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Participation of Students With Disabilities in Higher Education: Policy and Practices

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Equity Policy and Practices

Equity, in general refers to fairness or justice. The promotion of equity through policies and practices requires the individuals' or groups' needs and circumstances to be taken into account (Matear, 2006). Access to higher education should not be taken out of the context of equity (Asian Development Bank, 2012). Policy on equitable access, therefore, seeks to provide students with disabilities with greater opportunities to access tertiary education, which is driven by a sense of justice and fairness. Students with disabilities are still underrepresented in higher education at most countries, particularly in developing countries. Based on the policy and practices in developed countries, this paper aims to reflect on the provision of equitable higher education for students with disabilities at a selected developing country.

Studies have shown that students with disabilities face challenges during admission, have lower academic performance and are more at-risks of dropping out from higher education (Bauman, Bustillos, Bensimon, Brown, & Bartee, 2005; Dutta, Scguri-Geist, & Kundu, 2009; Foreman, Dempsey, Robinson & Manning, 2001). The low enrolment and high dropout rates among students with disabilities at higher education are equity issues that called for the attention of policymakers and institutional stakeholders (Foreman et al., 2001). To promote equity in higher education, most developed countries have set clear goals to increase the share of the population with higher education and/or broaden access to higher education for individuals that are underrepresented because of socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender, disability or location (International Association of Universities, 2008). In Australia, for instance, equity has informed participation policy in Australian higher education since early 1990s. The Australian Government has designated students with disabilities as one of the six equity groups that were underrepresented in higher education. At the policy level, there has been strong interest in widening and increasing participation resulting in unprecedented levels of funding (Gale & Parker, 2013). Universities have also taken up the challenge to support students with disabilities throughout their university life cycle. The participation rate of students with disabilities in Australian universities has increased steadily for the past two decades and it has exceeded the estimated population reference point of 4.0% (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2014).

Meeting the Students' Needs through Ecological Framework

Disability policy in many developed countries is underpinned by an ecological framework. Ecological framework defines disability through the interconnection of person and environment, and a contextual experience of

disability (Ebersold & Evans, 2003). The International Classification of Functional Disability and Health (ICF) is perceived as a specific model within the Ecological Model (WHO, 2001) that provides a framework for articulating the way in which disability can be managed by higher education institutions and education system (Figure 1).

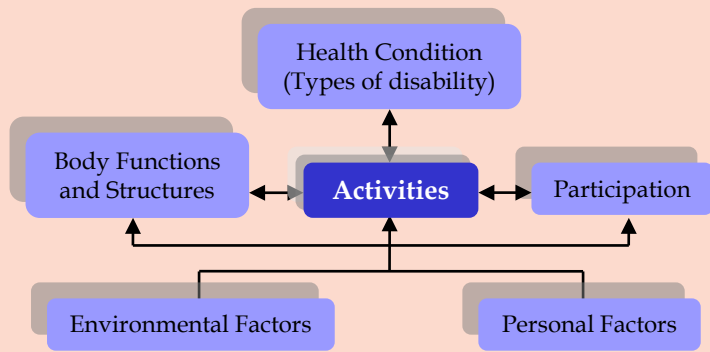


FIGURE 1 Interactions between the components of ICF (WHO, 2001: 18)

The ICF framework provides guidelines on how disability is managed at the micro (service delivery) and macro (funding models and data collection) levels. As illustrated in Figure 1, disability is multidimensional and interactive. All components of disability are important and any one may interact with another. Environmental factors which include institutional policies, system and services must be taken into consideration as they affect the participation and successful outcomes of students with disabilities throughout their university life cycle. In line with the Ecological Framework, a whole-of-Institution approach that takes into account both personal and environmental factors is commonly implemented in developed countries. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL), inclusive curriculum, the provision of supporting services as well as infrastructure (Table 1) are initiatives taken to meet the needs of students with disabilities at the higher education sector.

