lot of support from the Vice Chancellors, foreign universities, international bodies such as UNESCO and central agencies such as the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning Unit and the Public Services Department, in its quest to achieve its objectives.

The Department targets to achieve a 1:18 staff ratio in universities by the year 2010. In other words, for every 18,000 students, there should be 1,000 lecturers. At this point, the ratio is 1:21, or 1,000 lecturers to 21,000 students.

In terms of research conducted by the universities, the department always stresses that they must be of high international standard. It also encourages researchers to get involved in international projects and consultancies in order to generate more funding. By doing so, universities' dependence on government's funding can be reduced.

Dato' Professor Hassan would also like to see the internationalization of the Malaysian higher education system. Universities, according to him, "should think of the global challenges" and "should produce people who can challenge the world."

In addition, he hopes to see a few universities in Malaysia achieve international research excellence, at par with MIT, Harvard and Cambridge. This, in his view, is not impossible to achieve since as it is, there are already a few universities that can be categorized as world class and highly competitive.

Challenges

The Department of Higher Education faces many challenges in achieving its objectives, one of which is the lack of manpower due to the increase in the number of universities. The hiring of academicians poses another challenge. Due to the attractiveness of the industry, not many graduates are interested in joining the academic world. A further challenge is to get universities to compete successfully in the international arena.

Strategies

To formulate policies for the higher education, the department seeks assistance from universities in implementing certain related projects. The Institut Penyelidikan Pendidikan Tinggi Negara (IPPTN) was set up to conduct research for the formulation of these policies.

Another strategy is for universities to plan their manpower development. For example, the current strategy to send lecturers and future lecturers to overseas full time to do their PhD could be reconsidered. They could do a twinning programme instead of a full PhD abroad in order to save funding. As Dato' Professor Hassan states, "new possibilities must be explored as high and sophisticated technologies are at our finger tips nowadays." Therefore, the universities must come out with various mechanisms to train its manpower, be it the academicians or the non-academicians as both complement each other. Currently, only about 34% of the academic staff in the universities are PhD holders. The department targets to create 75% PhD holders or scholars with equivalent degree in order to compete in the international arena.

In the future, the Ministry of Education expects to have 35% of the population between 17 to 23 years old in higher education as at present, there are only 26%. In order to achieve this, the smaller universities must increase their intakes, number of staff and infrastructure. At the same time, the private sector must also play their role by having more private universities. Although there is a gap in terms of quality between the public and private universities currently, it is expected to narrow down within ten years time as the accreditation processes will be properly laid down.

In view of that, the governance in the university must be in line with the trend of the global challenges, in terms of accountability, flexibility and operational procedures. Academicians should be able to position themselves in the global scenario, be more proactive and understand future threats and opportunities. This global positioning requires a lot of changes in the present mindset.

Additionally, the curriculum must be constantly enhanced, checked and vetted. Inputs from the faculty, alumni and industries must be considered to ensure that it is relevant to the job market and the outside world, without compromising the knowledge value.

In preparing the graduates for employment, soft skills such as communication skills, personality and competitiveness must be improved. These skills must be strengthened as they are important assets for future employment. Universities must also create awareness among students to better understand other people's cultures so that ethnic integration can be maintained.

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Evaluating Teaching Effectiveness in Higher Education: A Case Study

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Introduction

In making public higher education more accessible to the general population, the Malaysian government has been encouraging improvements for student learning. In the global marketplace, higher education is seen as a mechanism in providing an essential infrastructure with which a country can harness its technological and creative potentials. As part of this expanding 'knowledge industry', institutions of higher learning will be expected to place a greater emphasis on teaching, so that new developments can be more quickly communicated to the broader community. In the literature of evaluation studies in higher education, the study of teaching has now become accepted rather than exceptional, and there are fewer contemporary signs of the traditional reluctance of lecturers to engage in self-evaluation (Hounsell, 1997). Effective teaching matters greatly and will continue long to be the case as many researchers concur that higher education teachers contribute significantly to the formation of the next generation of workers, equipping them with the requisite knowledge and generic skills necessary to sustain and develop the national economy (William & Fry, 1994; Kember, 2001). At the macro level, higher education teachers help to shape the cognitive, emotional and moral development of individual learners for their multiple roles as citizens, parents and community members.

In this study, the term 'adult students' refers to former primary school teachers coming to university to pursue their first degree on a full-time basis while the term 'young adult students' refers to students entering university upon completing their Form Six. The purpose of the case study was to investigate students' and course lecturers' evaluation of teaching effectiveness, students' academic achievement and students' perceptions of their academic skills in a higher education setting. The study rested on the premise that for teachers of higher education to understand and gain insights into student learning, they must understand learning from the students' point of view. In this regard, their evaluation of the instruction, curriculum and assessment matters in their degree programme helps shape the curriculum and embodies the purposes of higher education.

