ORIGINAL ARTICLES

Generic Skills Courses In Fulfilling The Requirement Of The Malaysian Qualification Framework: A Study On Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Students

Jamsari Alias, Nazri Muslim, Ahmad Zamri Mansor, Rafizi Salleh, Aminuddin Basir

ABSTRACT

University general courses in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) have been managed by the Centre for General Studies. The general learning courses commence simultaneously with the founding of the UKM in 1970. Contemporary academic planning proposes the advancement of the courses that are generic-based, should involve communication skills, thinking ability and also the exposure to a wider scope of general knowledge field that surpass the limitations of traditional knowledge disciplines. The intention on the broadening of this field in principal is in line with the goals of liberal education as indicated at the early stage of the establishment of the UKM, which aiming towards producing open-minded and well-balanced scholars. This study aims to examine UKM students’ views towards generic-based courses in fulfilling the requirement of the Malaysian qualification framework (MQF). This study involves the participation of 240 respondents from the Third Year students that have enrolled for the particular courses. The study data was gathered through questionnaire survey that has been analysed using the SPSS programme. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, cross-tabulation statistics, and correlation coefficient has been applied to explain the respondents’ backgrounds and assessing the opinions of the students towards the generic-skill courses in answering the call for the MQF requirement. The study outcome shows that the students’ views on the courses in the framework are generally high. Based on the findings, several proposals have been put forward for the improvement of the courses to ensure sounder requirements for the MQF are applied and UKM manages to produce students with relevant generic skills needed.

Key word: Generic skills, Malaysian Qualification Framework, Students, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia.

Introduction

University general courses at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) have been fully operated by the Centre for General Studies. They started at the same time with the establishment of UKM in 1970. The academic planning at the moment proposes that the human-skill courses that cover communication skills, thinking skills also exposure to a wider scope of general knowledge field surpassing the limitations of the traditional knowledge, needs to be progressed. The stress on the broadening of this general learning in principal is at par with the aspirations of the liberal education at the early phase of the establishment of the UKM to have open-minded and well-balanced scholars. The latest update sees the call for the Malaysian IPT to make steps towards strengthening and the development of human capital integrative and comprehensively, by taking into account the well-being of the country as well as the job market needs. The human capital development is an aspect outlined as one of the national key agenda in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (RMK9). Automatically, this links very closely with the issue of IPT quality product whereby consequently, there has been an increase in the number of graduates without jobs. Among the weaknesses of these graduates are their lack of personality and not having the supposed qualifications, especially human skills as demanded by the employer, other than the fact that they have to be in the game of competitive job market.

Previous Studies:

In a study done by Lazerson, Wagener & Shumanis (2000) there is an indication of the fact that only 1/3 from 1400 higher learning institutions in the USA asses their students on higher-order learning skills, affective...
development or professional development. Thus, it is not surprising when Oblinger & Verville (1998) write that the adults scholars tend to be very weak in several skills like writing, oral communication, teamwork and lifelong learning. This statement is supported by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2008) which posits that the employers tend to seek for graduates who have high capability and skills in problem-solving, teamwork, communication and leadership.

In Malaysia, the failure of the scholars to get a job does due to them not possess any of the soft skills or human skills which are very much required by employers. The study of Haslinda, Muhammad Nubli and Zarina (2005) reveals that the marketability of every graduate is evaluated in various aspects and the employer is likely to find would-be employees who have all sorts of skills without the former having to provide service training. The study conducted by the Academic Development Centre (CADE) UPM finds that issues related with human skills remain at the tenth rank during the interview session, as compared with academic-related issues that are found at the eighteenth rank (Mohamad Shatar dan Azali Mohamad, 2008). This indicates that things related to the formation of human skills in students need to be given serious attention, with special regards to the Higher Learning Institutions in our country.

The importance of human resource development in a country’s development has long been acknowledged. Following Rahmah (1997), several countries in this region are able to achieve high economic growth through carefully addressed human resource development, despite their little physical capital. Conversely, there are some rich countries, in terms of their physical capital but have failed to reach high economic growth, due to their weakness in human resource development. This is supported by Kamal and Mei (1996) that human resource development functions as asset developer, which solves problems creatively to ensure the success of able, talented and interested employees.