TABLE 1 A whole-of-institution approach in meeting the needs of students with disabilities

Law & Policy	Student Life Cycle Strategy	Universal Design for Learning & Inclusive Curriculum	Supporting Services and Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws • Institutional policies • Strategic action plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-university (e.g., come-and-try days/ open days) • During the study period (e.g., orientation and mobility training, support for learning activities, extracurricular activities) • Post-graduation (e.g., preparation for work, alumni arrangements, cooperation with firms for transition) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility and variety in teaching, learning, and assessment • Learning experience of comparable quality for all students • Capacity to adjust course components to meet the needs of students with disabilities without compromising on academic standards • Improved accessibility of course materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability specialist provision (e.g., learning disability specialists, low vision specialists) • Auxiliary aids and services provision (e.g., braille books, large print materials, taking calculator, television enlarger, reader, interpreter, assistive listening devices) • Case-by-case accommodation • Universal design for students with physical disability • University staff support (e.g., tutoring services)

Scenario at Developing Countries: From the Lenses of Indonesia

Students with disabilities in developing countries such as Indonesia still experience minimum access at the higher education. Statistics shows that even though the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Indonesia has increased from 14 percent in 2001 to 22 percent in 2009, equitable access to higher education for students with disabilities in Indonesia is a seriously overlooked issue (Steff, Mudzakir, & Andayani, 2010). The country's primary focus is still on basic education. There is an absence of specific regulation and policy to promote

equitable access and to protect the rights of students with disabilities within the higher education system (Stef, Mudzakir, & Andayani, 2010). Accordingly which is due to a lack in funding support funding support, standard operation procedures and systemic approach on the provision of services for students with disabilities at Indonesian universities and colleges (Hidjikakou & Hartas, 2007).

Students with disabilities in Indonesia faced tremendous difficulties to participate at higher education. At the present state, there are extremely limited disability services and support, adapted academic materials

and personal programs for them at the university (Steff, Modzakir & Andayani, 2010). Higher education institutions are still adopting the Medical approach when dealing with students with disabilities, which is contrary to the Ecological approach taken by the developed countries. The Medical approach perceived students with disabilities as having an illness and medical condition. Hence, there is not much that the university could do for these students. Such negative perceptions and attitudes in Indonesia limit the support and accommodations received by students with disabilities throughout their full student life cycle, which make their experiences at campus a big challenge.

“Studies show that students with disabilities face challenges during admission, have lower academic performance and are more at-risks of dropping out from higher education”.

Conclusion

Massification of higher education has taken place in many countries. This phenomenon has been accompanied by a global policy shift, triggered by rising societal concerns for the equity of students with disabilities as this cohort is traditionally underrepresented within the tertiary system. Many developing countries are yet to establish specific policies and practices to promote equitable access and to protect the rights of students with disabilities in higher education. Hence, there is an absence of a systemic and integrated Ecological Approach to support and accommodate the needs of these students. The supporting services provided, if any, are ad hoc and fragmented in nature. Admission systems, in most cases, are still contingent on qualifications and competencies awarded by inflexible education systems, often resulting in the exclusion of marginalised groups such as learners with disabilities.

Legislation and policy must, therefore, be implemented to establish a more equitable and inclusive higher education system. At the institutional level, the commitment of the university to address the special needs of students with disabilities should be clearly stated in its strategic action plan. To promote successful higher education outcomes for learners with disabilities, a Whole-of-Institutional Approach needs to be adopted. The implementation of UDL and the provision of supporting services and infrastructure are among the effective institutional strategies. Higher education institutions also need to take into consideration the full student life cycle (pre-university, during the period of study, and post-graduation) when addressing the needs of students with disabilities. Effective intervention and strategies can then be implemented at different phases of the student life cycle (entry point, during the course of study, and exit point) to aid them making more

successful transition from secondary education to higher education and ultimately, to the workplace.

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Potential Tools for Blended Learning in Mathematics Courses

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The development of smartphone innovations has shifted users' dependency on bulky computers to a smaller pocket-size computing device that ease their daily tasks. In the first quarter of year 2014, Lenovo reported that the sales of their smartphones began to exceed the sales of personal computers globally (Anatol, 2014). In Malaysia, it is visible that there is a rapid shift in the manner in which things are done conventionally. Many daily tasks can now be accomplished through a smartphone application without the need to visit the corresponding physical stores. Besides being able to initiate or receive phone calls and text messages, e-commerce activities such as reservation of flight ticket, purchasing a dress via online store, and reselling used items on auction sites could be done with just a few taps on smartphone. Internet banking or bill payment could also be carried out through smartphone applications. In terms of learning, students use smartphones to search for information via Google search to clear their doubts on a specific mathematical concept. They could also post their questions in an online forum to get help from other experts overseas. They may use Automath application accessible from smartphones to obtain a step-by-step solution simply by taking a snapshot of the mathematical expressions used in a mathematical problem.