Methodology

The study consisted of four main groups of subjects: 135 Bachelor of Arts, English Language and Literature Studies (B.A. ELLS) students who completed the Course Experience Questionnaire, 44 students (selected according to the demographic factors of age, gender and ethnicity) who kept student journals over one semester (15 weeks) and were interviewed, 10 course lecturers who completed an adapted version of the questionnaire and the Approaches to Teaching Inventory (ATI) survey (developed by Trigwell & Prosser, 1996a) and 6 course lecturers who were interviewed. The Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) was administered to the student and course lecturer sample in Week 13 of the 2001/2002 academic session. The CEQ, developed by Ramsden (1991), is a questionnaire with 23 Likert-type items that assesses respondents' educational experience or perceived teaching quality in a degree programme in the following domains: good teaching, clear goals and standards, appropriate workload, appropriate assessment and generic skills.

Findings and Discussion

The triangulation of findings (surveys, interviews and student journals) revealed that the main comparison between lecturers' and students' perceptions of effective teaching highlights the difference in terms of consistency. The mean ratings of lecturers' perceptions in all the five

domains of teaching quality are consistently high (mean rating of 3.0 and above). In comparison, students recorded lower means in most categories of teaching effectiveness (see Table 1).

In this study, 22% and 20% of students had negative perceptions of their lecturers' ability to 'comment on students' work' and 'give helpful feedback on how students are doing' respectively. Students' mean ratings for 'appropriate workload' (2.1) and 'appropriate assessment' (2.4) show that a majority of students found the workload 'heavy', 'pressured' and students (46.6%) perceived their assessment tasks as being dependent on their ability to remember facts learned in their courses rather than on their ability to comprehend concepts learned.

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Students' and Lecturers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Domains of Teaching	Lecturers' Mean Ratings	Students' Mean Ratings
Good Teaching	3.6	2.9
Clear Goals and Standards	3.5	2.8
Appropriate Workload	3.2	2.1
Appropriate Assessment	3.5	2.4
Generic Skills	3.4	3.2

The interview and student journal data supplemented these quantitative results and provided students the pedagogical space to develop their own voice in resolving conflicts that exist in their educational experiences. The mean ratings for the 'generic skills' domain of effective teaching reveal that both lecturers and students had a high level of agreement with this variable. This indicates that the course is able to inculcate the following six generic skills: problem-solving skills, working as a team member, being confident about tackling unfamiliar problems, developing the ability to plan own work, written communication skills and analytic skills.

Students' perceptions of their academic achievement and skills were investigated quantitatively and qualitatively through the use of the CEO, group interviews and student journals. The major findings indicate that adult students recorded better academic achievement than young adult students and that female students did better than male students. In terms of ethnicity, Chinese, Indian and minority group (Eurasians) students attained better academic achievement than Malay and Indigenous group (ethnic groups from East Malaysia) students. Most students recorded positive perceptions of their academic skills of 'comprehending lectures in English', 'reading skills in English', 'taking notes during lectures' but had less positive perceptions of their ability to 'write in English', 'library skills', 'study skills' and 'computer skills'.

Conclusion

The following recommendations are suggested in the light of the findings of this case study:

- Staff should provide effective feedback.
- Staff should be aware of the professional and personal characteristics students look for in their teachers.
- Staff should communicate clear expectations to their students and should state those expectations early so that students can plan their schedules with confidence.
- Staff should evaluate workload requirements in their courses.
- Staff should plan their assessment schedules appropriately.
- Staff should encourage active learning among students.
- Staff should consider the needs of both adult and young adult students.

This study acknowledges the fact that students' perceptions of their learning context is an integral part of his/her experience of learning and asserts that students' perceptions of teaching, assessment and course content and structure within the natural setting of their academic discipline may influence how students learn. It is widely documented that sound teaching and assessment practices can easily contribute to 'deep' and 'surface approach' learning outcomes. There is a need for every teaching-learning situation or context to tailor its own unique strategies which are sensitively tailored to the particularities of curriculum purposes, academic discipline concerned and to the characteristics of the course and institutional setting.

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Input-Output Relationship: A Case Study on Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) Economics Graduates

