

Sharp focus on soft skills: a case study of Malaysian university students' educational expectations

Abstract

In 2006, the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia, recommended that all public institutions of higher learning in the country incorporate soft skills formation into their curricula. This qualitative study aimed to explore Malaysian students' expectations of university education with a special focus on the acquisition of soft skills and to examine the students' perceptions of the instructors' and the courses' effectiveness in fulfilling their educational agendas. Ninety-six students at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) participated in this study. The findings revealed that their educational expectations were varied and diverse and could be separated into three categories, such as "Life Skills", "Subject Matter (Hard Skills)", and "Soft Skills". The students considered soft skills formation as an important part of university education. However, not all of the soft skills identified by the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia, were mentioned by the respondents. The article discusses the implications of the study's findings for Malaysia's higher education policy.