"...blended learning combines the best features of classroom interaction and online interaction in such a way that it allows personalise learning and provides thoughtful reflection".

The Ministry of Education had launched the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) where Shift 9 in the blueprint highlighted the need for institutions of higher learning in Malaysia to gradually gearing towards the full implementation of blended learning (Malaysia, 2012). Blended learning integrates both the traditional face-to-face learning environment and e-learning approach by employing suitable learning models (Horn et al., 2011; Kaur, 2013). In a blended learning environment, students would spend less time face-to-face with their lecturers and spend more time doing self-learning online. The students are given the authority to choose their pace of study. In general, blended learning combines the best features of classroom interaction and online interaction in such a way that it allows personalise learning and provides thoughtful reflection (Güzer & Caner, 2014). Some academicians struggle to shift to blended learning approaches as reported by researchers in the Asia

region including Malaysia (Haron et al., 2012; Jong et al., 2014; Tham & Tham, 2011) while there were some who are positive with the shift (Embi & Panah, 2014). Those who struggle found the shift was too drastic to be accepted as there were too many instructional design considerations and planning that have to be put in place first. A good implementation of blended learning requires a comprehensive instructional design that employs the six blended learning models (Embi et al., 2014). This includes the work of identifying potential educational tools that could enhance students' learning. This article aims to share two online tools that could potentially enhance students learning experience when undertaking Mathematics courses.

At the moment, the course management system (CMS), social media, and instant feedback platform are widely known to possess suitable features for the implementation of blended learning (Embi & Panah, 2014). Moodle platform is an example of CMS and it is usually used to post announcement, to store lecture notes and tutorial questions, and to store the grades of students' continuous assessments. Some lecturers may use it to create formative assessments that provide instant feedback about students' level of understanding individually. However, such a practice is not common as the designing tool is not sufficiently versatile to the design of assessment (Jong et al., 2015). This is especially true for mathematics courses because assessing a mathematical solution and providing feedback are usually done by lecturers themselves using the paper and pen approach. Formative assessment is too time-consuming for the mathematics courses that are taught in large classes. MathDIP could be one of the solutions in providing formative assessments that give instant feedback to students (Pacheco-Venegas et al., 2015). It is a web-platform service (<http://www.mathdip.org/>) designed by researchers in Mexico. It was used by students taking introductory university mathematics course there. The system employs an open source computer algebra system (CAS) that is capable of evaluating mathematical expressions for calculus, algebra and statistics. Students could easily check their level of understanding by integrating their solution into this system. Lecturers could capture the progress of students through the system as it records every mathematical expression input by the students as they solved a mathematical problem. The immediate response would motivate students during their self-learning time. Even though the functionality of the application is promising, such ecosystem is not publicly available to be used by other institutions as it is just newly established. Unless Pacheco-Venegas's team made further progress in extending the accessibility, other institutions which are interested with such an

ecosystem will need to develop the system on their own.

“The search of suitable tools and teaching pedagogy to empower blended learning is a continuous effort”.

As for face-to-face sessions, game-based tools could be a good choice to check students' progress in their level of understanding. Enjoyable learning experiences in class will mostly promote students to adopt deep learning (Nisbet & Luther, 2014). Kahoot! is one of the game-based digital learning platform that was recently being introduced in my centre to enhance classroom learning. It has been used in The Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Norway to improve students' engagement in learning (Hussein, 2015). Based on the responses provided by their students, the tool was very helpful in building useful learning experiences. Basically, it only requires students to have a device with a browser application and Internet connection. Smartphones would be the most convenient device as it is an always-on device. Lecturers need to prepare several multiple-choice questions and answers before entering the class. During the face-to-face sessions, students will need to login to Kahoot! Web page via a pin number that is provided by their lecturer. Once they enter, the lecturer is notified and may begin the game. The students only need to choose the options that appear on their screen. The correct answer is provided according to the timing decided by the lecturer. The wear-off effect of the tool was being studied as well. It was evident that the students continue to stay motivated after the tool was being used continuously for five months (Wang, 2014). Thus, it is worthy to explore the method of incorporating this tool to enhance learning experiences in mathematics courses.

The search for suitable tools and teaching pedagogy to empower blended learning is a continuous effort (Embi et al., 2014). Hopefully, the tools introduced here are able to encourage academicians to adopt blended learning in their teaching especially in the case of Mathematics teaching.