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Introduction

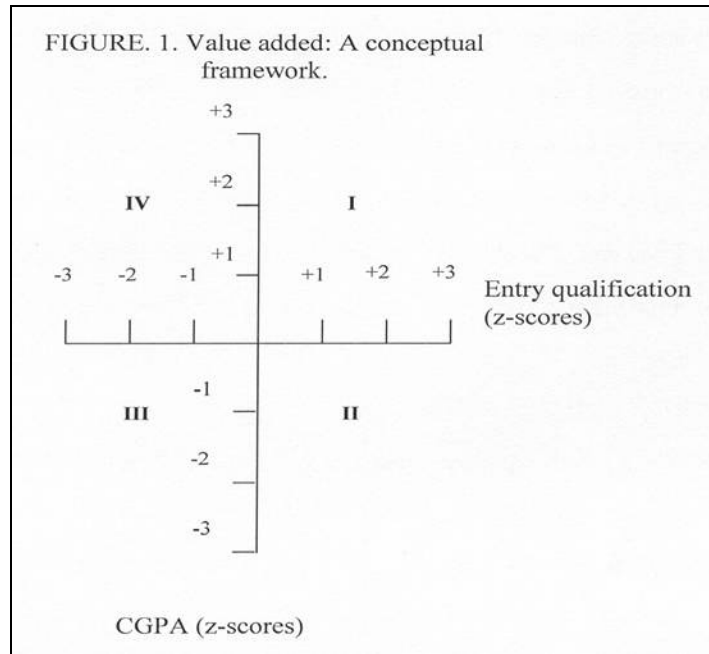
In a free market economy, competition results in the best allocation of resources as well as efficiency and high productivity. As such, in education industry, public and private universities compete to produce best quality graduates so that they are industrially marketable. The quality of the graduates is often measured by their certificates (degrees). The best are linked with a first class degree whilst the weak are equated to the general degree. This in turn means that the demand for university outputs by other industries will be influenced by the class of degrees of the graduates. This approach, however, is insufficient to reflect the contribution of quality education service by universities to their products (i.e. graduates). The value-added concept is overlooked in the evaluation of local university service (public and private). Value-added can be measured by identifying the relationship between the level of achievement of the student before being accepted into the university (i.e. at the Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia - STPM, Matriculation and Diploma levels) and the class attained in the university. A high added value will be reflective of the education service quality provided by the university to its graduates. By using the value-added approach, this paper indirectly measures as to how far the role of universities add value to the quality of graduates produced.

Value-Added Approach: Assumptions of the Study

The value added approach propounded by Chapman (1996) is applied in this study. However several assumptions need to be given due attention under this approach. Firstly, the determination of input quality depends on the results obtained for entry into universities. Pre-university academic achievement at the STPM, diploma and matriculation levels are the basis of measuring input quality. As such, the role of universities in enhancing student added value between the pre and post university period can be examined. Secondly, other inputs of a qualitative nature and the history which influences output such as family background, environmental influence are exempted from the input-output relationship. Thirdly, students who obtain marks below average are classified as weak or below-average students. Those who obtain marks bordering the average are moderate or average students and students whose marks exceed the average are the best or above-average students.

Analysis Framework and Interpretation

Figure 1 shows the relationship of academic achievement at the pre and post university levels and is divided into four quadrants. The units on each axis are z-scores which express the position of individual observations in a data set relative to the mean in standard deviation unit. (A z-score measures how many standard deviations an observation is above or below the mean). A positive value explains academic achievement exceeds the average while a negative value indicates the reverse. Based on the distribution of the observations in respective quadrants, the role of universities in adding value to its products can somewhat be identified. As an example, if universities receive students whose entry merits are excellent, or above average, and at the end of the course, the students obtain above average results, then the distribution of the observations will be in the first quadrant. On the other hand, if the student's entry level into the university is below average and the end degree achieved is also below average, then the result will be in quadrant III. Quadrants I and III show a positive relationship between the basic entry qualification and degree results, that is, students with low entry qualification will achieve poor degree results and students with high entry qualification will achieve good degree results.



On the other hand, quadrants II and IV not only show an inverse relationship between the entry level and the degree result thus bringing the concept of value added and value subtracted. Students in quadrant IV show there is added value on the basic quality of academic achievement. This means students with entry qualification below the average level obtained excellent results at the end of the degree course. As such, universities have succeeded in processing lower quality input into high quality output. However, if students are in quadrant II, this implies that universities have lowered the basic quality academic value of the students. If this is happening, this therefore, has important policy implications on the teaching and learning approach of the students.

Empirical Evidence in UUM Case

The research analysis focuses on the statistics of the academic achievement of students at the pre and post university levels with UUM economics graduates as a case study. The entry requirement to university is based on the STPM, matriculation and diploma results. The research samples are economics graduates of 1998 and 1999 and are analysed separately. The study reveals that the distribution of observations are clustered in quadrants I and III for both years. This means there is a strong and positive link between entry qualification and students' degree results. However, there is also a value-added phenomenon, albeit marginal, found in quadrant IV. The 'subtracted' value though found in quadrant II is insignificant. In the context of this case study, it is not extreme to say that students with low (high) entry merit will obtain low (high) degree results. This is somewhat a predictable academic achievement trend.

Policy Implications

This research, nonetheless, cannot be construed as having policy implications as it only involves the economics graduates of 1998 and 1999. The findings of this study will be more meaningful if it involves a study trend over time and perhaps strategies can be put into place by the university management to enhance added value on students towards producing our graduates of higher value.

