# STUDENTS' AND LECTURERS' CONCEPTIONS AND PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN UNIVERSITY

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper examines students' and lecturers' conceptions and philosophy of university teaching and learning at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Johor. The study extends the earlier work by Taylor (1983) and Saljo (1979) and other study series by Entwistle, Marton and their colleagues in the Western culture whereas several other works in Eastern cultures especially headed by Biggs, Watkins & Regmi, Kember & Gow and others. However, there is no such work done, recorded or extended in Malaysia. This study employs a combination of phenomenography inquiry (see Marton & Saljo, 1984; Svensson, 1985; Saljo, 1988) and qualitative paradigm (see Burgess, 1984a,b; Bryman, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1980, 1987; Merriam 1988) with in-depth exploratory, descriptive and analytical characteristics (Yin, 1994; Stake, 1980, 1995). Data from interviews were gathered from students from different years of study and different levels of academic staff members. The analysis was then carried out on the relevant parts of the verbatim transcripts of the interview which are subjected to two stage analysis. First, the findings are analyzed according to what emerged as the key research issue from the three original questions to answer conceptions and philosophy of university education and its teaching and learning activities. Second, adopting the phenomenographic approach, expressions reflecting conceptions of learning were identified and grouped on the basis of similarities, differences and complementarities (Marton et al., 1993) and they are then organized according to both lecturers' and students' conceptions and philosophy of teaching and learning, respectively. The findings revealed that some qualitatively different conceptions of teaching and learning in Malaysia were similar to the Western findings and the philosophy held concorded to the international goals of higher education. However, further differentiations have also been made within the various conceptions and some significant differences have been acknowledged which are due to 'soft' moral-cultural and strong religion influences. Conclusively the conceptions, philosophy and aims of university education in Malaysia are seen indirectly orientated to one major theme that is, to satisfy national political and economic orientations that may present conflicts in the system.

## INTRODUCTION

In late 1970's, research on teaching and learning was popularized by an area of inquiry known as 'phenomenography' (Saljo, 1979). Since then the approach has contributed valuable knowledge in improving and understanding teaching and learning, especially in higher education system. Different from other research field approaches, 'phenomenography' offers researchers in education the opportunity to understand teaching and learning from both teachers' and students' views. Prosser (1993) explains 'phenomenography' is an *'approach to research which aims to identify peoples' qualitatively different experiences and understanding of the world and systematically describe them in terms of categor ies of description'*.

It is belief that understanding and awareness on views on conceptions and philosophy of teaching and learning may improve teaching and learning and may help lecturers improve their teaching (lecture) preparation and presentation. Ideally, the goals of higher education are to promote thinking and enhance understanding in students (Barnett, 1990, Baharin Abu, 2000) and to apply knowledge in vocational situations (Boulton-Lewis, 1995). Practically, the quality of teaching and learning are evidently connected to the quality amount of interactions between lecturers and students (Staton, 1960; Kyriacou, 1986; Brown & Atkins, 1988; Ornstein, 1990; Cullingford, 1995; Bligh, 1998; Baharin Abu, 2000). These immense evidences pointed that good (effective) lecturers and teaching will focus on quality explanations and emphasize on students' understanding and learning. Both 'stakeholders' are partners in the process – as 'shareholders' working symbiotically to make teaching and learning successful experiences. By exposing and understanding both the views from lecturers and students on the conceptions and philosophy of teaching and learning may promote more knowledge in the areas and could then trigger more future research in the Eastern and Malaysian culture.

Significantly to mention until this research is done, there has been no document or possibly research done in Malaysia to examine and understand orientations and conceptions to teaching and learning in the higher education system. In addition, it is worth mentioned that qualitative and together with phenomenographic research inquiry is still a new experience for some researchers in Malaysia. Similarly, research in teaching and learning in the Malaysian higher education setting is still very limited in number compared to other more developed field such as secondary education. Thus, we claim this paper is one of its kinds in explaining and exposing lecturers' and students' views on the philosophy and goals of higher education in Malaysia. Therefore, this paper will investigate both lecturers' and students' philosophy of teaching and learning and in the Malaysian university system.

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## THE STUDY AIMS

Specifically, the present study attempts to investigate and discuss the qualitatively different ways in which students' and lecturers' orientations and conceptions to teaching and learning in Malaysia with the hope that the findings from the study could contribute to the development of future teaching and learning in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Malaysia.

## METHODOLOGY

The research reported here was part of a larger investigation of teaching effectiveness and staff professional development programs in a university in Malaysia (see Baharin Abu, 2000) employing both qualitative and quantitative methods – the combined paradigms (see Denzin, 1997; Rose, 1991; Yin, 1994; Patton, 1980, 1987) with in-depth exploratory, descriptive, evaluative and analytical characteristics (see Yin, 1994; Stake, 1980, 1995; Burgess, 1984a,b; Bryman, 1988; Merrriam, 1988; Borg et al., 1996) focusing on the 'actual problems' (Burgess, 1984b) and 'in-depth focus and contemporary phenomena' (Yin, 1994; Stake, 1995). This study is described as such as '*not much has been written on the topic or population being studied, and the researcher seeks to listen to informants and to build a picture based on their ideas*' (Creswell, 1994, p.4). It is also considered an evaluative study since it is judgmental (Borg et al., 1996). Moreover, from literature it was evidenced that '*very few studies had been done in Malaysia to understand and describe*' on the topic (Baharin Abu, 2000).

The study's respondents cum informants comprise 17 lecturers of multiple levels according to position and 18 students of different years of study. To enhance the findings, the study employed a stratified random sampling in choosing its respondents (Cohen & Manion, 1989, 1994, 1997). In addressing the question: '*What are the Malaysian students' and lecturers' conceptions and philosophy of teaching and learning in university*', during interviews, *three* questions are asked to both students and lecturers:

i. Is there a difference between teaching in school and university?
ii. What is the aim of higher education?
iii. What is the main intention of students attending university?

### The Qualitative Phenomenographic Analysis

The findings highlight the results from the analysis of qualitative data based on phenomenographic approach relying on semi-structured interviews. The analysis was carried out on the relevant parts of the verbatim transcripts of the interview which are subjected to two stage analysis. First, the findings are analysed according to what emerged as the key research issue from the three original questions to answer conceptions and philosophy of university education and its teaching and learning activities. Second, adopting the phenomenographic approach, expressions reflecting

conceptions of learning were '*identified and grouped on the basis of similarities, differences and complementarities*' (Marton et al., 1993) and they are then organised according to both lecturers' and students' conceptions and philosophy of teaching and learning, respectively. (For more detailed descriptions of the phenomenographic approach to the analysis of interview data see Marton & Saljo, 1984; Svensson, 1985; Saljo, 1988).

## THE ORIENTATIONS, CONCEPTIONS AND PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

### A. Contrasting Learning Motives and Orientations

Taylor (1983) in his extensive research interviews with students in trying to find out and to describe the motives or reasons for students deciding to enter HE, found four distinct motives or 'educational orientations': academic, vocational, personal, and social. Gibbs et al. (1984) later narrowed it into two reasons why a student decided to take a particular course and to 'learn' when they entered HE, mainly either (1) for intellectual development (see also Perry's work in 1970), or (2) to ensure them a good job and salary. In the study, he however found out that most students had mixed motives. These differences in learning orientation are known to affect not just the degree of effort students put into the course but also, the kind of effort they present in their learning and studying.

### B. Contrasting Learning Conceptions

Students who come into HE come from various socio-economic backgrounds and cultures and bring different learning experiences. They possess different beliefs and values about what learning is actually about. Today, as HE adopts an open education policy and a concept of 'lifelong learning', students who enter HE came from a wider and richer background in their beliefs, values, perceptions, and cultures. In interviews with adult learners by Saljo (1979), when students were asked to explain what they understood of 'learning', a series of contrasting 'beliefs' in variety and different ways about learning were found. He referred these different beliefs as 'conceptions of learning'. Pratt (1992) defines 'conceptions' as:

> ...*specific meanings attached to phenomena which then mediate our response to situations involving those phenomena. We form conceptions of virtually every aspects of our perceived world and, in doing so, use those abstract representations to delimit something from, and relate it to, other aspects of our world. In effect, we view the world through the lenses of our conceptions, interpreting and acting in accordance with our understanding of the world.* (p. 204)

Educational psychologists belief conceptions are closely related to perceptions or in other words, are mental constructs that arises from the process of perception. The perceptions of the world around that form as initial conceptions will later influence one's own understanding and awareness

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of learning (Kember & Sivan, 1995). In addition, there are also sufficient evidences in literature to support the view that awareness of one's own learning processes is a valuable step toward improving the effectiveness of learning.