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Integrated Marketing Communication: Where Does It Stand in the Malaysian Institutions of Higher Education?

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Introduction

Globalization foresees the rapid development of information technology (IT) and the Internet, where by customer's choices grow at a very fast rate. These factors are well reflected in the extremely competitive market environment in institutions of higher education (IHEs) (Dawes & Brown, 2002). Potential student customers are more sophisticated; they have a very wide variety of IHEs and program choices, and they have access to ample program information from various sources including government quality control agencies. As a result, today's students do not easily trust the advertisements of IHEs. In emerging customer-driven IHEs marketplace, the customer is in control rather than the IHEs (Kim, 2006).

In fact, the stiff competition in the marketplace among the IHEs in Malaysia has made them realise that it is not easy to capture the hearts of students in selecting their institutions, and even more difficult in maintaining their student recruitment, let alone increasing productivity in that vein. Hence, IHEs need to improve the coordination of their marketing communication (MARCOM) programs and create a strong emotional bond with their markets in order to be perceived as a relevant choice in their target market's minds (Rosen, Curran & Greenlee, 1998).

The concept of integrated marketing communication (IMC) is able to significantly add value to the management strategies of the Malaysian IHEs by sending clear and consistent messages about the institution in every contact point, thereby, enabling the improvement of IHEs' reputation. To reach the goal of becoming a regional center of higher education, Malaysian IHEs must prevail in the marketplace and have their own sustainable competitive reputation, and this is where the role of IMC fits in.

The identified problems include the need to observe (1) the level of IMC implementation, (2) the barriers in implementing IMC processes and (3) the leadership style in the Malaysian IHEs. In this study, a quantitative analysis of survey research was employed to measure and access those aspects, with regards to Schultz and Schultz's (2004) four-stage IMC framework and Lewin's (1939) leadership styles, whereby keywords and themes were identified through the interview transcripts.

The Malaysian Higher Education System

The National Higher Education Action Plan (2007) stated that the success of human capital development

is closely related to the quality of a national education system, whereby, IHEs play an important role in influencing human capital development (Morshidi, 2010). Moreover, to transform Malaysia to an international center of higher education excellence until 2020 and beyond is the vision of Malaysia's government for the higher education sector (NHEAP, 2007; Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2008). In other words, IHEs contribute to the economic growth of Malaysia by leading the industry through the power of knowledge.

In 1995, the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) found that 20 per cent of overseas-trained Malaysian students cost the country around USD800 million in currency outflow, constituting nearly 12 per cent of Malaysia's current account deficit. In order to reduce the outflows of funds, the government has intervened by increasing the capacity of public universities and expanding the capacity of local (private) higher education sector (Ziguras, 2001; Sirat, 2008). The Malaysian MoHE saw the local public and private IHEs as the key means of reducing this currency outflow and in the long term of transforming Malaysia into a net exporter of higher education (Ziguras, 2001).

In 1996, the Malaysian government enacted five higher education legislations, of which, they were considered a 'revolutionary' milestone in the development of the Malaysian higher education system (Johari, 1996). The following are the five lists of 1996 higher education legislations:

- 1) Education Act, 1996,
- 2) The Private Higher Educational Institutions Act, 1996,
- 3) National Council on Higher Education Act, 1996,
- 4) National Accreditation Board Act, 1996 and
- 5) Universities and University Colleges Act (Amendment), 1996.

Furthermore, as an effort to emphasize the important role of higher education, the Malaysian government had set up the Ministry of Higher Education in March 2004. It was aimed at spurring the country towards attaining a world-class education system (Kim, 2006).

In 2009, Malaysia was ranked the world's 11th most preferred study destination by the Institute of International Education (Lim, 2009). Malaysia achieved a 26 per cent increase in 2009 in international student numbers compared to 2008 and is estimated to reach 80,000 students in 2010 (Lim, 2009). Thus, seeing how important the roles of IHEs are in Malaysia, it should be well supported with IMC. In fact, Michael (1997) describes university in terms of relationship marketing

as an assemblage of communities with different ideologies, agenda and academic traditions held together by a common institutional logo and image.

The Integrated Marketing Communication

Schultz (2004: 9) defined IMC as “a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and

evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive brand communications programs over time with consumers, customers, prospects, employees, associates and other targeted relevant external and internal audiences”, which is apparent in the four stages of IMC framework (see Figure 1).