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A Study of Institutional and Individual Factors Influencing the College Choice Process

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Introduction

The accelerated growth of private colleges in Malaysia between 1995 and 2001 has resulted in very stiff competition in private education. This has led to a number of adverse impacts on students and private institutions of higher learning (PIHL) such as poorer quality of education, inadequate resources or in the worst situation the closing down of PIHLs. To minimise or eradicate such adverse impact on students and on PIHLs, an understanding of why students choose to attend one particular private college over another is important to the management and students of these private colleges. This will help private colleges to better cater to the needs of the public and in turn, to perform better and remain in the industry. In turn, the public's needs and preferences will be better met and more opportunities will be created locally for higher education for students.

A study was henceforth carried out to identify the various institutional and individual factors considered by students and parents in the process of choosing a college. The parent component was included as parents play an important role in influencing their children's college selection.

Factors Studied

A total of 29 choice factors classified under six categories were selected for this study. These institutional and individual choice factors together with respective categories are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 29 Institutional and Individual Factors and the 6 Categories Selected for this Study

(I) INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS
(A) Study Option
1. Availability of Field of Study
2. Availability of Program of Study
3. Availability of 3+0 Option
4. Timing of the Starting of a Programme
(B) Prestige
5. Recognition of Programme of Study
6. Reputation of Programme of Study
7. Reputation of the Twinning Programme
8. Reputation of the College
(C) Logistics
9. Country of Twinning Programme
10. Location of the College
(D) Financial Consideration
11. Tuition Fee
12. Availability of Scholarship/Financial Aids
(E) Institutional Characteristics
13. Availability of dormitory
14. College Facilities
15. College Environment
16. Extra-curricular Activities
17. College Size
18. Class Size
19. Quality of lecturers
20. Friendliness of Enrolment Counsellors
21. Quality of Administrative support staff
(II) INDIVIDUAL FACTORS
(F) Source of Influence
22. Parents' influence
23. Student's/Child's decision
24. Family members' influence
25. Peers' influence
26. Alumni's influence
27. High School Counsellors' influence
28. Education Counsellors' influence
29. Meeting minimum entry requirements

Samples and Results

A sample of 260 undergraduate degree programme students and 58 parents was drawn from a private college. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the 29 choice factors on a scale of "1" to "5", with "1" being "Not Important", and "5" being "Very Important". Results of the ratings of the three most important factors are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 2 The Three Most Important Choice Factors Rated by Students and Parents

Choice Factor	Type of Factor	Ranking of Students' Ratings	Student		Ranking of Parents' Ratings	Parent	
			Mean	Std. Dev.		Mean	Std. Dev.
Quality of Lecturers	Institutional	1	4.64	0.65	1	4.52	0.71
Student's / Child's Decision	Individual	2	4.46	0.80	3	4.39	0.79
Reputation of the Twinning University	Institutional	3	4.38	0.80	3	4.39	0.73
Reputation of Programme of Study	Institutional	3	4.38	0.86	2	4.45	0.87

Students' Ratings

Taking the three highest mean scores, the three most important factors rated by students were: (1) Quality of Lecturers, (2) Student's Decision, (3) Reputation of the Twinning University, (3) Reputation of the Programme of Study.

The importance of "Quality of Lecturers" is supported by Krukowski (1985), Wanat and Bowles' (1989), Braxton (1990), Annis and Rice (1993), and Coccari and Javalgi, (1995). A good teaching faculty is indeed important as it is the instrument of knowledge transfer to students. Moreover, a student's potential could be better realised if he or she was under the guidance of a quality faculty.

The findings also show that "Student's Decision" is second in importance to students. As students are the ones who will go through the studies, they are generally concerned about making their own selections. Wanat and Bowles (1989), and Annis and Rice (1993) showed that despite students receiving influence from various sources, the final decision of a college choice rests on students.

Both "Reputation of the Twinning University" and "Reputation of Programme of Study", were regarded by students as the third most important factor. As off-shore offerings of programme of study are limited compared to those offered by the main campus, there might be a tendency for local students to correlate the two factors. This may explain why the two factors received the same rating. Previous studies by Chapman (1979), Krukowski (1985), Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1986), and Wanat and Bowles (1989) showed the popularity of reputable institutions which ranked high for prestige, recognition of its institutional name, excellent teaching faculty, research publications, desirable job placements and good admission rates into prestigious graduate schools for its graduates. All these institutional selection criteria are found in the measurement of the "Reputation of the Twinning University" and the "Reputation of the Programme of Study" in this study. Hence, consistency in the importance of the prestige associated with the twinning university and programme of study is noted between the past and the present research.

Parents' Ratings

The three highest rated choice factors by parents were: (1) Quality of Lecturers, (2) Reputation of Programme of Study, (3) Reputation of Twinning University, (3) Child's Decision. Comparing the students' and parents' results of ratings, parents too have regarded "Quality of Lecturers" as the most important variable in selecting a college. This is supported by Bowers and Pugh (1973), Litten and Brodigan (1982), Litten and Hall (1989), and Quade (1994), whose studies showed that

parents, regardless of educational and socioeconomic levels, emphasise lecturers' teaching and their accomplishments.