Significantly, the synthesis of research on understanding students' learning was based on a series of work by principally four groups, in Sweden (Marton and his colleagues), in US (McKeachie and his colleagues), in UK (Entwistle and his colleagues), and in Australia (Biggs, Ramsden, and their colleagues). By using different access and different analytical instruments, the four groups have provided rich information on describing the different approaches of students to their learning tasks, at least in western cultures.

These previous research on students' learning, as in teaching had laid out various systems of classifying conceptions of learning. However, one that many researchers quoted was by Saljo (1979) who identified five levels of students' learning conceptions:

1. learning as quantitative increase in knowledge;
2. learning as memorising;
3. learning as acquisition of facts and procedures;
4. learning as abstraction of meaning; and
5. learning as an interpretative process aimed at understanding reality.

Saljo added that levels 1 to 3 were related to a *surface* approach to learning whereas, levels 4 and 5 were related to a *deep* approach. In another study, van Rossum et al. (1984) further confirmed such a division. These different conceptions of learning were then again reported by Beaty et al. (1989) when adult students were asked to explain what they understood of 'learning'. They found a similar hierarchy of conceptions of learning, which then suggested a sixth conception: 'learning as changing a person', forming a model from Conception A to Conception F as pictured in Figure 1 below.

**FIG. 1: THE DIFFERENT CONCEPTIONS OF LEARNING**

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a. Increasing one's knowledge
b. Memorising and reproducing                 *REPRODUCING*
c. Utilising facts and procedures

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d. Developing an initial understanding
e. Transforming one's understanding           *TRANSFORMING*
f. Changing as a person

Two main conceptions of learning are identified: surface and deep or reproducing and transforming. Studies on students' learning have shown that there is a major distinction between learning as requiring reproduction of information presented and learning as transformation of information acquired by students.

In a study by Marton et al. (1984), they found students differed in their level of understanding. The students were believed to adopt either a deep or a surface approach to their learning. They then commented that the crucial difference lay in the contrasting intentions shown by the students. They argued that students adopting a surface . level processing employed a reproductive orientation. A deep approach draws a sophisticated conception of learning with an intention to reach a personal understanding of the material presented and in contrast, a surface approach involves a simple conception of learning as memorization and intention to merely satisfy task or course requirements (Entwistle, 1990). This initial intention has an effect on the learning experiences in students as reported by many other researchers (such as Biggs, 1987; Laurillard, 1993, 1997; Ramsden, 1984, 1997).

After many studies on students' learning were gathered, researchers concluded three terms to describe the processes in learning: surface, deep and strategic or achieving. The features and characteristics of approaches to learning according to Entwistle (1997, p.19) can be summarized in Figure 2.

## FIG. 2: THE THREE APPROACHES TO LEARNING

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**Surface Approach**                                                  *Reproducing*
*Intention* - to cope with course requirement                         by

Studying without reflecting on either purpose or strategy
Treating the course as unrelated bits of knowledge
Memorising facts and procedures routinely
Finding difficulty in making sense of new ideas presented
Feeling undue pressure and worry about work

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**Deep Approach**                                                     *Transforming*
*Intention* - to understand ideas for yourself                        by

Relating ideas to previous knowledge and experience
Looking for patterns and underlying principles
Checking evidence and relating it to conclusions
Examining logic and argument cautiously and critically
Becoming actively interested in the course content

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**Strategic Approach**                                                *Organising*
*Intention* - to achieve the highest possible grades                  by

Putting consistent effort into studying
Finding the right conditions and materials for studying
Managing time and effort effectively
Being alert to assessment requirements and criteria
Gearing work to the perceived preferences of lecturers

The above diagram lists the defining features of the three approaches to learning and studying. A simple distinction between deep and surface approaches to learning was found not to focus on assessment. The influence of assessment, however, was dominant in strategic or (Biggs preferred to use 'achieving') approach where the intention was to achieve the highest possible grades, with the process depending on cue seeking, well organized study methods, and effective time management. Students who adopt strategic approach can of course combine deep and surface approaches to achieve their ends (Biggs, 1987; Dart & Clarke, 1991).

It was also argued that factors influencing approaches to learning can be seen originating in part in the student's own orientation to education and their contrasting forms of intention and motivation in learning (Biggs, 1999), and in part from the student's perception of the educational context (Ramsden, 1984, 1997). In another study conducted by Marton et al. (1984, 1997) they reported that when students were asked to carry out an academic task, the way they attempted the task was influenced by the 'intentions' or the reasons why they took the course, and by what they believed as learning required by the course. Marton et al. (1997) concluded that individual students had different intentions that were proved closely related to how they went about learning, and to the quality of the learning they achieved. Similarly, Biggs (1993a) argued that learner's intentions in carrying out a learning task are more important in determining their particular approach to learning than the actual strategies used.

## C. Eastern Students Learning Approaches

Comparatively, there are not many studies done about non-western cultures regarding students' learning approaches. Only recently the study has attracted several scholars such as Biggs, Watkins, Kember and Gow. Early literature has suggested that Asian students rely more heavily on memorization and less on understanding (Samuelowicz, 1987) or they are described as rote learners who adopt a surface approach to learning (Ballard, 1989; Kim & Crowley, 1990). However, recent research carried out in Hong Kong, Singapore, China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Australia on Asian students revealed that the students used memorization with the intention of understanding information (Hess & Azuma, 1991; Marton et al., 1993; Tang, 1993; Watkins et al., 1991; Kember, 1996; Chalmers & Volet, 1997). These studies found that both students and their teachers held an underlying belief in 'understanding through memorization' (Marton et al., 1993) or 'deep memorization' (Tang, 1993) and yet they performed extremely well in their studies especially in the areas of mathematics and science (Medrich & Griffith, 1992; Biggs, 1993b; Sue & Okazaki, 1990).

Similarly, using Study Processes Questionnaires, Biggs (1990, 1991, 1992, 1993b) found that Asian students consistently scored higher on deep approach and lower on surface approach to learning. Thus, it is argued by some recent studies that although the use of repetition and memorization strategies by Western students has been found to link to a surface approach, the use of such strategies by Asian students does not necessarily indicate that they are adopting a surface

approach. Biggs (1993a) argued that by using the surface strategy does not mean that the Asian students have changed their approach to learning, rather it is simply one strategy that complements other strategies they use in order to understand. These findings confirm Biggs' (1987) claim that the learner's intentions in carrying out the learning task are more important in determining the particular approach to learning than the actual strategies used. It is also believed that understanding through memorization and the use of repetition strategy is reinforced by the teaching methods used in the schools throughout Asia (Biggs, 1993b).