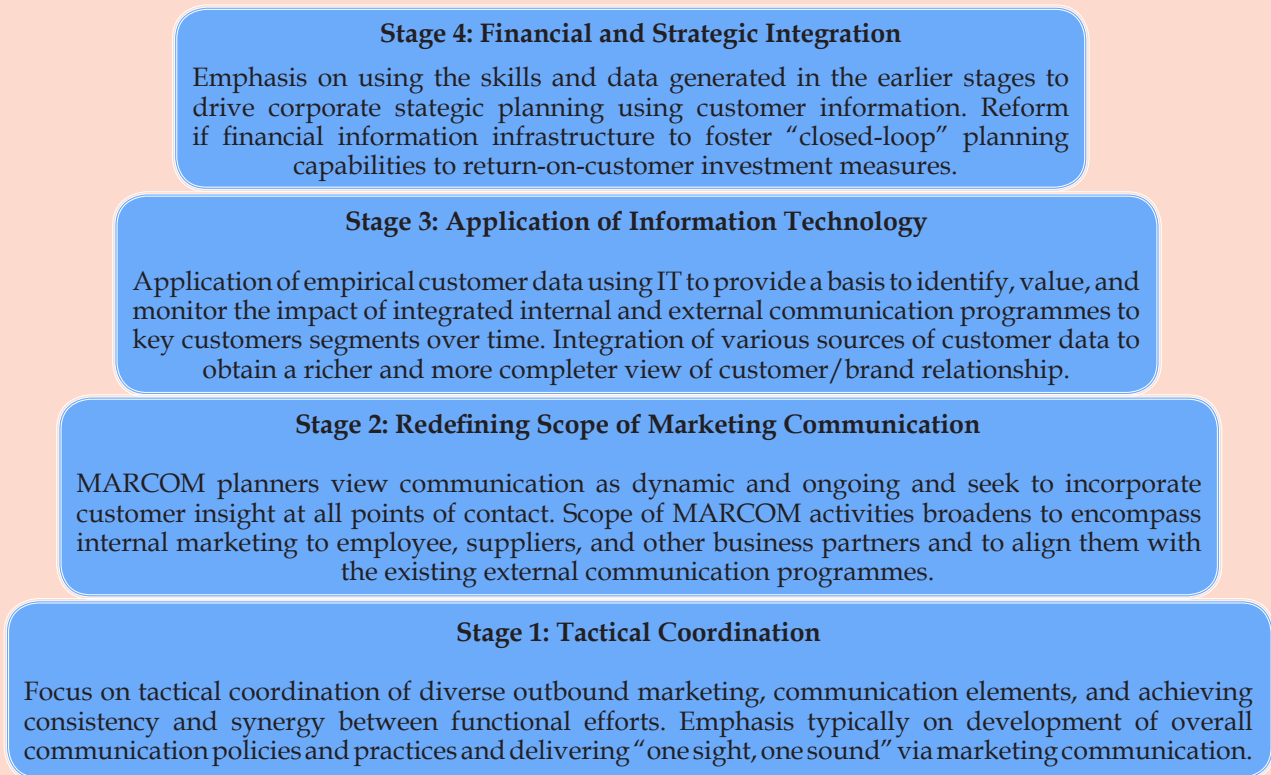


Figure 1 The Four Stages of Integrated Marketing Communication Model
(Source: Adapted from American Productivity and Quality Center, 1998)

The tactical coordination of MARCOM requires a high degree of coordination between departments to speak with one voice. The coordination challenge between departments varies based on the complexity of the organization, which can be measured by size, number of departments involved in a particular business activity and amount of available resources (Horrigan, 2007: 9). The goal is to achieve a high-degree of interpersonal and cross-functional coordination and communication between internal departments and external consultants (Kitchen et al., 2004).

Commitment to market research in support of IMC comes second, where information about the institution’s consumers is collected and evaluated on their feedback. Schultz (2009: 14) highlighted; “to effectively develop MARCOM messages and incentives that will be of value to the customers and prospects the marketing firm aims to serve and to solve the problems they have, the MARCOM manager needs to identify customers who might have those needs or wants”. The most common way to identify customers is through some type of analysis of the information normally held in the organisation’s database (Schultz, 2009).