Chan Yuen (2000) asserts that the current organisations no longer need a lot of labour force but in fact, they require work force that is knowledgeable and highly skilled. This is because, knowledgeable and highly skilled workers will guarantee the survivability of an organisation. Mohd Faizal (2005) puts forth the characteristics of workers who are knowledgeable and highly skilled, namely possessing various skills, is versatile, creative and is able to face the ongoing technological changes and following lifelong learning process, also the workers need to get accustomed to the latest technology use to avoid from any complications in this globalised era.

It can be summed up that the importance in mastering human skills among the workers to implement the job more effectively and efficiently has been recognised by an organisation. Higher learning institutions need to take the initiative to prepare students that can fulfil the foundation laid by the employers. Also, The Conference Board of Canada (2004), states that employees require workers who are able to communicate effectively, think critically, have the commitment in the ongoing lifelong learning, show appropriate personality and attitude, responsible, good at adapting and can work in groups.

According to Lukman (2005), good quality IPTA should have no difficulty in producing graduates who show quality in academic fields, but also in terms of other skills which include leadership, communication skills, good moral values and as such. According to Sharifah Hapsah (2005), the quality assurance at the IPT is to make sure that the produced graduates have the technical and practical skills, professionalism, technical thinking management skills, communication skills, and information management skills also lifelong learning. Higher Education Department (KPT, 2006) has set the standard for all curriculum in the higher education in Malaysia to have designs that instils some generic skills covering (i) thinking, action, making adaptation, problem-solving and decision-making skills (ii) interpersonal and communication skills, (iii) information technology skills, multimedia and information technology skills, (iv) leadership skills, also (v) entrepreneurial skills.

Therefore, generic skills serve as skills that every student should have. The skills are not only focused on the things that they learn in their fields (Lizzio & Wilson, 2004). The skills include communication skills, teamwork skills, and problem-solving skills. To produce these kinds of students, IPT needs to instill elements that motivate the element in the skills within the students through the teaching and learning process.

Generic Skills (Kemahiran Generik - KG):

Generic skills are skills that one is required to have, to function effectively at a minimal rate while doing work following the specific skills owned. Generic skills progress through the natural processes like growth, maturity and aging. The skills have also been discussed at all levels, either at the lower, secondary or higher education institutes (IPT). Although there is no one specific skill about KG (generic skills), but most of them relate with skills like leadership, teamwork cooperation, communication and ongoing learning. KG being among the elements recognised is becoming critical in the globalised-based working world, what more with the rapid pace of the technological change. Therefore, IPT graduates must master the KM that caters for and fulfil the requirements of the job market and increasingly challenging daily lives.
Human Skills Development module (soft skills) for Higher Learning Institutions (2006) has stated that human soft skills are the generic skills that embody various generic skill aspects. Human skills do not have any one specific list of skills, yet these skills relate with skills like leadership, teamwork, communication and ongoing learning. According to this module, human skills are recognised to be critical, which are global in nature also experiencing very fast-paced technological change. Therefore, Higher Learning Institution graduates must master these human skills (soft skills) that cater for and fulfil the job market in the gradually challenging life.

Higher Learning Ministry has outlined the main 7 elements below- those selected to be implemented at the IPT as the general skills that the students should have:

i. Communication Skills
ii. Critical Thinking and Problem-solving skills
iii. Teamwork skills
iv. Continuous learning and Information Technology
v. Entrepreneurial Skills
vi. Professional Ethics and Moral
vii. Leadership Skills

Espinoza (1999) has outlined several generic skills needed by the employers like the ability to adapt, analyse, communicate, initiate, then the interpersonal, leadership, self-confidence and teamwork skills. Pumphrey (2001), defines generic skills as changeable skills, consisting of combinations of various skills that can increase individual productivity. The generic skills also depend on the job sector or group done by a worker to carry out a work process to get the desired outcome namely communication skills, flexibility skills, information technology skills, management, mathematical skills, work organisation, teamwork and problem-solving.