"Reputation of the Programme of Study" was rated second in importance by parents. As supported by Krukowski's (1985) study, parents emphasised on prestige associated with their children's college education and the education outcomes. Parents, being the financiers of their children's education in most cases (except scholarship and financial aid recipients), naturally emphasise the value of education which is believed to translate into better career opportunities for their children. Both the "Reputation of the Twinning University" and the "Child's Decision" appear third most important to parents.

The importance of the "Reputation of Twinning University", is supported by Bower and Pugh (1973), and Quade (1994) whose studies stated that parents were most concerned about academic quality, with focus on the status of the university, faculty's accomplishments and teaching ability, and academic standards - attributes which are consistent with the measurement of the "Reputation of the Twinning University" in this study.

As for "Child's Decision", Wanat and Bowles' (1989), and Annis and Rice's (1993) findings showed that the final decision of a college choice rested with students despite parents playing a pivotal role in influencing students in the college choice process. This is consistent with the present finding that parents regard their child's decision to be one of the most important factors in deciding a college. Parents and students in this study could have discussed the various choice factors during the college choice process, and since students will be doing the study, their parents have left the final choice to them.

Findings and Implications

The above findings indicate that academic quality, student's decision, and prestige are criteria considered by students and parents during their institutional selection process. These findings are mostly applicable to degree programmes in private colleges.

To realise the potential of students, academic quality in terms of curriculum and lecturers needs to be maintained. The Ministry of Education should continue to monitor the course curriculum of twinning programmes in addition to channelling its resources for the training and development of academics. It should also encourage all institutions of higher learning to be selective in their lecturer recruitment exercise. Qualified lecturers with positive attitudes are essence of a quality faculty. A private college which possesses a good teaching faculty has the strongest selling point for attracting enrolment as "Quality of Lecturers" is regarded as the most important factor by students and parents.

As the final decision of a college is made by students, the statutory bodies and institutions of higher learning may like to pay more attention to prospective students, rather than to parents, by providing information on career prospects, courses and colleges/universities to influence their choice.

Both parents and students believe that prestige associated with reputable twinning universities and programmes of study will improve career prospects. Hence, private colleges which offer twinning programmes should carefully select their potential partner universities and thus the programmes of study. It is noted that most students and parents select the foreign twinning university and its programme before they consider the local college offering the programme.

Recommendation

The findings indicate the need to emphasise on the quality of academic staff and to provide extensive information on the status of the twinning university and programmes of study to parents and particularly to students.

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The English Language Teaching Situation in Yemen

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Introduction

English is the only official foreign language in Yemen, situated in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula. It is a tool for modernization and a prerequisite for finding a job, particularly in the private sector, and for entering some English-medium faculties (Badaroods, 1988). The language is glorified in Yemen, receiving increasing importance from the Yemeni government (Ibid). However, its educational policies regarding the teaching of English have significant effects on Yemeni students. Studies have shown that there is a decline in the general level of students' proficiency in English and a weakening of learners' interest in learning the language.

The Status of English language Teaching in Yemen

Prior to the 1970s, English was the medium of instruction at the school level in Yemen. However, since then the Yemeni government has taken the decision of replacing English by Arabic as the medium of instruction from the school level up to the university level because it was believed that effective learning takes place only through one's mother tongue (Ghanem, 1978).

The changing attitudes of people and the different policies adopted by Yemeni Government have had drastic influences on the status and functions of the English language in the country. After the unification of the two sectors of Yemen in May 1990, the Ministry of Education has issued a decree stating that English language should be taught as a compulsory subject from Form 7 instead of Form 5 in the primary schools. Instead of eight consecutive years in learning English, it decreased to six years, which as a result significantly reduced students' amount of English language exposure. This situation is worsened by the limited number of hours students spent learning English in higher education institutions. In Hadramout University, for example, English language lessons comprise two hours per week only.

It is of no surprise that Arab learners of English encounter problems in communicative competence arising from this situation. This fact has been clearly stated by many researchers such as Abbad (1988) and Wahba(1998). Despite formally learning English for many years, many students' level of English language proficiency is still far from satisfactory. An average Yemeni learner, it has been argued, fails to perform day to day communicative chores in English in his/her personal, professional, academic and social spheres with an optimal degree of competence and confidence (Sahu, 1999).

The policy to reduce and limit the contact hours for the teaching of English necessitates pedagogical strengthening. Some efforts have been made along this line such as the introduction of new teaching materials for primary and secondary schools in Yemen which were prepared and published by Oxford University Press for English Language Teaching in the Arab World. This new production of English materials in Yemen reflects the government's positive policy towards English language teaching and learning as becoming essential in a time of worldwide communication.