IT in support of IMC needs to be applied in order to

develop databases and to globally segment customer data into customer knowledge for the purpose of communication and relationship building (Ireland, 2002). Intelligent and creative human resources are needed to manage the capabilities of technology in order to identify appropriate relationship building strategies for each organisation’s market segment (Horrigan, 2007: 10). There are four critical areas which define the third stage of integration, such as (1) empirical customer data, (2) behavioural versus attitudinal, (3) valuation tools and techniques and (4) differentiation of customers on economic criteria (Schultz & Schultz, 1998).

The fourth stage is strategic integration of IMC that describes an institution’s ability to continually measure performance from a return-on-investment perspective by market segment. IMC process, as presented by Schultz (2009: 12) requires that the various functional groups in the organization work together and relate to customer needs. When the marketer knows enough about the customers or prospects, the communication planner will be able to forecast the results outcome, and if the MARCOM manager has an idea about the returns then the communication program will be achieved, it will be possible to develop a MARCOM investment plan.

The final step in the IMC process is to invest the firm's resources in various MARCOM programs pertaining to the selected customers, measure the returns, and use that as the basis for the next level of investment (Schultz, 2009: 14).

“These messages from every employee and customers will then be oriented towards a ‘one-voice’ communication, since in IMC, productivity is not merely directed at the marketing department, but it involves everyone”.

The Leadership Styles

According to Lewin, one of the factors that determine a leader's choice of leadership style is the need to make decisions (Learn to be a leader, 2009). Lewin and his colleagues (1939) had undertaken leadership decision-making experiments and thus, identified three different styles of leadership, that is, autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire.

In the autocratic style, the leader makes a decision without consulting others, and this, can cause the most level of discontent. An autocratic style works when there is no need for input on the decision, where the decision would not change as a result of input, and where the motivation of people to carry out subsequent actions would not be affected irrespective of whether they were involved in the decision-making (Lewin, Lippit & White, 1939).

In the democratic style, the leader involves the people in the decision-making, although the process for the final decision may vary from the leader having the final say to them facilitating consensus in the group. Democratic decision-making is usually appreciated by the people, especially if they have been used to autocratic decisions with which they disagreed. However, it can be problematic when there are a wide range of opinions and there is no clear way of reaching an equitable final decision (Lewin, Lippit & White, 1939).

The laissez-faire style is to minimise the leader's involvement in decision-making, and thus, allowing people to make their own decisions, although they may still be responsible for the outcome. Laissez-faire works best when people are capable and motivated in making their own decisions, and where there is no requirement for central coordination, for example, in sharing resources across a range of different people and groups (Lewin, Lippit & White, 1939).

In Lewin et al.'s experiments, they discovered that the most effective style was democratic. On the contrary, excessive autocratic styles led to a revolution, whilst under a laissez-faire approach, people were not coherent in their work and did not put in the energy that they did when being actively led (Lewin, Lippit &

White, 1939).

The Integrated Marketing Communication and Leadership Style in Malaysian Institutions of Higher Education

Face-to-face interviews were carried out with administrators and educators from four Malaysian public IHEs (i.e., a university in Negeri Sembilan, Penang, Perlis, Terengganu) and Malaysian private IHEs (i.e., a university in Kedah, Perak, Selangor) to access the level and barrier of IMC implementation, as well as the leadership style of their institution.

Based on the analysis, the survey respondents were adequately experienced in MARCOM and management, since most of them have had experiences in those areas for more than five years. Through those kinds of knowledge and experiences, they are able to educate and set an image and impression of the institution to the students.

However, a contradiction is present in the responses of the administrators and educators of the selected Malaysian IHEs regarding the level of IMC implementation; the administrators were certain that all four stages of the IMC framework were applied in their institutions, whereas the educators were uncertain about the level of IMC implementation in their institutions.

The lack of budget and competent employees and functional silo appear to be the barriers concerning IMC implementation. The data obtained reveals that territorialism exists in the selected Malaysian IHEs because the traditional structures of their institution tend to rely on professional expertise rather than interdepartmental cooperation. The administrators had often mentioned about the lack of budget compared to the educators since they might have feared that IMC could cause budget reductions.

Despite that, most of the survey respondents claimed that their leaders were democratic, by means that decisions were made based on discussions. Most of them believed that it is important for leaders to listen to other people's opinions and suggestions as a good sign of appreciation towards subordinates, which echoes to Lewin's (1939) statements on democratic leadership style.