A few countries have made use of different terms for generic skills, yet their meanings and definitions remain the same. According to National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2003), in the United Kingdom, generic skills are known as core skills and additional skills. Meanwhile, the employers often use skills which characterise on the needs of the employers (employability skills). Among the core skills are, communication, numbering application, and information technology use.

In Canada, researchers have started to introduce generic skills in 1970 and divided them into two categories, basic skills comprising of communication skills, information management, numbering application and problem-solving and personnel management skills, namely having positive thinking, being responsible, being flexible, always want to learn and work in secure conditions (Conference Board of Canada, 2000). The Conference Board of Canada (2000) has highlighted three groups of employability skills namely basic skills, self-management skills and teamwork skills. Every skill contains several more sub-skills. The sub-skills are as follows:

1. Basic skills (Communication skills, information management skills, problem-solving skills and number use skills)
2. Self-management skills (The ability to have a positive attitude, the ability to be responsible and the ability to making adjustments or adaptations)
3. Teamwork skills (The ability to work with others and the ability to get involved in a project or task).

The United States has actively introduced some generic skills in 1990. In this country, the generic skills are named as basic skills, necessary skills, workplace know-how. The skills are categorised into four elements, which are core skills like communication and numbering application, high-level thinking skills like always being able to accept changes, solve problems, be creative, able to make decisions, learn how to gain knowledge and skills related to attributes, namely honesty, placing aim on every job and consistently positive with self-capability (National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2003).

The mastery of generic skills not only enables a person to adapt to the changes and progress that take place in the working sector, but also to their daily activities. Generic skills also prepare a citizen in confronting the exponential and continuing technological change (Sharifah Noor Anita, 2002). Therefore, graduates of today should have all the requirements as demanded by the employers and as needed by the gradually challenging job market. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Higher Learning Institutions to produce scholars with balanced skills either in the aspects of attitude, moral and so on. Mohd Safarin and Mohd Zolkifli (2005) in their research have derived a conclusion that self accommodation and competition in global work market nowadays have stressed on how important it is for local graduates to have generic skills elements, other than being excellent in the academic field. According to them, elements of human skills will enable a worker to use all the knowledge and skills needed in the job.

Reigeluth (1999) adds that generic skills are those applied across various subject domains. This means that by mastering generic skills an individual will be able to adapt him or herself to any change that happens.
Workers who are empowered with generic skills are flexible, dynamic and have the personality in performing their duties. Generic skills also known as employable skills indicate the skills in the ability to do work more practically and realistically.

Hassan Said in the Human Skills Development Module (soft skills) for Higher Learning Institutions (2006), points out that Higher Learning Institutions need to stress on the importance of human skills or soft skills that are seen as the critical contributor in generating human capital that is able to compete at the global level. In a study done by Green F (2001), the importance of generic skills (soft skills) lies in the fact that they are able to produce workers of various skills (overall employability), able to move across sectors, prepare to face any changes to elevate workers’ autonomy, being optimist workers, workers who are keen learners and workers that can address the change of culture at the workplace.

Additionally, employers today tend to place more focus on adaptability, cost reduction, productivity increase and new market, goods and services. A worker needs to demonstrate the ability to work together in a team, ability to resolve any issues and ability to face situations that are not common occurrences. Workers must also make decisions, are responsible and communicate effectively. Human skills efficacy and mastery have become the key prerequisites for modern workers today (Australian National Training Authority, 2003).

A study done by Yahya (2004) finds out several important soft skills agreed by the employing industry and which need attention and depicted as a new model. The model contains three aspects of skills based on the mean of priority referred to the importance and need of the employer towards the aforementioned elements of soft skills. The skills have been briefed as follows:

i. Academic skills that give focus on the skills to solve problems, think critically, communicate and master mathematics.

ii. The skills of self-management namely the soft skills elements are given due attention- those that cover the skills of responsibility, the skills of adopting positive attitude, and the skills of making adaptation.

iii. The skills of teamwork that cover the soft skills elements which are the skills of working with others and the skills of involving oneself with a particular project.