## D. Contrasting Conceptions and Approaches to Teaching

Recent studies on approaches to teaching have shown that teacher's approach influences the learning approach adopted by students in lectures (Patrick, 1992; Martin & Ramsden, 1998; Gow & Kember, 1993; Trigwell et al., 1999). Similarly, studies done by Gow and Kember (1993) and Kember and Gow (1994) found a correlation between teachers' conceptions or orientations to teaching and students' approaches to learning. They found in departments that emphasized learning facilitation, students adopted a deep approach. In addition, the approach to teaching adopted by teachers has been shown related to their own conceptions of teaching (Trigwell & Prosser, 1996; Trigwell et al., 1999) and also to their perceptions of their teaching context (Prosser & Trigwell, 1997). Various classifications of teaching have been identified over time:
Fox's (1983) classifications of teaching were:
   a. student-initiated: learning with focus on student change
   b. student-initiated: learning with focus on content
   c. teacher-initiated: learning with focus on student change
   d. teacher-initiated: learning with focus on content

Dunkin (1990) identified four conceptions of teaching dimensions:
   a. structuring learning
   b. motivating learning
   c. encouraging activity and independence in learning
   d. establishing interpersonal relations conducive to learning

Dall'Alba (1990) identified seven conceptions of teaching by focusing on particular levels of understanding:
   a. level 1: presenting information (*lowest*)
   b. level 2: transmitting information
   c. level 3: illustrating the application of theory to practice
   d. level 4: developing concepts and principles and their interrelations
   e. level 5: developing the capacity to be expert
   f. level 6: exploring ways to understand
   g. level 7: bringing about conceptual change (*highest*)

Similar to Fox's (1983) classification and Dall'Alba's (1990) levels, Trigwell et al. (1994) identified five qualitatively different approaches to teaching.

a. Approach A - A teacher-focused a strategy with the intention of transmitting information to students.
b. Approach B - A teacher-focused strategy with the intention that students acquire the concepts of the discipline
c. Approach C - A teacher-student interaction strategy with the intention that students acquire the concepts of the discipline
d. Approach D - A teacher-focused strategy aimed at students developing their conceptions
e. Approach E - A teacher-focused strategy aimed at students changing their conceptions.

From the classifications above, it could be argued that in general, the various teaching approaches can be simplified into two: (1) teaching as encouraging understanding and (2) teaching as transmitting information (Entwistle, 1998; Gow & Kember, 1993). Gow and Kember (1993, p.28) described the differences between the two approaches.

> *The learning facilitation approach characterises lecturers who conceive teaching as a facilitative process to help students develop problem solving skills and critical thinking abilities... involve interactive class sessions. The lecturers take a personal interest in their students and recognise that it is part of their role to provide motivation and stimulate interest. On the other hand, ... knowledge transmission focus more on the subject than learning... a lecturer is an expert in the discipline. The teaching process is envisaged as the accurate and clear presentation of the subject matter to the student using media... The goals of education... preparation of the student for a position in the profession... .*

Furthermore, the study by Gow and Kember (1993) also found that methods of teaching adopted, the learning tasks set, assessment demands made and the workload specified were strongly influenced by the orientation to teaching which then influenced student approaches to learning. In the same study, they both argued that in departments where knowledge transmission orientation predominated, the curriculum design and teaching methods had undesirable influences on learning approaches of students whereas departments with a greater inclination toward learning facilitation, would design courses and produce a learning environment that encouraged meaningful learning. In other words, in departments emphasizing knowledge transmission, students' use of a deep approach declined.

## E. Eastern Conceptions of Teaching

There are not many studies done about non-western cultures regarding conceptions of teaching. Significantly, there has been no research done in Malaysia to understand orientations to teaching. The majority of research on teaching in the Eastern culture were done in Chinese contexts, particularly by Watkins, Kember and Biggs. A unanimous conception was that teaching was for

moral development. The Nepalese research by Watkins and Regmi (1992) found teaching was viewed as for character development and was related to cultural and religious belief of Hinduism. Gao (1996) and Lo and Siu (1990) reported that both teachers in Hong Kong and China viewed good teachers as the persons who can foster responsibility and good moral conduct in their students. Again the argument given was based on culture and religion. Watkins (1998) quoting Liu Zhen (1973) explained that the concept of a teacher in the Chinese culture was '*the one who shows you the way of being human, teaches you knowledge and enlightens you while you are confused*' which was based on Confucian beliefs. In fact to the Chinese community, she explained that Confucius was a honored as the *wang shi shi biao* (a model teacher for ten thousand generations) and his image had a strong influence on teachers, and teaching and learning. She explained that:

> *His way of cultivating students by his exemplary role is regarded as the best way of teaching and educating. Many teachers in Chinese societies today follow these ideals, even if unaware of their Confucian roots, and regard good teaching as involving not only educating students from the intellective or academic perspective, but also in terms of conduct and morality. A good teacher should not only perform well in teaching and learning but also perform well in other aspects of life, the so called 'wei ren shi biao'.*

In addition, Gao (1996, cited in Watkins, 1998, p.22) mentioned that '*teaching should be far more than knowledge delivery. It should include educating and cultivating students. Teach them how to be a person. That's the so called 'jiao shu yu ren'*'.

## FINDINGS

This section examines the cognitive aspect i.e. the philosophy and ideologies of the different categories of respondents (stakeholders) on the topic of the study. The findings are drawn from the analysis of interviews and are organized based on the three questions asked to both students and lecturers which are:

i. Is there a difference between teaching and learning in school and university?
ii. What is the aim of higher education?
iii. What is the main intention of students attending university?

1. The Differences Between School and University Education

When the members of academic staff and students were asked '*is there a difference between teaching and learning in school and university?*', the majority stated that there were vast differences and yet some similarities. In terms of similarities, in general, education at any level in Malaysia is viewed as the instrument of achieving the objectives of National Philosophy of Education, NPE (see *Appendix 2A*). The aims of teaching and learning, besides observing national demands or requirements, are to foster thinking, to bring understanding or learning in students,

and to develop a 'comprehensive and balanced' individual: cognitively, spiritually or affectively, socially, and physically.

In contrast, much is said about the differences and they are categorized here into four themes: (1) interactive, active and participative styles; (2) freedom and flexibility; (3) assessment and examination system; and (4) learner autonomy. A very large body of students (15 out of 18) mentioned the notion of becoming independent learners (theme four). Staff members, however, elaborated more on teaching and learning processes (themes two and three), especially on the lecture method. The differences are illustrated below:

## a) Interactions, Knowledge and Thinking Development

For the first theme, it was felt by both the informants that the university teaching system and structure are regarded as more interactive, active and participative to develop thinking and to enrich knowledge. Students made comments such as:

> [ST2/SS/KDPKD3]....*In university, lecturers demand us to be active and participate in class. There are lots of discussions going on in the class lecture.... Some of them even give marks for class participation and attendance.* (Student/SPN: 3 Year)
> [ST13/SC]....*We can't run from having discussions... interactions between students are encouraged. Sometimes, the lecturers will throw questions and ask us to respond... if nobody volunteers, they will call our names. We are expected to be active. We have to be prepared.* (Student/SPB: 2<sup>nd</sup> Year)

Staff members mentioned 'challenging the mind', 'encouragement of thinking development' and 'knowledge enrichment'. Thus, the emphasis in the higher education system is clear.

> [AM7/HD-DR]....*University is a store of knowledge so we try to discuss ideas and to focus more on the students. The students bring out some of those ideas and we will then act as the guidance so that they are guided on the topics... It is more on challenging the mind and the thinking.* (Administrator)

> [AS4/SL]....*we interact more with discussions, knowledge enrichments... to look at one fact and more on encouragement of thinking development.* (Experienced Lecturer)

However, staff members claimed that some students are still lacked with learning skills required in the university environment. Experienced staff members believes even though students are not initially adapting well in the university teaching system, they will then improve later, once they have been in the system. They emphasized that '*what is obvious we can't have the same (teaching) approaches and methods. We have to adapt to their different education levels and learning needs*'.

> [AS2/AP]....*We hope, InsyaAllah (God permission) they will change and adapt very well and they can differentiate between the school and the university.* (Experienced Lecturer)

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### b) Freedom and Flexibility

Second is the theme of freedom and flexibility in teaching and learning. University lecturers felt that they exercised more freedom in their teaching and learning activities. However, interestingly, only one student out of 18 interviewed saw the system as providing more freedom to express opinion.

> [ST1/SS]....*we feel more free to express our opinions ...but in school sometimes the students feel afraid...* (Student/SPL: Final Year)

The freedom staff members referred to is, however more in preparing and planning lectures, as lecturers are not required to have teaching records and therefore, feel they have more control of their subject syllabus. Another new staff member who had experience in teaching three different environments (school, teachers training college and university) claimed that the university teaching and learning environment had more freedom and more flexibility. In the recent move by the Malaysian Government, all the public universities are under going management transformation under the Corporatization Policy where university management is given more freedom and power (see Corporatization Policy, 1989). Comparatively, it is said school management system possessed little freedom due to its centralized and hierarchical system.