Despite their merits, unfortunately the materials have many shortcomings, which render them unsuitable for most Yemeni learners of English. According to Sahu (1999), they are not properly graded for teaching vocabulary and structures; do not take into cognizance the entry behavior or the background knowledge of the learners for whom they are intended. They are, nevertheless, good enough for any group of learners in English saturated learning environment, but seem to be anything but appropriate for the environment existing in Yemen where English has still to cover a lot of ground.

What might be the implications of the present situation on the future of English language teaching in Yemen? It is worth pointing out at this stage that despite their low proficiency level in English, most applicants are accepted into higher education institutions to be enrolled in various faculties including the English faculty, as reported by Abbad (1988), cited in Rababah (2003). This situation is not restricted to Yemen, but also applies to the Arab world countries in general. English-mediated faculties accept high school graduates without taking into consideration their proficiency level and whether or not they will be able to manage.

Studies carried out at some Arab universities confirm that graduates of English departments – students who have chosen English as their major area – could not on the average cope with undergraduate university education through the medium of English. What's more, these graduates are future teachers of English in Yemen. We may therefore be witnessing a vicious circle in the country unless drastic steps are taken to remedy it.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Evidently something vital is lacking in Yemen's English as a foreign language curriculum that needs to be identified, and if necessary, suitably remedied. Short contact hours for the teaching and learning of English, ineffective materials and a delayed introduction of English may well have contributed to the low level of proficiency of Yemeni learners. A few recommendations below may be worth thinking about as a way to overcome these problems.

- The number of hours allocated to teaching English at all levels of education should be increased.
- The training of teachers of English should be continuously checked and enhanced, allowing only those who are highly proficient in English to be trained to teach the language.
- Opportunities to use English outside classrooms should be increased. To compensate for the lack of natural face to face interaction in English, modern natural sources of the language such as the internet should be easily and cheaply accessible to all students.
- Parental and societal encouragement for a wide use of the language should be strengthened such as through English language awareness campaigns.

Teaching and learning materials should be in tune with the occupational needs of the Yemeni learners. Rigorous research such as needs analysis should to be actively conducted to identify how the teaching of English can be made relevant to their occupational needs.

All these are vital if Yemen is to be at the forefront of academic development in consonance with other front ranking, developing countries of the world. Since Yemen stepped into the education sunlight only in the seventies, linguistic gestation of English among generation of learners is still awaited. Mere tinkering with the curriculum will not hasten the pace of learning.

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The Right to Learn Throughout Life: Adult Education in Malaysia

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Introduction

This study is on the provision of adult education by the Malaysian government and it was carried out as a component of a larger international study commissioned and coordinated by the International Council for Adult Education in conjunction with the mid-term review of the Fifth International Conference of Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) which was organized by UNESCO and held in Bangkok, Thailand on 5-11 September 2003. 16 countries participated in this study which focuses on 5 thematic areas, namely, (i) ensuring the universal right to literacy and basic education, (ii) promoting active citizenship, awareness of discrimination and a culture of peace and human rights, (iii) ensuring the right to work-related adult education, (iv) promoting the right to health education, and (v) ensuring the involvement of civil society in environmental and development problems. The provision of adult education in Malaysia is analysed under these 5 themes. It is important to note that this study focuses only on the state provision of adult education, and so most of the data were collected from annual reports of the various ministries that are involved in adult education.

Literacy and Basic Education

The adult literacy rate in Malaysia is 87.4% with some gender and regional disparities and there is an increasing trend with the aim of eradicating illiteracy. Malaysia provides 11 years of free basic education and the move is towards universal secondary education. The enrolment rate at the upper secondary level has increased impressively from 55.78% in 1995 to 72.61% in 2000. However, there still exist a small percentage of illiterate adults. It has been estimated by UNESCO that there were about 1.8 million illiterates in 2002. Most of the adult illiterates are found among the hard-core poor in the interiors of some of the less developed states like Sabah and Sarawak. In these areas, the Adult Education Division in the Ministry of Rural Development provides various types of non-formal adult education programmes such as hard-core poor development programmes, family development programmes, and religious and moral education.

Promoting Active Citizenship

Adult education for promoting active citizenship can include education for political participation in democratic processes, education for peace, education for economic participation, education for planning public policies, education for empowerment of the organization, education for improving relations among cultures, education for promoting gender equality, and education for non-discrimination.

The data show that Malaysia pays more attention in areas such as education for economic participation, education for empowerment of the organization, and education for improving relations among cultures. For example, the Ministry of Social Welfare carries out community participation projects while the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development implements economic development programmes for indigenous people, the micro-credit programmes for the poor (Projek Ikhtiar), organizational management courses for the village headmen (JKKK) and community institute management course for the mosques. National unity classes under the neighbourhood watch scheme (rukun tetangga) are usually organized by the department of national unity. However, the Malaysian government is very lacking in other areas such as education for peace, education for human rights, education for planning public policies, education for the control and monitoring of public policies, education for promoting gender equality, and education for non-discrimination.