Meanwhile, Yahya (2004) also points out that the model produced demonstrates the similarities noticeable in terms of the soft skills established in the study model carried out by The Conference Board of Canada (1996), which has also enlisted the required skills in the world of occupation as seen below:

i. A good communication skill.

ii. The ability to study independently.

iii. The skill to work in a team.

iv. The ability to adapt in changing situations.

v. Thinking skills-solving problems critically, thinking logically and numerical skills.

vi. Navigating knowledge-finding and using the different ways of processing information.

As this has been brought into the discussion, it is clear that the element of generic skills differ from one country to another. There are also some differences in terms of the terms used among the countries. However, the aim of the generic skills stays the same, that is to see that the students learn and master every generic skill there is.

Malaysian Qualification Framework – MQF:

On December 21st 2005, the Malaysian Government had decided to combine the National Accreditation Board (Lembaga Akreditasi Negara - LAN) and Quality Assurance Section of Ministry of Higher Learning (Bahagian Jaminan Kualiti, Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi - BJK, KPT), forming a new entity with the responsibility on quality assurance of public and private sectors of national higher learning. This entity, named as Malaysian Qualifications Agency, MQA was established on November 1st 2007 as a result of the enforcement of Malaysian Qualification Agency Act, 2007.

The major role of MQA is to implement the Malaysian Qualifications Framework, MQF as a platform of quality assurance system of higher learning as well as a reference point of national qualification criteria and standards. MQA functions as sole body that supervises and coordinates the quality assurance and accreditation of national higher education. LAN was dispersed due to the establishment of MQA and its staffs were transferred into MQA. The vision is to become an authoritative quality assurance organization of higher learning that is recognized worldwide while the mission is to give assurance to the concerned parties by means of smart practices of quality assurance. As a quality assurance body, MQA functions as follows:

1. Implement MQF as the reference point of Malaysian qualification

2. Develop criteria and standards as national reference for qualification accreditation with the cooperation from various concerned parties

3. Ensure the quality of higher learning institutions and programmes

4. Grant accreditation to programmes that fulfil the set criteria and standards
5. Simplify the recognition and equalizing method of qualification
6. Manage Malaysian Qualifications Register, MQR

Malaysian Qualifications Framework, MQF is Malaysia’s declaration relating to local qualifications and qualities of the qualifications. MQF is the instrument that develops and classifies qualifications based on a set of criteria which is agreed at national level and benchmarked by international practices, clarifying learning stage, learning results and credit system based on student’s load of learning. These criteria are accepted and applied for all qualifications awarded by higher learning providers. In fact, MQF integrates and connects all national qualifications.

MQF also provides educational paths that systematically correlate qualifications. This allows for individuals to perform in higher education by means of credit transfer and accreditation of prior experiential learning gained from formal and informal learning regardless of time and place, in the context of lifetime learning. MQF emphasizes on eight domains of significant learning results for Malaysia namely;

1. Knowledge
2. Practical expertise
3. Social skills and responsibility
4. Value, attitude and professionalism
5. Skills of communication, leadership and teamwork
6. Skills of problem solving and scientific skill
7. Skills of information management and lifetime learning
8. Skills of managing and entrepreneurship

In Malaysia, generic skills evaluation of IPT students was first focused when Malaysian Qualification Framework (MQF) was implemented in 2006. Generic skills are the skills other than academic field required by students in order to excel as practitioners in the field of academic, employment and life (Falk & Millar 2002; Hambur, Rowe & Luc, 2002; Lublin, 2003).

Generic skills are integrated in context of teaching and learning subject and becoming transferable skills (Kearns, 2001). Process of evaluation and quality assurance of every graduate is one of the processes in educational system in IPT. Even though it is tough to develop this process but the initiative is crucial in determining whether or not generic skills among the IPT students are achieved (Hambur, Rowe & Luc, 2002).

Reviews conducted by Ministry of Human Resources (2005) and Ministry of Higher Learning (2006) had discovered that a total of 59,315 graduates were jobless. One of the main factors for the unemployment was lack of communication skills particularly in verbal skill and critical thinking skill such as in reasoning relating to problem solving.