> [AS7/NL]....*Obviously, there are differences. I have experiences teaching at 3 different environments: the school, the (teachers) college and here in the university. In schools teachers are bounded by the (national) curriculum and rushed to finish it. ....In colleges, there are a little more freedom. College lecturers have authority to choose their own direction. They have more freedom in teaching, more freedom to express opinions and more freedom to design the teaching curriculum. Lecturers in colleges and universities have freedom to determine students' grades. Moreover, in universities, there have even n.ore freedom than what we have in (teachers) colleges. More obviously, in university we ought to show our expertise.* (Newly Appointed Lecturer)

### c) Assessment and Examination System

Leading on from this is the third theme, the question of assessment. Five out of the 18 students interviewed felt that university teaching systems assessed students differently from the more standardized school examination system. However, only one staff member mentioned assessment issue. From these responses, it is believed that assessment is one of the students' concerns.

> [ST18/TE]....*The (final) examination in school is more nationally standardized whereas in university it is according to department, lecturers and consists of course work.* (Student/SPJ: 2nd Year)

It was also claimed that there were lecturers who encouraged students to learn for the examination from the behaviors they showed to students during lectures. One student who adopted a 'strategic' approach to learning explained that it is easier to predict questions and prepare for examinations in the university as lecturers are seen to put more emphasis on important topics that are more likely

to be in the exam. This suggests that lecturers' approach in teaching influences students' learning approach (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983; Kember & Gow, 1989; Watkins & Biggs, 1996).

> [ST16/TE]....*What is only taught by lecturers will come out in the exam... what a lecturer feels important will only be taught in the lecture. They will also help us, "OK, this section is important and will probably be in the exam" ... The questions won't deviate from the lecturer's lectures. But in school, they could be different and unpredictable.....* (Student/SPA: 2nd Year)

## d) Autonomous Learners

The fourth and the final theme is the autonomy of learners. Expectedly, the majority (15 out of 18) of the students and staff (12 out of 17) felt that a university teaching system would develop independent and responsible learners as opposed to 'spoon- feeding'. The university system is thought to orientate and to train students for self-learning. Student discourses focused on 'self': self-learning, self-disciplined, and self-development.

> [ST3/SS]....*Here we ought to work independently. Sometimes we ask our lecturers and they suggest finding from books... Lecturers provide little content and asked us to find more on our own, more on self-learning and self-development.* (Student/SPL: 1st Year)

> [ST18/TE]....*In schools the teachers teach everything but in university lecturers teach a little. They ask us to find more... to promote self-discipline in us.* (Student/SPJ: 2nd Year)

Significantly, however, the theme of learners' autonomy emerged mainly from more experienced staff members. They mentioned the concept of student centered learning and they wanted the students to display active learning behaviors (style and attitude) and to have good learning skills. However, a female staff member (having school and college experiences) relayed a different story. Many of her third year students were not considered as independent and they were guided more. She explained regretfully.

> [AS8/NL]....*If I compare my previous school students with my third year university students in searching for references, they are not many differences... I see they are not doing their references in the library. They are not reading as well... I find that their knowledge on the topics given is very low and their arguments are not what I expected to be.* (Newly Appointed Lecturer)

On contrary, the degree to which lecturers emphasize understanding of lectures was questioned by some more mature in-service (INSET) student teachers. These students accused some staff members were not taking teaching seriously and were employing ineffective teaching behaviors and approaches. However, staff members claimed that these 'upgrading' students were less independent and less committed in their learning as they were only looking for 'paper qualification'.

[ST5/PS/KDPKD3]....*From what I see in the* [teachers training] *college and university, many of the lecturers ask us to find materials on our own but they don't explain well. For example, they give us a topic, provide us with the headlines and with little explanation... Sometimes, I have a hard time in understanding the lecture* .... (Student/SPN: 3rd Year)

[ST9/TE/KDPKD3]....*However, ...first, they teach very little and we don't understand. Sometimes is very fast. I believe this could be the university system.. Second, is the voice. Teachers should have clear and strong voice, and clear explanations.* (Student/STP: 3rd Year)

In another situation, one second-year male student raised the issue of student-teacher relationships. He felt closer to teachers in schools, who gave him more attention and time that was lacking in the university setting.

[ST15/TE]....*One more thing, in school we are closer to the teachers. They can spend a lot of time with us. We can see them often. I feel in university it is less....* (Student/SPA: 2nd Year)

Lecturers good teaching behavior have shown to bring positive impact on students learning behavior and experience. Two staff members mentioned how their lecturers' previous teaching and learning experiences have influenced on the way they execute their teaching duty.

[AM2/UND-AP]....*Some lecturers probably think and behave exactly like when they were students themselves... how they learned and were taught before. They then copied exactly from these experiences in the way they teach the students.* (Administrator).

[AM4/HD-AP]....*As for myself if the students do not come to me and show their efforts, I won't help them. My principle is based on my experience as a student before.* (Administrator).

In conclusion, there are significant differences perceived between the school and university system. The university teaching system wants students to be independent and active learners. They are also expected to be responsible for their own actions and learning. In order for the students to be successful, they are required to develop a positive learning culture and study skills. In university, due to its 'higher' level, teaching activities should also aim at developing higher thinking. The concerns and roles are well summarized by this administrator:
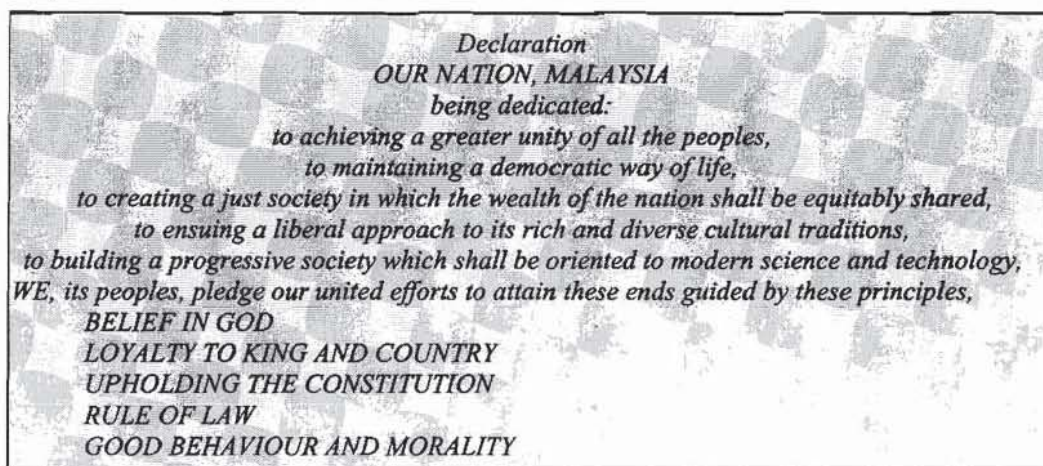
[AS4/SL]....*They are many differences, but I would like to focus on their roles... students are to be more active, get involved in the class discussions and participate in the class activities. Lectures are done through two-way communication, not passive like it used to be. They are university students. They are the ones who are going to learn, to get knowledge and to take the exams. Not us. So they must change their attitudes.... If they still think we have to treat them like they are in schools, spoon-feeding them again, they are misinformed. University is a place for matured, independent, and self-disciplined students. I want them to exercise their thinking, besides learning on new knowledge. If they don't have these qualities, they are going to face problems.* (Experienced Lecturer)

The management system and the educational emphasis or aims in each system are also different. Therefore, weighing the responses from each side, I found the majority of them seem to have a common understanding of the nature and environment of the teaching and learning in the university, and what to expect in the university educational system, '*because in university we have to be independent and find materials on our own*'. However, it is also wise to remember both the students and the staff members mentioned problems they experienced in interactions in teaching and learning processes.

