

# STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON HIGHER LEARNING EDUCATION: DATA ANALYSIS



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10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
The Innovative University  
1994 - 2004

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Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Students' perception on higher learning education : data analysis

ISBN 983-2369-23-1

1. Education, Higher—Research

378.07

Printed by :



**RIKAPADU**

best prices...best product  
No. 4-08 2000 Tel: 4-08 2000  
Email: rikapadu@msm.gov.my

Artwork & Design by : Francisca Johny

Typeface for text : Times New Roman & Arial

Text type and leading size : 12 / 14 pts.

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## **PREFACE**

The need for quality education system especially in the universities and colleges is crucial in preparing for future human capital. University graduates are expected to be equipped with various skills before they adhere to the working environment.

It is imperative to ensure the Malaysian graduates are properly trained and equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge so that they are ready to enter the market place. Therefore, the researchers believe it is important to identify the students' perception on university education and assess their level of competency before entering the university and at present.

This book is the compilation of the data analysis conducted to achieve the above objectives. The researchers believe this book would benefit many interested parties including academicians, policy makers, corporate leaders, scholars and others who have great interest primarily in higher education research.

We wish to thank Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) for its financial support that enable us to complete the study. Our appreciation also goes to all respondents and individuals who have made special contributions to the success of this study.

## **BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

Generally, the primary task of a university is to develop human resource as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of both human intellectual and emotional capacity through education process. The common ways in implementing this mission is through lecturing, training, research, professional practices and student participations in class and field works.

Students' exposure to a comprehensive academic curriculum, professional skill practices and extracurricular programs should be emphasized in the university system. Universities should not only focus in delivering knowledge but at the same time assisting students to develop skills and emotional capabilities that allow them to relate more effectively to working environment and society.

The universities play a significant role in changing and nurturing student mindset. Students perceive a university as a centre for cultivation of important skills namely communication, specific knowledge, team building, creativity and innovative, information communication and technology (ICT) etc. Therefore, a study of expectation and perceived quality of university students and university education is crucial in addressing the development of versatile human resource for the future.

Thus, the primary objective of this study is to examine the university students' expectations and perceived quality on their generic skills and personal attributes capabilities. In addition, the aim of this study is to determine the relationship between the demographic variables of the student respondents and their generic skills and personal attributes.

In this study, students from a variety of programs at Universiti Malaysia Sabah and Universiti Teknologi Mara in Sabah and Sarawak had been chosen to complete a list of 35 competencies regarding the above-mentioned issue. They were required to rate their expectations and perceived quality towards university education as well as to assess their level of competencies before and at present on a 5-Likert Scale. The findings of this study will be useful as a guide for university's management in reengineering its curriculum and subject matters, which is essential for students' development. This study is also believed to benefit other scholars, corporate leaders and researchers in higher education learning.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND ANALYSIS

The study was conducted in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah and Kuching, Sarawak. The questionnaires were mailed to the student affair department of the respective universities, namely University Malaysia Sabah and Universiti Teknologi MARA of Sabah and Sarawak. The questionnaires then were distributed to the final year students of each school or faculty in the universities.

The data was analysed through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) using regression, hierarchical regression, analysis of variance (ANOVA), T-test as statistical tools for testing the hypotheses. Descriptive and inferential statistics were also conducted. Prior these analyses, several test of assumptions such as normality, homoscedasticity, independence of error terms and linearity of relationship had been made. 350 questionnaires were distributed however only 279 were returned and usable which gave a response rate of 79.7 percent.

In this study, 95 percent confidence level (0.05 significance level) is used for the purpose of testing the hypotheses in order to identify the acceptance or rejection regions. The hypothesis is supported if the test statistics value fall within the rejection region.

## VARIABLES STUDIED

The variables studied are as follows:

### Dependent Variables

Expectation, Perceived Quality, Level of competency before and at present

### Independent Variables

Gender, Age, Ethnicity, Education and Sponsorship

### Generic Skills

1. Communication Skills
  - 1.1. Reading Skill
  - 1.2. Writing Skill
  - 1.3. Listening Skill
  - 1.4. English Communication
  - 1.5. Foreign Language Skills
2. Public Speaking
3. Presentation Skill
4. Technical Knowledge
5. Ability to Use Numerical Data
6. Computer Literacy
7. Technical Computer Skill
8. Application of Basic Computer Software
9. Ability to Apply Knowledge
  - 9.1. General Knowledge
  - 9.2. Knowledge In Specialized Area
10. Conceptual Thinking Ability
11. Research Skill
12. Creativity
13. Innovative

14. Teamwork
15. Problem Solving Skill
16. Time Management
17. Leadership
18. Analytical Thinking
19. Entrepreneurship Skill
20. Critical Thinking

### Personal Attributes

1. Self-Confidence
2. Self-Discipline
3. Self-Reliance
4. Self-Control
5. Self-Motivation
6. Willingness to Learn
7. Adaptability
8. Understanding Professional and Ethical Responsibilities
9. Commitment to work
10. Work with Minimum Supervision
11. Initiative
12. Intrapersonal Skill
13. Interpersonal Skill
14. Risk Taking
15. Mobility

### Moderator Variables

Student's cumulative grade point average (CGPA)