Employers in this era of globalization emphasize on requirement for workers with high generic competence in interpersonal skill, leadership (Mason, 1992), teamwork (Boud & Middleton, 2003; Kanapathy, 2001), and writing as well as verbal skills (Schroder, 1989).

Views of concerned parties are also important for listing out the necessary critical skills to be achieved by universities students. Therefore, this study is very significant and may act as guidance to all parties so as to determine suitability of generic skill courses offered by UKM in fulfilling the requirement of MQF and complying with the eight domains of MQF.

Problem Statement:

Educational institutions play important roles in developing community especially in the context of making Malaysia a knowledge-based developing country of. Not only educational institutions are considered as an institution for expanding and cultivating knowledge, but in fact are responsible for attaining the aspiration and expectation of the nation by producing students with personality, capable of thinking rationally, critically, creatively, innovative, disciplined and of decent character (Abdul Hadi, 2000).

According to Hasliza (2002), one of the factors causing graduates of IPT to be unaccepted in employment markets is the unavailability of soft skills or generic skills. Employers-to-be are not confident with the graduates especially in the aspects of personality, appearance, self confidence, communication skills, ability in decision making and working in team.

However lately, there are grievances that question the capability of students resulting from currently deteriorating education especially in the aspect of leadership and identity, despite of their recognised intellectuality. According to result of study by Ministry of Higher Learning and Ministry of Human Resources (2006), there were 59,315 graduates unsuccessful in getting employment. Eleven causes were identified and out of these, seven were found to be related to the students’ weaknesses in generic skills.
Objectives Of The Study:

Objectives of this study are:
1. To determine the perception of UKM students on generic skill courses that fit MQF’s requirement.
2. To identify UKM generic skill courses that suit Eight Domains of MQF according to the perception of UKM students.

Methodology:

Design of the Study:

This study is in the form of descriptive study relating to the perception of students in IPTA. According to Wiersma (1995) this method is among the best methods if the study is to measure or evaluate attitude, perception and achievement of a programme. Descriptive form is also used to align with the requirement of study to observe an occurring phenomenon (Mohd Majid Konting 1990). Thus, a set of questionnaires was prepared by the researcher for such purposes in achieving the objective of the study. According to Tuckman (1999), questionnaire seems to be an effective way for gathering information from respondents.

Respondents of the Study:

The population of this study is all the third year students in UKM. This situation is very significant and realistic for the students’ perceptions, as they are more familiar with the campus surroundings. Sample selection was done through the group sampling method. Group sampling may be used by determining the number of groups according to states, districts and territorial divisions. This way of sample selection is suitable if the population is big and distributed all over the places. It may save time and reduce all kind of problems because the researcher puts together all samples into a group before random selection is carried out. Thus, for determining the number of respondents, Table of Sampling Size of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used and so the sample size for this study is 240. According to Sidek Mohd Noah (2002), the bigger the sample size is, the smaller the sampling error.

Instruments of the Study:

Instruments used in collecting data for this study is a set of questionnaires. According to Oppenheim (2004) and Tuckman (1999), questionnaires and interview are two forms of effective instruments for obtaining information from respondents besides observation. All questions are in positive form and respondents are required to state their perceptions according to the Likert scale. The questionnaires comprise of two parts namely Part A and Part B. Part A is relating to demography of respondents. Part B is regarding students’ perception on generic skill courses in UKM.

Pilot Study:

Pilot survey was done with the intention to identify weaknesses and strengths of the prepared questionnaires. Therefore, 50 students were selected to answer the questionnaires before the questionnaires were distributed. Results show that the 50 students had no problem in understanding the questions and no explanation was required. Then, by using SPSS programme, the researcher calculated the reliability value and value of Alpha Cronbach. It was found that the value of Alpha Cronbach for all items is above 0.6. Thus, the questionnaires are appropriate for this study.

Validity and Reliability of Instruments of the Study:

In this study, the validity of the questionnaires is determined by experts. Reliability refers to the stability and consistency of instruments in measuring a concept. The popular test which is frequently used in measuring consistency in a concept is Alpha Cronbach. The value of Alpha Cronbach reliability is between 0.0 to 1.0. According to Mohd Majid (1990), Alpha Cronbach value of above 0.60 is often used as reliability index in a research. Thus, in this study, the researcher has fixed Alpha Cronbach value of above 0.60 as reliability value for each part of the questionnaires.