2. The Goals and Roles of University Education

When the participants were asked '*what is the aim of higher education and what is the main intention of students attending university?*', various responses were gathered. However, first, from the national point of view, the general aim and philosophy of education in Malaysia is to develop competent individuals in all aspects of human development to contribute to the society and the national economic development (see National Philosophy of Education, NPE, *Appendix 2A*). Higher education is to produce 'suitable' graduates for the development of the nation at large. Furthermore, if we analyze the 'serampang dua mata' (two-pronged aims) of the New Economic Policy (NEP), we see that education is to be used as an instrument to eradicate poverty or in other term, for social mobility and to social and ethnic integration. All these national aims and beliefs are in line with the RUKUNEGARA, the national ideologies. The Rukunegara was documented to form a basis for the enhancement of national unity and development based on five principles. Since then, the Rukunegara has become the nation's references for development and direction in the political, economic, social, educational and cultural policies in Malaysia. The aspirations and principles of Rukunegara are documented as follows.

*Declaration*
*OUR NATION, MALAYSIA*
*being dedicated:*
*to achieving a greater unity of all the peoples,*
*to maintaining a democratic way of life,*
*to creating a just society in which the wealth of the nation shall be equitably shared,*
*to ensuing a liberal approach to its rich and diverse cultural traditions,*
*to building a progressive society which shall be oriented to modern science and technology,*
*WE, its peoples, pledge our united efforts to attain these ends guided by these principles,*
*BELIEF IN GOD*
*LOYALTY TO KING AND COUNTRY*
*UPHOLDING THE CONSTITUTION*
*RULE OF LAW*
*GOOD BEHAVIOUR AND MORALITY*

(Source: Ministry of Information (1969). *RUKUNEGARA*. Kuala Lumpur: Information Department).

Examining Universiti Teknologi Malaysia's, UTM (also known as The Discovery University)
philosophy, vision and mission, clear parallels can be seen:

> *The Allah's (God) Law is the foundation for the science and technology. Thus,*
> *The Discovery University is trying wholly and together to expand the excellence*
> *of science and technology for the belief in God and prosperous being in*
> *accordance to His will.* (philosophy)
> *To be the centre of academic and technology excellence of world class*
> *standards through creativity.* (vision)
> *To lead in the development of human resource and technology parallel with the*
> *nation's aspirations.* (mission)
>
> (Source: The Discovery University (1997). *Total Quality*
> *Organisation.* Quality Council, May)

From interviews, a diversity of issues emerged from the study in relation to such goals and roles of
university education in Malaysia. The study has identified seven themes: (1) providing continuing
education for lifelong learning and developing a competent workforce or 'human capital' concept;
(2) imparting new knowledge, developing critical and an intellectual person; (3) upgrading
teachers' current knowledge and qualification; (4) getting a good job, upgrading status and
recognition; (5) motivation and interest; (6) fulfilling family obligation and responsibility; and (7)
inculcating moral development.

It was found therefore that the general perceptions and expectations from both the lecturers (and
the academic administrators or managers) and the students would concord with common
international goals of higher education:

1. to equip and *'to teach students so that they can apply a sound knowledge of the content
   and structure of their chosen disciplines and can apply it effectively in further
   development of knowledge and in vocational situations'* (Boulton-Lewis, 1995, p.143),
   and
2. to develop an independent and critical learner or the cognitive development, (Barnett,
   1990).

However, the findings from this study revealed the sources of aims of higher education in
Malaysia are three-fold: (1) the common universal philosophy of (western) higher education. (2)
the influence of government political and economic aspirations and (3) materialistic socio-cultural
values and achievement oriented personal goals. As we look at all the seven themes, it is obvious.
nevertheless, that the second and third sources occur more frequently.

## a) Lifelong Learning and Human Capital

For the first theme, it is found that the recent government's aspirations (policies) and philosophy of providing continuing higher education in the country is to all for developing human capital. Tertiary education is observed as an expansion level from primary and secondary education (see NPE) in developing comprehensive individuals and in promoting life-long learning in the society - the productive and informative society. University education is noted as a means of transmitting and increasing new knowledge and information, as defined below:

> [AS2/AP]....*we see their desire to learn and to get up-to-date knowledge and information. Our society is moving towards the culture of lifelong learning... more on self-satisfaction or to get knowledge.* (Experienced Lecturer)

> [AM3/HD-AP]...*Actually university education is a continuation from the present educational system ... and the government effort of promoting the learning society.* (Administrator)

Interestingly, the above discourses such as quality education, lifelong learning and learning society reflect the government's ideology mentioned in Vision 2020. Hence, the present role of the 'research' university is preparing for a life-long learning society and focusing on 'quality'. It is also the aim of the organization to have effective management.

> [AMS1/AP]....*Furthermore, higher education sector particularly the universities under Corporatization, are given more roles in educating the society and some of them claim they are moving towards becoming total quality and learning organization such as our university in promoting quality education... effective management.* (Administrator)

Another finding in the study which is related to the government's policy is that university education is seen as a means to produce graduates for national workforce demands - the Human Capital Theory, to fulfill national economic development that is in line with the existing current political situation as embedded in the ideology of the national philosophy of education (NPE) and the multiple aims and nine challenges of Vision 2020 (see *Appendix 1*). The knowledge gained from the process is to contribute productively to the nation. This expectation of the goals of university education is reflected below:

> [AM3/HD-AP/PS]....*With university qualification and the knowledge gained through years here, the graduates I believe should be able to contribute to the society and ...for the sake of the nation's development ...because now we are talking of becoming a developed nation.* (Administrator)

> [AS3/AP]...*and besides that probably they can serve intelligently in the society and for the national development.* (Experienced Lecturer)

Relevant views were expressed by staff members and students who described the role and the emphasis of the university curriculum (compared to the school) that were seen to prepare them

with appropriate advanced knowledge and skills in their specialized field for job requirements. The perceptions reflect government current ideology. According to Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the Deputy Prime Minister in Berita Harian Online (18 March 1998),

> *Universities are not only seen as places for inventing knowledge, culturing*
> *thinking in the young people and disseminating culture but they become*
> *economic centre of knowledge which will produce human capital to compete in*
> *the world economy.*

In addition, one staff member noted that the specific role of the Faculty of Education is to train

students for specific professions, that is as competent teachers.

> [AS5/SL]....*But in this faculty, students are here not only to get good higher knowledge*
> *but also the knowledge that will prepare them to become a competent teacher.*
> (Experienced Lecturer)

One critical administrator strongly disagreed with the secondary school curriculum which he claimed did not prepare school leavers with the scientific and advanced technological skills. These skills he believed were crucial for the requirement in the competitive job market and in the development of an industrialized nation.

> [AM3/HD-AP]...*And just having the high school certificate would not be enough to be*
> *successful in the job market because as we all know what students learn in university is*
> *far more superior than what they learn in high school and this in turn, will ensure*
> *candidate to adapt themselves to the job market...and that is why it is important.*
> (Administrator)

## b) Intellectual Development

The second theme is the development of an intellectual person. The university education in Malaysia is to provide opportunity to increase or upgrade new knowledge and to promote thinking, which is similar to other systems in the world, especially in western societies. Lecturers in higher education are to facilitate learning and understanding in the students (Samuelowicz & Bain, 1992; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997, 1999) and to educate them to be an intellectual and a critical person in their communities and society.

In this study, half of the students (9 out of 18) mentioned upgrading new knowledge, whereas some staff members (5 out of 17) stressed deepening knowledge and promoting thinking.