Work-related Adult Education

The Malaysian government is most active in this area of adult education, involving ministries like the Ministry of Human Resources, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, and Ministry of Entrepreneur Development. Education and skill training is accorded high priority in nation-building in order to provide a sufficient pool of well-educated, highly-skilled and strongly motivated labour force. The overall national plan for work-related adult education is encapsulated in the multiple-prong strategies as carried out by the various government agencies. The public sector is committed to implement administrative improvements by providing continuing professional development to its personnel in its efforts to institutionalize a culture of excellence. The national policy for women, formulated in 1989, aims at promoting the role and position of women in society, to integrate women in all sectors of national development, and to achieve gender equality. The youth development policy, formulated in 1997, emphasizes on the acquisition of knowledge, development of skills and entrepreneurship, healthy lifestyle, character building, social interaction, development of smart partnership as well as international networking. The human resources development fund aims at facilitating private companies in carrying out training for their employees. The Council of Trust for Indigenous People (MARA) aims at helping the Bumiputras to be involved in active participation in commerce and industries. The National Vocational Training Council (NVTC) is a national coordinating body whose functions are to introduce new trade skill standards and to ensure production of skilled manpower in accordance with industrial requirements.

Health Education

Health education can be further categorized into different types of programmes such as education about reproductive health, education about the right to choose freely a healthy and responsible sexuality, education for the prevention of domestic violence, education for the prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, education about health problems specific to each country, and education about healthy nutrition, healthy lifestyle. In Malaysia, there are many health-related adult education programmes which are located in various ministries. In the Ministry of Health, there is a health education division under the Public Health Department which has a plan of action on nutrition. In the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development, there is the National Population and Family Development Board which has a national action plan on family development and reproductive health. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport has a youth development policy which aims at promoting healthy lifestyle among the youths. The National Narcotics Agency in the Ministry of Home Affairs has a national plan on preventive drug education.

Environmental and Development Education

There are national programmes to ensure the involvement of civil society in government's development efforts via different ministries and departments, specifically the Ministry of National and Rural Development and the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development. The Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment addresses issues of large scale development and their environmental impact. On environmental related concerns, the Department of Environment largely functions as a provider and promoter of environmental education, awareness and information dissemination rather than ensuring the involvement of civil society. Environmental education usually includes education about environmental issues such as recycling, use of non-renewable resources, pollution, defense and protection of green areas, forests and public urban spaces, as well as education for responsible consumption. The Department of Environment collaborates with other ministry to provide environmental education to students in schools and universities. The Department of Wildlife and National Parks is also engaged in educational activities to preserve the country's rich biological heritage by raising the public awareness.

ASEM Initiative on Lifelong Learning

This study is one of the initial efforts to survey the various kinds of provision of adult education in Malaysia. The findings in this study show that the Malaysian government has made provisions for basic education, work-related and health-related adult education. This study has also identified certain gaps in the provision of adult education in Malaysia which need to be filled through improved efforts on the part of the government, and these gaps are education for human rights, education for participation in democratic processes, and education for non-discrimination. However, this study only surveyed the provision of adult education made by the state, and it did not take into account the provision made by the market and civil society.

Despite its limitation, this study is very timely as the Malaysian government is currently trying to formulate a strategic plan of action for Lifelong Learning as part of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Initiative on Lifelong Learning. In line with this ASEM initiative, Malaysia has to create a framework to promote lifelong learning in line with its move to become a knowledge-based economy. The current state of affair shows that strategies on lifelong learning seemed to be compartmentalized where different government agencies carry out their own adult education programmes without much coordination and cooperation. Programmes on lifelong learning should not be restricted only to certain realms such as work-related programmes nor should it be provided only by the state. The concept of lifelong learning should be broadened to include learning for economic gains, learning for active citizenship participation, and learning for personal and social transformation. Similarly, the providers of adult education should not be restricted to the state and market, but should also include civil society.

International Conference on Literacy (LITCON 2003)



The Head of State of Penang, Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas giving his opening address