Data Analysis Procedure:
The data obtained were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) Program version 16 by means of mean, standard deviation, Chi square and cross-tabulation. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, average score or mean, cross-tabulation and correlation coefficient were used for describing background of respondents and appraising the perception of UKM students on generic skill courses.

Data Analysis And Findings Of The Study:

Backgrounds of Respondents:

A total of 240 students had answered the questionnaires. Respondents’ backgrounds were asked in Part A of the questionnaires. Discussion on the respondents’ backgrounds will be divided into two sections namely profiles and academic backgrounds. Table 1 shows the information on respondents involved in the study. In overall, there were 240 students involved as respondents. Out of the total, 70.8 percents were female respondents while 29.2 percents were male. Out of the 240 respondents, 87.1 percents were Malays. The Chinese were 5.8 percents, while Indian 3.3 percents and others 3.8 percents. Total of 88.8 percents of the respondents were Muslim students. Christian respondents were 4.2 percents followed by Buddhist 3.8 percents, Hindu 2.9 percents and other religions 0.4 percents. Majority of the respondents were in the range of 19 – 21 years old forming 67.5 percents. Respondents within the age range of 22 – 24 years old were 28.8 percents and 3.7 percents for 25 – 26 years old.

Table 1: Profiles of Respondents

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n = 240</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>70.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Races</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>5.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>88.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buddha</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<td>Hindu</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ages</td>
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<tr>
<td>19-21</td>
<td>67.5</td>
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<td>22-24</td>
<td>28.8</td>
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<td>25-26</td>
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Table 2 relates information on respondents’ academic background. This study involves respondents from faculty of FSSK (37.5 percents), FPI (12.9 percents), FST (29.2 percents), FUU (1.7 percents), FEP (12.9 percents) dan FPEND (5.8 percents). Most of the respondents, consisting of 50 percents were STPM holders. This is followed by 37.1 percents of matriculation students and 12.9 percents of diploma students.

Table 2: Academic Background of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>n = 240</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculties</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSSK</td>
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<tr>
<td>FPI</td>
<td>12.9</td>
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<td>FST</td>
<td>29.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>FUU</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<td>FEP</td>
<td>12.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>FPEND</td>
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<td>Entry Qualification into University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>12.9</td>
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<td>STPM</td>
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Generic Skill Courses and MQF Requirements:

Table 3 below shows respondents’ perception towards GS courses that fit MQF requirements. The first row of the table indicates 60.0 percents of respondents agreed that GS courses may fulfill the requirements of social skills and responsibility. This is followed by 20.0 percents of those strongly agreed, 15.4 percents less agreed, 3.8 percents disagreed and 0.8 percent strongly disagreed.
The second row relates that 62.5 percents of respondents agreed that GS courses may fulfil the requirement of value, attitude and professionalism. This is followed by 18.8 percents of those who strongly agreed, 15.4 percents less agreed, 2.5 percents disagreed and 0.8 percent strongly disagreed. As for the third row, 65.0 percents of respondents agreed that GS courses may fulfil the requirement of communication, leadership and teamwork skills. This is followed by 17.5 percents of those strongly agreed, 14.2 percent less agreed, 2.5 percents disagreed and 0.8 percent strongly disagreed.

The fourth row in Table 3 shows 64.2 percents of respondents agreed that GS courses may fulfil the requirement of problem solving and scientific skills. This is followed by 18.3 percents less agreed, 12.9 percents strongly agreed, 3.3 percents disagreed and 1.2 percents strongly disagreed.

In overall, 60.7 percents of respondents agreed that GS courses in UKM fit the requirements of MQF with 18.5 percents strongly agreed. This brings total respondents who “agreed” and “strongly agreed” to 79.2 percents of the whole respondents.