> [ST17/TE]....*gain new knowledge... .* (Student/SPA: 2nd Year)

> [ST7/TE]....*I want to upgrade my knowledge... many new up-to-date knowledge in my*
> *area.* (Student/STP: 3rd Year)

The view of simply wanting or acquiring knowledge was shared by the less experienced staff, that '*I actually believe their main intention is that they want knowledge*'. However, the experienced staff members revealed an emphasis on 'deepening' of knowledge and promoting thinking. Their remarks are such as:

> [AS4/SL]....*The main intention...* [is] *to deepen their knowledge and to train or orient their thinking... trains the students to be able to think and analyze the problems critically... more on the development and encouragement of thinking in the students...become critical and intellectual individual.* (Experienced Lecturer)

> [AS6/SL]....*Knowledge and experiences that they (students) received in university will prepare them to become critical learners... besides, also to develop their thinking ability.... .* (Experienced Lecturer)

Interestingly these cognitive goals are also found embedded and enacted in the current government's National Philosophy of Education (NPE) of developing a critical, informative and intellectual citizen (with high moral and religious values, and loyalty to the country stressed by national ideology, the Rukunegara). The goals of developing higher knowledge and critical thinking are also seen as the general view of the western higher education, as Barnett (1990) argues:

> *An educational process can be termed higher education when the student is carried on to levels of reasoning which make possible critical reflection on his or her experience, whether consisting of propositional knowledge or of knowledge through action. These levels of reasoning and reflection are "higher', because they enable the student to take a view (from above, as it were) of what has been learned. Simply "higher education" resides in the higher-order states of mind.* (p.202).

Interestingly, Barnett's definition of 'higher-order states of mind' might be recalled when one female staff member describes the importance of the developing higher thinking as related to God's gift. Education was not only for cognitive development but balanced with human moral development. According to her, this 'special gift' from God must be used to search for more knowledge for the students to become an objective and a critical person. Thus education is linked to spiritual and moral development (see theme seven in this section).

> [AS8/NL]....*The aim to me is that every human being who is given the 'akal yang sempurna' (intelligent mind) as a special gift from God, they should use it for good purposes. Because when we learn and the more we learn the more we don't know. And when we read from so many disciplines, we will become an individual who is objective and not so emotional.* (Newly Appointed Lecturer)

In addition, it is important to mention that it is highly competitive to get a place in public higher education in Malaysia. Acceptance is based on academic merit and is supported by achievements in co-curricular activities. Thus, due to its highly selective and competitive nature, society labels this 'lucky' breed as intellectuals, and more so if one is an oversea graduate. These oversea

graduates are considered very 'smart' and are respected more in their communities. The university
graduates (locally or overseas) will enjoy a higher status in the society.

> [AM2/UND-AP]....*The purpose of the students pursuing university education is that
> they want to take the opportunity to be called an intellectual... . It is good for their image
> and they are more respected in their communities.* (Administrator)

> [ST8/TE]....*I want to get a good degree...* [and be] *an intellect... and respected by
> family members.* (Student/STP: 3rd Year)

It was evident from the discourses above that the concept of intellect or being intellectual was
more related to receiving university qualification and achieving academic recognition - the
'achievement-oriented' society. Intellectuals were seen not so much about exercising critical
minds but more about achieving academic qualifications or becoming expert 'gurus'. University
graduates were perceived as having higher status in the eyes of the society. Similarly, the
university, its academic staff and its students were regarded as 'special communities' of high
moral respect in the society (see theme four). In addition, the national culture and customs place
great importance on respect for authority or status. An important lesson for Western society is the
issue of respect for authority in Malaysia since it is important in building good personal
relationship (Asma Abdullah, 1994). Insensitivity in not addressing a person by a 'status symbol'
(such as Encik/Mr., Puan/Mrs., Cik/ Ms., Tuan/Sir, Dr., Prof., Dato' etc) is considered 'kurang
ajar' (ill mannered). The issue of status or respect and recognition is explained in theme four.

## c) Teachers' Knowledge Development

Moving on to the third theme emerges the government's current role in upgrading in-service
teachers' qualifications and knowledge, in order for them to deliver quality education. The move is
also an effort to upgrade the teaching profession. By upgrading their qualifications from certificate
and diploma to first degree, they will get extra increments in their monthly salary. They are
categorized as graduate teachers who enjoy a better remuneration package from the government.
This 'special' collaboration program between the Ministry of Education (MOE or KP) and
universities was designed to upgrade teachers' qualification and knowledge in stages and to boost
teachers' morale. These 'special' teachers would become catalysts for improving the quality in
teaching and learning in schools.

> [ST8/TE/KDPKD3]....*My intention is to get a degree and many new knowledge so that I
> can become better teacher.* (Student/STP: 3rd Year)

> [ST2/SS/KDPKD3]....*Because the KP sent me here to get a degree so that I can
> upgrade myself and then provide my service to them and to the schools when I graduate.*
> (Student/SPN: 3rd Year)

These responses from some in-service student teachers confirmed that they were pursuing university education because they wanted both to upgrade their qualifications and to get knowledge.

**d) Materialistic Values of Status and Recognition**

The fourth theme is the issue of materialistic socio-cultural values of status and recognition, which received the highest and elaborated responses from the respondents. The majority of staff members and students significantly highlighted the scenario of university education in Malaysia as furthering academic qualifications in commanding a good job that would upgrade individual status in the society. However, it was not surprising, as the issue of upgrading the status or the notion of social mobility through education was found enacted in the government's New Economic Policy (NEP, 1970) and the policy continues until the present Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000).

The study found that one influential reason for students pursuing university education was for a 'paper qualification' or to upgrade their qualification to command a good job and salaries, which were found linked to achieving social recognition and status. However, it seems the aim of getting a 'paper qualification' (extrinsic motive) is not applied to all groups since there was found to be differences in motives between the 'fresh' and first degree students, and the postgraduate students in pursuing university education. In general, first degree students who are of various ages aimed for a 'paper qualification'. The more experienced postgraduates will search for knowledge satisfaction and for broadening their experiences (intrinsic motive).

> [AM6/HD-AP]...*If at the first degree level of course, their main intention is to go for qualification...enable them to enter better career prospect. But if at the postgraduate level, I find many of them who come to the university mainly for knowledge satisfaction to broaden their experience. There are few who continue their Master's level to get good qualification to enable them to get better job.* (Administrator)

One administrator reasoned that the different aim in getting education was influenced by the family socio-economic background and environment. His assumption is a poor village student goes to university to improve his/her economic status and to help his/her family. The rich student who is economically stable will focus his/her attention on study and knowledge.

> *Student A comes from a village and Student B comes from the city. Student B probably said 'I want to get knowledge'. Student A entered university and said 'I just want a degree. I want a good job because I want to help my parents'. Student B come from a rich family, 'I want to get education.' So I think these scenarios are very clear since when they were still in secondary schools.*

The claim that the majority of the students are there to get university qualification for improving social status is supported by the quantitative data. The result from students' learning questionnaire revealed that only 1.5% have fathers who are professionals, 9.0% have fathers as school teachers, 14.2% are fathers as businessmen and the majority (about 50%) are from low income earners. Furthermore, 69.4% said that their mothers are full-time housewives. This suggests that probably

the high percentages of family low socio-economic background may have influenced on the students' aims in pursuing university education, which is for social and economic mobility. Interestingly from the data, it is shown that the Malay families are employed more as school teachers (middle income earners), whereas the Chinese are businessmen.

Another stimulating remark in relation to the importance of status and recognition was when one female senior staff member provided an instance of the conflict of two cultural groups: graduate and non-graduate school teachers in schools. She claims that getting a degree would bring recognition and boost the teacher's self image, self-esteem and confidence.

> [AMS1/AP]....*If the KDPK group...one most amazing thing from what I gathered is they want to promote their self-esteem because at schools according to them, graduate teachers do not mix with non-graduate teachers. They just want the recognition and self-fulfilment.* (Experienced Lecturer)

### e) Motivation and Interest in Teaching Profession

The next theme relates to status and recognition is motivation and interest (theme five). Due to social status and early career orientation, choosing a program course in the university became an important matter. Information obtained from informal discussions with students had revealed claims made by students who were dissatisfied regarding choosing the program. The younger age students said they applied for other program in the university as their first choice (from the three choices given to them) and for some, the education program was their last choice. The comments reflect the demands and popularity of technical and applied engineering programs.

> [ST18/TE]....*Actually, I applied for a course in mechanical engineering as my first choice, but I was offered to do mechanical engineering in the education faculty....* (Student/SPJ: 2nd Year).