Educators have to be ready to accommodate change, and set new directions for the way we react to new demands that changes in lifestyles, economies, politics and cultures will impose on us as a result of new technologies, said Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas, the Head of State Penang in his opening address at the International Conference–Litcon 2003 at the Park Royal Hotel, Penang. He added that we have to take note of the need for what has been termed Multiliteracies, implying more than mere multilingual literacies. This implies being literate in numerous aspects, and numerous ways: being literate with reading, writing, making presentations, chairing meetings, and corresponding with different types of people. The event was organized by the International Literacy Research unit housed at the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia and co-hosted by RMIT Australia, International Development of Asian Committee International Reading Association, National Higher Education Research Institute (NaHERI) and Penang Education Department. Some 400 participants from more than 20 countries including Fiji, Australia, United States, Britain, Japan, New Zealand, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Thailand and Singapore attended the conference that featured more than 120 local and foreign presenters. Litcon 2003 also saw the first collaborative international conference of the National Higher Education Research Institute. According to Prof. Morshidi Sirat, Director of NaHERI, this conference was important as it reflected the shared concerns of many educational institutions with regard to the saturation of our daily lives with information organized and disseminated via information technology. He said, "Indeed public issues, social life, the structure of education, entertainment, art, fantasy and spiritual life are increasingly affected by information and communication technologies. We should be thinking of disciplinary border crossings that contribute to a broader understanding of literacy and education in the coming years." According to the organising Chairman, Litcon 2003 was significant for a number of reasons, "In the first place, it provides opportunities for reexamining the concept of literacy and the currently preferred 'Multiliteracies'. Second, it provides a platform for exchanging information on initiatives, programmes, perspectives, theories, pedagogies and knowledge pertaining to literacy. A third commendable aspect of this conference, is the opportunity that it provides for theoreticians, publishers, administrators and practitioners to note what we know, share views and forge common grounds for the future."

He added that the agenda on literacy should address the needs of the individual as well as the family, literacy in the workplace and in the community as well as in the nation. "We are talking about a new curricular framework: one that equips people not with technical skills but also broad perspectives on the world of information, its origins and development trends, its definitions of experience and social life, its potential for human emancipation and human domination and for growth and destruction so people can be the intelligent shapers of the information society and to humanistic culture" he stressed. Three books, the conference proceedings of LitCon 2003 in print and CD-ROM versions produced by the International Literacy Research Unit were also launched at

this event. The books were entitled “New Literacies, New Practices, New Times”; “Bahasa dan Literasi: Penyelidikan dan Peninjauan untuk Pendidikan” and “English Language Teaching and Literacy”. The books highlight the fast changing world and the ways in which we will have to make changes to the portrayal, dissemination, development and prioritization of matters related to literacy. Grounded in an ideology designed to bring about social transformation, the perspectives in these publications aim to provide important insights on the learning environment, or space where teachers and students interact to understand how relationships, hierarchies, and socially and culturally constituted literacy practices operate in classroom and real life.

Ambigapathy Pandian

Talk on Thinking Skills Requirements in the Workplace



Mr Mohd. Sofi sharing his experiences with lecturers at the School of Humanities in USM

Employers want highly qualified employees, but they also want employees with good creative thinking skills. This is what the Managing Director of Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) Penang, Mr. Mohd Sofi Osman stressed in his talk to Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) lecturers teaching Thinking Techniques course on the 8th of October at the School of Humanities, USM. Mr Mohd Sofi, who has been in the semiconductor industry for 17 years, said that in business organisations, creativity is the currency for success. Because the industries are very competitive and everybody seems to have a similar level of technology, creativity gives the edge for success. Current graduates, he added, generally lack initiatives. They seem to prefer top-down directions rather than bottom-up actions in fulfilling their daily tasks. In addition, the skills learned in schools and universities are rarely carried through to the workplace environment. A life-long learning attitude, which is vital in career development, is also lacking in the current graduates. The talk, which was also attended by the director and fellows of IPPTN, provides new insights about the importance of thinking skills, especially creativity, in the workplace.

Munir Shuib

Guidelines on Submission of Manuscripts

1. Manuscripts should be written in English, typed using Times New Roman 12 point font, and double spaced on only one side of A4 size paper with ample left and right margins on Microsoft Word.
2. The length of the manuscripts should not exceed 1000 words. An abstract of about 150 words should be included.
3. Authors are responsible for obtaining permission to use any published material. The publisher shall not be held responsible for the use of such material.
4. Citations in the text should include the author's last name and date of publication, e.g. (Ashton, 2001). If quotations are used, page numbers should be indicated, e.g. (Ashton, 2001:30).
5. Endnotes may be used.
6. Include tables and figures within the text. Number tables and figures consecutively.
7. The reference list should be arranged in alphabetical order and should include only works cited in the text.

Examples:

Yule, G. (1996). [Pragmatics](#). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wolfe, R.N. & Johnson, S.D. (1995). Personality as a predictor of college performance. [Educational and Psychological Measurement](#), 2., 177-185.

Watkins, D. (1998). A cross-cultural look at perceptions of good teaching: Asia and the West. In J.J.F. Forest (Ed.), [University teaching: International perspectives](#). New York: Garland.

8. All submissions should include a cover page containing the title, name of author(s), designation, affiliation, mailing/E-mail address and telephone/fax number. A brief biographical note of the author(s) should also be included.
9. Manuscripts submitted must not be those already published or those which have been offered for publication elsewhere.
10. Manuscripts received will be acknowledged but not returned.
11. Submission of a manuscript will mean that the author agrees to transfer copyright of his/her article to the publisher if and when the article is published. Authors who wish to send their articles to be published elsewhere should seek the written agreement of the publisher.
12. Manuscripts may be sent via e-mail attachment or via post together with the diskette.

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