In general, shows that in the perception of UKM students the generic skill courses offered are conforming to the requirements of MQF. The high average score of 79.2 percents proves that the existing generic skill courses are very much relevant and in accordance with the requirements of Malaysian qualification as standardized by the MQF. Average score of 4.8 percents that includes the “strongly disagreed” and “disagreed” verifies that only a very small percentage of respondents who think the offered generic skill courses are not really conforming to MQF requirements.

Next, let us look at the findings from the list of generic skill courses being offered and the perception of UKM students regarding the conformity of the courses to the eight domains of MQF; that include aspects of knowledge, practical expertise, social skill and responsibility, attitude value and professionalism, communication, leadership and teamwork skills, problem solving and scientific skills, information management and lifetime learning skills, and also managing as well as entrepreneurship skill. The overall findings are presented in Table 4 below.
In details, 57.5 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2143 Penjagaan Kesihatan Diri conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 23.8 percents less agreed, 14.6 percents strongly agreed, 3.8 percents disagreed and 0.4 percent strongly disagreed.

As many as 52.1 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2213 Bentuk Bentuk Penulisan conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 28.8 percents less agreed, 12.9 percents strongly agreed, 5.4 percents disagreed and 0.8 percent strongly disagreed. Then, 61.2 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2223 Hubungan Insan conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 22.9 percents strongly agreed, 13.8 percents less agreed, 1.7 percents disagreed and 0.4 percent strongly disagreed.

In the fourth row, 66.7 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2263 Kemahiran Mem buat Keputusan conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 18.3 percents less agreed, 12.5 percents strongly agreed, 2.1 percents disagreed and 0.4 percent strongly disagreed. As many as 60.0 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2243 Kemahiran Menulis conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 21.1 percents less agreed, 15.4 percents strongly agreed, 2.9 percents disagreed and 0.4 percent strongly disagreed, whereas 55.0 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2253 Pengurusan Emosi conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 25.8 percents strongly agreed, 17.1 percents less agreed, 1.7 percents disagreed and 0.4 percent strongly disagree.

Next, as we see in the seventh row, 57.1 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2313 Asas Pengurusan Kualiti conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 24.2 percents strongly agreed, 16.7 percents less agreed, 1.7 percents disagreed and 0.4 percent strongly disagreed. As many as 63.3 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2273 Apresiasi Teknologi Maklumat conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 18.8 percents less agreed, 15.4 percents strongly agreed, 2.1 percents disagreed and 0.4 percent strongly disagreed, whereas 62.5 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2313 Asas Pengurusan Kualiti conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 20.0 percents less agreed, 15.4 percents strongly agreed, 1.7 percents disagreed and 0.4 percent strongly disagreed.

In the tenth row, 56.6 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2413 Kemahiran Berfikir conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 25.8 percents strongly agreed, 15.8 percents less agreed, 1.2 percents disagreed and 0.4 percent strongly disagreed. As many as 60.4 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2423 Kemahiran Berfikir conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 23.8 percents strongly agreed, 13.8 percents less agreed, 1.7 percents disagreed and 0.4 percent strongly disagreed, whereas 57.9 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2433 Kemahiran Pengurusan Harta conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 22.9 percents less agreed, 16.2 percents strongly agreed, 3.3 percents disagreed and 0.1 percent strongly disagreed.

Next, let us look at the thirteenth row, 57.5 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2433 Kemahiran Pengurusan Harta conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 22.9 percents less agreed, 16.2 percents strongly agreed, 3.3 percents disagreed and 0.1 percent strongly disagreed. As many as 56.7 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2443 Kemahiran Kesantunan Berbahasa conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 20.0 percents strongly agreed, 19.6 percents less agreed, 3.3 percents disagreed and 0.4 percent strongly disagreed, whereas 57.9 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2453 Kemahiran Keibubapaan conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 20.4 percents less agreed, 19.2 percents strongly agreed, 1.7 percents disagreed and 0.8 percent strongly disagreed.