Overall, the MARCOM functions are separated from each department in the selected Malaysian IHEs due to their organisation setting. Therefore, leadership that supports an open system (i.e., permeable boundary, adaptive to environmental change, accommodative, holistic, ethical, encourages of feedback) operating philosophy, as suggested by Mulnix (1996) is required beforehand in the Malaysian IHEs in order to support open and honest communication policies. Then, every employee needs to be engaged in achieving their IHE goals by communicating between them and customers to convey a message on their institutions. These messages from every employee and customers will

then be oriented towards a 'one-voice' communication, since in IMC, productivity is not merely directed at the marketing department, but it involves everyone. When IMC works well in the institution, stakeholder relationships could be sustained, and thus, brand and customer equity could be leveraged.

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Transformation of Malaysia's Higher Education System: Malaysia Education Blueprint (2015-2025)

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Globalisation and technology have completely transformed sectors such as finance, services and telecommunications and the higher education sector will likely face the same transformation or as a matter of fact is already experiencing disruption from new models such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Competition among universities is intensifying internationally for students, for staff, and for resources. New technologies are creating new opportunities for students to access higher education, and to close the equity gap for disadvantaged communities. The Ministry recognises the need for radical change, rather than incremental steps in order to meet the challenges of higher education in the 21st century. The Malaysian higher education system has matured significantly over the past few decades where the impact is realised through an increase in student enrolment, surge in global recognition on key dimensions such as research publications, patents, and institutional quality, as well as a focal destination for international students. These achievements are an attestation to the positive spirit and innovation of the Malaysian academic community, the support of the private sector and the profound contribution that the Government has made. Malaysia's commitment to being a world-class knowledge economy and a regional education hub propels the Ministry of Education towards ensuring that the education system has to perpetually evolve dynamically to stay aligned with global trends where disruptive technologies such as advanced robotics, the Internet of Things, and the automation of knowledge work are expected to dramatically reshape the business and social landscape from what it is today. Preparing Malaysian youth to thrive in this complex and ever-changing future will require an equally fundamental transformation of how the higher education system and higher learning institutions (HLIs) currently operate.

The birth of the Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint (2015-2025) consolidates the Ministry's overriding aspiration to create a higher education system that ranks among the world's leading education systems and that enables Malaysia to compete in the global economy. The newly launched Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint is grounded in the system's achievements to date and proposes major changes in the way the Ministry and system will operate in order to realise this goal. Specifically, the Ministry aspires to:

- Instil an entrepreneurial mindset throughout

Malaysia's higher education system and create a system that produces graduates with a drive to create jobs, rather than to only seek jobs;

- Construct a system that is less focused on traditional, academic pathways and that places an equal value on much-needed technical and vocational training;
- Focus on outcomes over inputs and to actively pursue technologies and innovations that address students' needs and enable greater personalisation of the learning experience;
- Harmonise how private and public institutions are regulated, and to transition from the current, highly-centralised governance system for HLIs to a model based on earned autonomy within the regulatory framework; and
- Ensure the financial sustainability of the higher education system by reducing HLIs reliance on government resources and asking all stakeholders that directly benefit from it to contribute as well.

The latest blueprint introduces 10 shifts in support of the five system aspirations that focuses on access, equity, quality, efficiency and unity. Education Minister II YB Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh had emphasised that "among the most important shifts were creating holistic entrepreneurial and balanced graduates. This is important because we want better quality students and lecturers in the coming years. Besides that, the blueprint will also give more autonomy to universities, besides providing them with more sustainable financial management." The other shifts include higher learning talent excellence; nation of lifelong learners; quality of technical and vocational education and also training graduates; financial sustainability; empowered governance; innovation ecosystem; global prominence; globalised online learning; and transformed higher education delivery.

The shifts outlined in the Malaysia Education Blueprint are ambitious and geared towards delivering a comprehensive and necessary transformation of the higher education system. It is pivotal that the Ministry takes the lead in this transformation by role modelling the transformation itself. By leading the way, the Ministry can be a catalyst for transformation not only among private and public HLIs, but the entire Malaysian civil service. These changes—sequenced over three waves—aim to build successively on one another as the system's capacity and capabilities, and

the readiness levels of HLIs improve. The first wave will focus on establishing the building blocks for the transformation; the second wave will introduce more structural improvements to accelerate the pace of change; and finally, the third wave will strengthen the global prominence of Malaysia's higher education system. It is only through the collective efforts of every single stakeholder that the higher education system can be transformed to prepare Malaysians for the challenges and opportunities of an ever-changing world.