> [ST16/TE]....*My first choice is Civil Engineering, my second choice is Computer Science but when I got the university offer I had my third choice... technical education program. Since it is about civil engineering, I accepted the offer.* (Student/SPA: 2nd Year).

Other claims include some students not knowing what to choose (probably lack of career guidance) from the available programs offered by university or being less qualified to apply for other technical programs. The interviews also revealed the attitudes of some of the students in the education program. Some appeared not interested in becoming teachers.

> [AS1/AP]....*If the 'fresh' students they don't know what the qualification qualified them to be... is designed for them to become teachers. And actually, those sponsored students they 'have'* [with voice emphasis] *to serve the KP (Ministry of Education) first. They don't see this. They think when they graduated from our technical education program, they can work elsewhere...but not as teachers.* (Experienced Lecturer).

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She saw the misconception as due to the students asking for other technical programs but being offered courses in engineering or computers in education.

> *That's why some of them were confused because initially they applied for other popular program but ended up in education. Actually when they are in their third or final year only then they realize what they will become, especially when they know they have to do teaching practicum....* (Administrator)

However, the claim was then clarified by in-service student teachers. The students criticized the low recognition offered to the teaching profession. They believed that being a school teacher is a 'second class' and less 'glamorous' and prestigious job which receives low pay and low recognition or social status compared to other 'applied and technical' professions, even though teaching is perceived as a noble profession. Linked to theme four, this shows that choosing a career with high social status and recognition is a very significant issue in Malaysia.

> [ST1/SS/KDPK]....*If we look at the teaching job or teachers especially, how much they get ...very little.* (Student/SPL: Final Year)

> [AS5/SL]....*I think many are not interested to become teachers because the profession receive low pay and recognition. With the same technical qualification, they will get better pay if they work in the private sector.* (Experienced Lecturer)

In informal conversations, in-service student teachers also highlighted the heavy burden and workload that they experienced, and the teachers' low 'kebajikan' (welfare) and social recognition that were given by the profession. These included their limited allowances, poor working conditions, bigger classes, little benefits, insufficient facilities and limited career promotions.

However, not all did not want to be a teacher. It was said self-interest and encouragement from family members influenced students in applying for university teacher education programs. It is also viewed that teaching is a female dominated job. As one female student said,

> [ST4/SC]....*My parents are both teachers. They encourage me to become a teacher as it is a suitable job for me as a woman... and I like to be a teacher as well. I hope I can become a lecturer one day.* (Student/SPL: 1st Year: Female)

## f) Family Obligation and Responsibility

The six theme is fulfilling family obligation and responsibility. In the Malaysian culture, the children will take the responsibility to look after their 'older' parents and 'immediate' family when they have a job. Significantly, this behavior is encouraged in the Islamic religion and as well as in the Eastern culture. Thus, it is important for them to look for a well-paid job. The concept of 'collectivism' (Asma Abdullah, 1994) is clearly highlighted.

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[ST14/CS]....*I want to help my parents since I come from a poor family...my little brothers and sisters are depending on me.* (Student/SPB: 2$^{nd}$ Year)

[AS11/T]....*We want to send our parents to 'buat haji' (perform pilgrimage to Mecca) also we can't.* (Less Experienced Lecturer)

## g) Moral and Human Development

Finally is the seventh theme. Some staff members (seven out of 17) and students (three out of 18) mentioned the significance of education in Malaysia as developing good moral values for its people in the society. The issue of inculcating values such as good manners, respect and politeness also emerge in staff working life and students' study behavior. Significantly, moral or values development, which is culturally related to religion, is considered important for individual personal development, as explained by this staff member.

[AS8/NL]....*In my view, real educated people would not only seek education and qualification, but they would also change their attitude so they can become a real good person with good moral. To me, to get knowledge it is not just in terms of academic knowledge, but also knowledge of personal development so that they are aware of their roles in the society. Meaning, they are not just looking for paper qualification.* (Newly Appointed Lecturer)

Nonetheless, other staff members and students stressed the importance of the socialisation process in the tertiary education.

[AM3/HD-AP]....*social exposure or socialization is yet another aspect. Thus, education received by the students in university not only for the knowledge purposes but we actually hope when they step in the university they get different exposures...to how they socialized themselves in the society....* (Administrator)

[ST18/TE]....*and personal skills and other social living skills....* (Student/SPJ: 2$^{nd}$ Year)

Yet, in the interviews with the students, it is also evident that many of them possessed dual or multiple motives i.e. to gain new knowledge, good qualification, good grades or good jobs, as well as personal growth. Similarly, the aims of university education are perceived as multiple, for personal and national socio-economic development, as summarized by this administrator.

[AM3/HD-AP]....*Thus, education received by the students in university not only for the knowledge purposes but we actually hope when they step in the university they get different exposures. These are the things should be stressed. The university is not only the place for us to provide knowledge to human but we intend to expose outside world at the more higher level and also to how they socialized themselves in the society...so that they can interact with other people from other disciplines...and to contribute to the society and national development.* (Administrator)

## DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The research found some similarities and differences in the perceptions of teaching and learning in higher education between Malaysia and the West. Obviously, the differences are due to political and cultural influences. Analyzing the findings from the interviews, a range of qualitative answers to the orientations towards higher education was collected. Reasons and motives have been put forward by range of authors in the literature (Taylor, 1983; Gibbs et al., 1984; van Rossum et al., 1984). From the study, it was clear that both the lecturers and students agreed four main reasons as to why students pursue university education. They are:

1. for intellectual development or gaining new knowledge (academic intention)
2. for securing good job and salary (vocational intention).
3. for social and moral development (social intention)
4. for personal development (personal intention)

It was also found that majority of students have mixed motives (Gibbs et al., 1984) with both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons to pursue university education (Taylor, 1983). Significantly, reasons one and two received high responses in Malaysia, although motive three was also emphasized. They first two popular motives were the intrinsic motives of gaining new knowledge for intellectual development (academic intention) and the extrinsic values of securing a good job with good pay (vocational intention). Besides these, there were other two possible motives that are different from Western education orientations namely, developing and changing as a competitive person socially and morally (social intention) (Gao, 1996; Watkins & Biggs, 1996; Watkins & Regmi, 1992). These two motives are found equally emphasized as the Malaysian culture is influenced by moral and religious values and its society is based on close family relations or from role models. These educational orientations were once claimed by Simpson (1997):

> *Just as education is seen in economic and career terms, so the typical Malaysian student is probably more vocationally oriented than the average British one, guided in choice of subject and jobs by national and family requirements. Family decisions both to forgo material goods in preference for expenditure on education... There is often considerable pressure on Malaysian students for high achievement... making moral and financial ties strong.* (p.30)

Another important issue raised here was the students claimed about the selections of course programs that did not suit their interests. The students mentioned they were unhappy with the university decision in offering them a different program field. Students were forced to follow a different interest due to their lack of academic requirement, which then hampered them in pursuing their interests. The students also claimed that there was lack of direction and guidance on university education, programs and system. All these comments needed to be explored and clarified in any future study.

We should now try to translate these orientations into what this might mean for learning, and what conceptions of learning would be. We conclude that student conceptions of learning processes involve:

1. increasing new knowledge or information,
2. facilitating understanding,
3. equipping workplace skills,
4. developing competitive status-seeking individual,
5. preparing for examination,
6. establishing interpersonal skills.

With regard to orientations by staff to the goals of teaching, in our analysis it was found that conceptions in Malaysia could be arranged from transmission or presentation of information and to facilitation of student learning which is similar to the Western literature on encouraging understanding and fostering thinking (Entwistle, 1998; Gow & Kember, 1993; Dall'Alba, 1990; Fox, 1983; Dunkin, 1990). Six qualitatively different conceptions of teaching were identified. They were:

1: Teaching for transmitting or presenting knowledge.
2: Teaching for encouraging and engaging learning activities.
3: Teaching for fostering thinking or intellectual development.
4: Teaching for educating and understanding.

Two interesting and contrasting concepts and emphasis of teaching as compared to other western studies emerging from the study were identified:

5: Teaching for strengthening character and moral development, where teaching is seen as associated with culture and religious beliefs.