In the sixteenth row, 58.8 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2463 Kreativiti dan Penyelesaian Masalah conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 20.8 percents strongly agreed, 17.9 percents less agreed, 2.1 percents disagreed and 0.4 percent strongly disagreed. As many as 59.6 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT2473 Penjagaan Kesihatan Reproduktif conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is followed by 21.7 percents less agreed, 15.8 percents strongly agreed, 2.1 percents disagreed and 0.8 percent strongly disagreed, whereas 59.6 percents of respondents agreed that the course ZZZT3213 Pemikiran Saintifik conforms to the requirements of 8 domains of MQF. This is
followed by 18.8 percents strongly agreed, 18.3 percents less agreed, 2.9 percents disagreed and 0.4 percent strongly disagreed.

In overall, the findings indicate that 58.92 percents of respondents agreed that the GS courses offered in UKM fit the eight domains of MQF with 19.05 percents chose to be strongly agreed. This brings the total respondents who “agreed” and “strongly agreed” to 77.97 percents of the whole respondents.

This big percentage, in general, depicts in the perception of UKM students, generic skill courses offered are very much conform to the eight domains of MQF. The high score of total average of 77.97 percents proves that the existing generic skill courses are very relevant and in accordance with requirements of eight domains of Malaysian qualification as standardized by MQF. Total average score of 2.91 percents that includes the category “strongly disagreed” and “disagreed” justifies that only very small percentage of respondents think generic skill courses offered not quite in accordance with the eight domains of MQF, with only 19.12 percents of total respondents chose “less agreed”.

If we look at the findings from the list of generic skill courses and the perception of UKM students regarding the conformance of the courses to the eight domains of MQF; we may gather five courses that CONFORM all the eight domains THE MOST, as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: List of Top Five Generic Skill Courses that According to UKM Students Conform to the Eight Domains of MQF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Total Average Score of “Strongly agreed” and “Agreed”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ZZZT2413 Kepimpinan &amp; Kemahiran Interpersonal (Interpersonal Leadership &amp; Skill)</td>
<td>84.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZZZT2223 Hubungan Insan (Human Skill)</td>
<td>84.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZZZT2393 Pengurusan Masa (Time Management)</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZZZT263 Kemahiran Membuat Keputusan (Decision Making Skill)</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZZZT2423 Kemahiran Berfikir (Thinking Skill)</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally, we may notice that four out of five respondents said that GS courses offered by UKM fit the eight domains of MQF with more than four out of five respondents select courses relating to leadership, personal skill in relation and time management as well as problem solving as main choices.

Then, on the opposite side, if we analyse the findings from the list of generic skill courses offered and the perception of UKM students regarding the conformance of the courses to the eight domains of MQF; we may gather five courses that CONFORM all the eight domains THE LEAST, as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: List of Generic Skill Courses that According to UKM Students Conform to the Eight Domains of MQF the LEAST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Total Average Score of “Strongly disagreed”, “Disagreed” and “Less Agreed”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ZZZT2213 Bentuk-Bentuk Penulisan (Types of Writing-up)</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZZZT2143 Penjagaan Kesihatan Diri (Personal Health Care)</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZZZT2433 Kemahiran Pengurusan Harta (Property Management Skill)</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZZZT2473 Penjagaan Keshatan Reproduktif (Reproductive Health Care)</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZZZT2243 Kemahiran Menulis (Writing Skill)</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may be seen in general; the respondents’ selections imply that GS courses offered by UKM should not burden them with too many personalized assignments such as in the courses of writing and health care. One interesting fact to be highlighted here is that generic skill courses relating to humanity and environment are considered as more required in conforming to the eight domains of MQF compared to the courses relating to personal of respondents.

Suggestion And Conclusion:

In generating human capital for the nation’s need, emphasis should be given on generic skills. Therefore, UKM students pursuing for their studies need to be instilled with generic skill. Appraisal and reward should be given to those who master the elements of generic skill. The researcher suggests for UKM to review the current curriculum so that generic skill may be instilled more effectively. Emphasis must also be given on how to improve generic skill of self development type. Apparently, the results of this study indicate high perception of the students towards generic skill courses and the courses do help them greatly in escalating their generic skill as well as confirming to the standardized eight domains of MQF.

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References


Kearns, P., 2001. Review of research: Generic skills for the new economy. NCVER. Adelaide