“By leading the way, the Ministry can be a catalyst for transformation not only among private and public HLIs, but the entire Malaysian civil service.”

The Malaysian higher education system needs to undergo comprehensive transformation if it is to rise to meet the nation's ambitious vision and aspirations. The transformation is envisioned to occur over a period of 11 years, and is a process of great complexity in both breadth and depth. A well-conceived plan is only the starting point as the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) will not succeed without effective implementation and monitoring of its sustainability. The Ministry of Education also cannot successfully deliver without the commitment and collaboration of relevant stakeholders and HLIs. Higher education delivery encompasses all facets of the Ministry of Education functions, from formulating policies and regulations, to implementing programmes and overseeing higher education institutions. The holistic blueprint is more outcome-driven rather than process-driven where it is pertinent that the organisational structure, operating model, key processes, and internal capabilities of the Ministry all function efficiently and effectively to ensure the smooth facilitation of its delivery.

Four principles will guide the Ministry in the transformation of the overall delivery system for higher education in Malaysia:

1. Focus on outcomes and performance – The Ministry will focus on ensuring delivery of outcomes and performance, beyond just inputs, resources and processes. This is to ensure greater return on investment as well as faster tangible results to the *rakyat*;
2. Involvement of relevant stakeholders – The Ministry will continue to communicate and to engage extensively with stakeholders throughout the implementation of the MEB (HE), including students, parents, the academic community, Ministry staff, and employers;
3. Greater transparency for greater accountability – Stakeholders will have access to regular and

transparent information about progress against the MEB (HE). This will lead to more accountable and more responsive implementation; and

4. Clarity in roles and expectations – The success of the MEB (HE) requires all relevant parties to contribute, to play their respective roles and to deliver on their commitments, including the Ministry, HLI leadership, university boards, and relevant government agencies.

The holistic blueprint is more outcome-driven rather than process-driven and in order to ensure that the system is not overtaxed, the ministry has carefully planned the strategies and initiatives of the 10 shifts across three waves. The first wave focuses on establishing the building blocks of transformation; the second introduces more structural improvements to accelerate change and the third strengthens the global prominence of Malaysia's higher education system. Basically, the HLIs are encouraged to transform graduates into job creators instead of job seekers while facilitating the grounds for producing students who are knowledgeable in their respective areas and practise good moral values. The Minister of Higher Education Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh said that “the government wishes to bear graduates brave enough to be creative and independent in coming up with their own field of work”. At the same time, universities should also think of ways on how students may learn courses or subjects that are always relevant to the demand in career opportunities. There is a leeway created for HLIs to facilitate more flexible learning opportunities, increase quality benchmark of available programmes and create awareness and interest towards learning among the society while simultaneously promote lifelong learning. The Ministry's role takes a back step in terms of giving more autonomy to HLIs while they regulate the system and policies. This will result in HLIs to develop the capacity to churn out graduates who are marketable and are able to reflect benchmarks of global standards. The main emphasise of the current blueprint is to vie for excellence as Malaysia is in the top 10 destination for international students. There is a pressing need to elevate the nation's higher education brand even further, from an attractive destination known for good value for money and quality of life, to one that is also recognised, referred to, and respected internationally. The significant impact of MOOCs and online learning broadens the horizons of quality content, improve the standards of teaching and learning, decrease the cost of delivery and collectively heighten opportunities in terms of networking and collaboration among Malaysian academics in the context of the global community. Much has been done, but the new education framework will see the nation stay abreast, if not ahead, of global trends if we can achieve the goals with these 10 shifts situated in the Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint (2015-2025).

CALLING FOR ARTICLES

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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 1,500 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, eg. (Ashton, 2001: 30).
5. Endnotes may be used.
6. Include tables and figures within the text. Number tables and figures consecutively.
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Mahadhir, M., Ting, S. H. and Carol, D. (2006). *Learning materials and human factors: Looking at the chemistry in the genre-based approach classroom*. Proceedings of 2nd Science and Art of Language in Teaching International Conference, 'Change: Bridging Theory and Practice', 20 - 22 November, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pulau Pinang.

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.

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

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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