6: Teaching for observing institutional requirements or fulfilling national demands and development, where teaching is associated with national economic policies.

In Conception Five, a significant role of education in Malaysia was to emphasize moral values and social development, strongly based on religion and culture. Mukherjee (1990) described religion and moral elements providing 'an opportunity for developing what is perceived as a set of socially desirable attitudes and values'. The Malaysian government and society believed education as educating individual not only for cognitive development but also inculcating cultural values. This is not surprising since the emphasis on moral and social values is found in the formal national education system (and in fact in all of national policies since after the formation of the Rukunegara). In view of such importance, the subject of Moral Education was introduced in the new school curriculum (see KBSR and KBSM, Appendix 2B & 2C) as supplement to the Islamic religion subject. Similarly, Rahimah Haji Ahmad (1998, pp.466-468) noted that:

*It is clear that Malaysia has taken the stand that values education should be an integral part of the school curriculum... Malaysia believes that all education is values education oriented. Specifically, the importance put on values education reflects the notion that for individuals to be truly developed it has to be balanced in terms of the intellect, spiritual, physical as well as emotional, which are based on values... These values are derived from religions, traditions and customs of the people... They relate to human relationships in everyday life, particularly relevant to relationships with the family, peer group, society as well as organization.*

Conception Six was also expected, whereby teaching was related to fulfilling national economic demands, since all national ideologies and policies such as Rukunegara, New Economic Policy, National Five-Year Plan, National Philosophy of Education and Vision 2020 are to support the nation's effort in developing its economic activities. The Malaysian government stressed that education was an instrument for eradicating poverty and integrating social unity and strongly believed that improving and achieving higher economic development would then result in building stability in the country (see New Economic Policy, NEP, 1970; Baharin Abu, 2000, pp.3-8). In fact, all national policies were said to be economically orientated which then were hypothesized to bring pressures and tensions to the national education system, particularly to higher education. From here, we conclude that the four aims of providing and pursuing of university education in Malaysia are:

(1) to deepen knowledge of the content and structure of disciplines which are then to be applied in vocational situations,
(2) to produce a competent and quality workforce following the changes and emphasis in the system laid by the institution and set by the government to meet national human resource requirement,
(3) to raise social status, image and recognition,
(4) to enhance personal cognitive, social skills and moral development.

From the analysis it is also clear that one of the main general purposes of university education in Malaysia is overtly to develop competent and intellectual human capital to serve economic and political aim in developing the nation (aims one and two). The other, more individual, aim is for improving social status and achieving social recognition (items three and four). In other words, these four goals of university education in Malaysia are associated with:

(1) the 'intrinsic' aspect of the development of the intellectual and moral individual or personal human development ,
(2) the 'extrinsic' aspect of the materialistic monetary values of securing good job for social mobility, status and recognition,
(3) the government 'socio-economic and political' requirement of fulfilling the national policy on the human resource and economic development, and
(4) the 'spiritual' elements of the beliefs in religion (Allah or God) and culture.

Significantly, therefore, it can be theorized that the aims and philosophy of university education in Malaysia are seen indirectly linked to one major theme i.e. to satisfy the government sosio-economic and political orientations. Conclusively, the study supports that the Malaysian educational orientation and philosophy are strictly controlled and influenced by the government (see Leong, 1997; Simpson, 1997; Mukherjee, 1990). Education and the people are regarded as an economic investment and instrument for the development of the nation - the concept of Human Capital and are used for achieving national political stability and economic aspirations as embedded long in the two-pronged aims of New Economic Policy (1970), the economic policy of Vision 2020 (1991) and the national socio-political ideology of Rukunegara (1969). Conclusively, education in Malaysia is used to 'indoctrinate' the thinking and behavior of its citizens to believe in God while being critical and intellectual and yet at the same time to be loyal to the government as it is morally unethical to criticize authority – to be 'critical respect' (Baharin Abu, 2000) [Note: Asma Abdullah (1994, p 29) uses the term 'unquestioning loyalty']. It seems hypothetically that there can be conflicts and tensions in pursuing all of the aims among the stakeholders.

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**APPENDIX 1**

> ## MALAYSIA VISION 2020

- **The Way Forward - Vision 2020** presents some thoughts and foundations laid for the future course of Malaysia on how to go about to attain its ultimate objective of developing Malaysia into an industrialised country.

- Hopefully the Malaysian who is born today and in the years to come will be the last generation of our citizens who will be living in a country that is called 'developing'. The ultimate objective that we should aim for is a Malaysia that is fully developed country by the year 2020. Do we want to be like any particular country of the present 19 countries that are generally regarded as 'developed countries'? To be sure, each of the 19, out of a world community of more than 160 states, has its strengths. But each also has its fair share of weaknesses. Without being a duplicate of any of them we can still be developed. We should be a developed country in our own mould. Malaysia should not be developed only in the economic sense. It must be a nation that is fully developed along all the dimensions: economically, politically, socially, spiritually, psychologically, and culturally. We must be fully developed in terms of national unity and social cohesion, in terms of our economy, in terms of social justice, political stability, system of government, quality of life, social and spiritual values, national pride and confidence. By the year 2020, Malaysia can be a united nation, with a confident Malaysian society, infused by strong moral and ethical values, living in a society that is democratic, liberal and tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust, and resilient. There can be no fully developed Malaysia until we have finally overcome the 9 central strategic challenges that have confronted us from the moment of our birth as an independent nation.

- The *first* of these is the challenges of establishing a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny. This must be a nation at peace with itself, territorially and ethnically integrated, living in harmony and full and fair partnership, made up of one 'Bangsa Malaysia' with political loyalty and dedication to the nation.

- The *second* is the challenge of creating a psychologically liberated, secure, and developed Malaysian Society with faith and confidence it itself, justifiably proud of what it is, of what it has accomplished, robust enough to face all manner of adversity. This Malaysian Society must be distinguished by the pursuit of excellence, fully aware of all its potentials, psychologically subservient to none, and respected by the peoples of other nations.

- The *third* challenge we have always faced is that of fostering and developing a mature democratic society, practising a form of mature consensual, community-oriented Malaysian democracy that can be a model for many developing countries.

- The *fourth* is the challenge of establishing a fully moral and ethical society, whose citizens are strong in religious and spiritual values and imbued with the highest of ethical standards.

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- The *fifth* challenge that we have always faced is the challenge of establishing a matured, liberal, and tolerant society in which Malaysians of all colours and creeds are free to practise and profess their customs, cultures, and religious beliefs and yet feeling that they are belong to one nation.

- The *sixth* is the challenge of establishing a scientific and progressive society, a society that is innovative and forward-looking, one that is not only a consumer of technology but also a contributor to the scientific and technological civilisation of the future.

- The *seventh* challenge is the challenge of establishing a fully caring society and a caring culture, a social system in which society will come before self, in which the welfare of the people will revolve not around the state or the individual but around a strong and resilient family system.

- The *eighth* is the challenge of ensuring an economically just society. This is a society in which there is fair and equitable distribution of the wealth of the nation, in which there is full partnership in economic progress. Such a society cannot be in place so long as there is the identification of race with economic function, and the identification of economic backwardness with race.

- The *ninth* challenge is the challenge of establishing a prosperous society, with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust, and resilient.

- The 9 central objectives listed need not be our order of priorities over the next three decades. Most obviously, the priorities of any moment in time must meet the specific circumstances of that moment in time. But it would be surprising if the first strategic challenge which I have mentioned - the establishment of a united Malaysian nation - is not likely to be the most fundamental, the most basic.

(Source: Adapted from the Working Paper - *The Way Forward: 'Vision 2020'* presented by Y.A.B Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad at the Malaysian Business Conference in Feb. 91, in K. Lumpur, Malaysia).

## APPENDIX 2A

### MALAYSIA'S NATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION (NPE)

*Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the betterment of the society and the nation at large.*

(Source: Ministry of Education, Malaysia (1989))

**APPENDIX 2B**

## INTEGRATION STRATEGY IN NATIONAL SCHOOL CURRICULUM
## (KBSR AND KBSM)
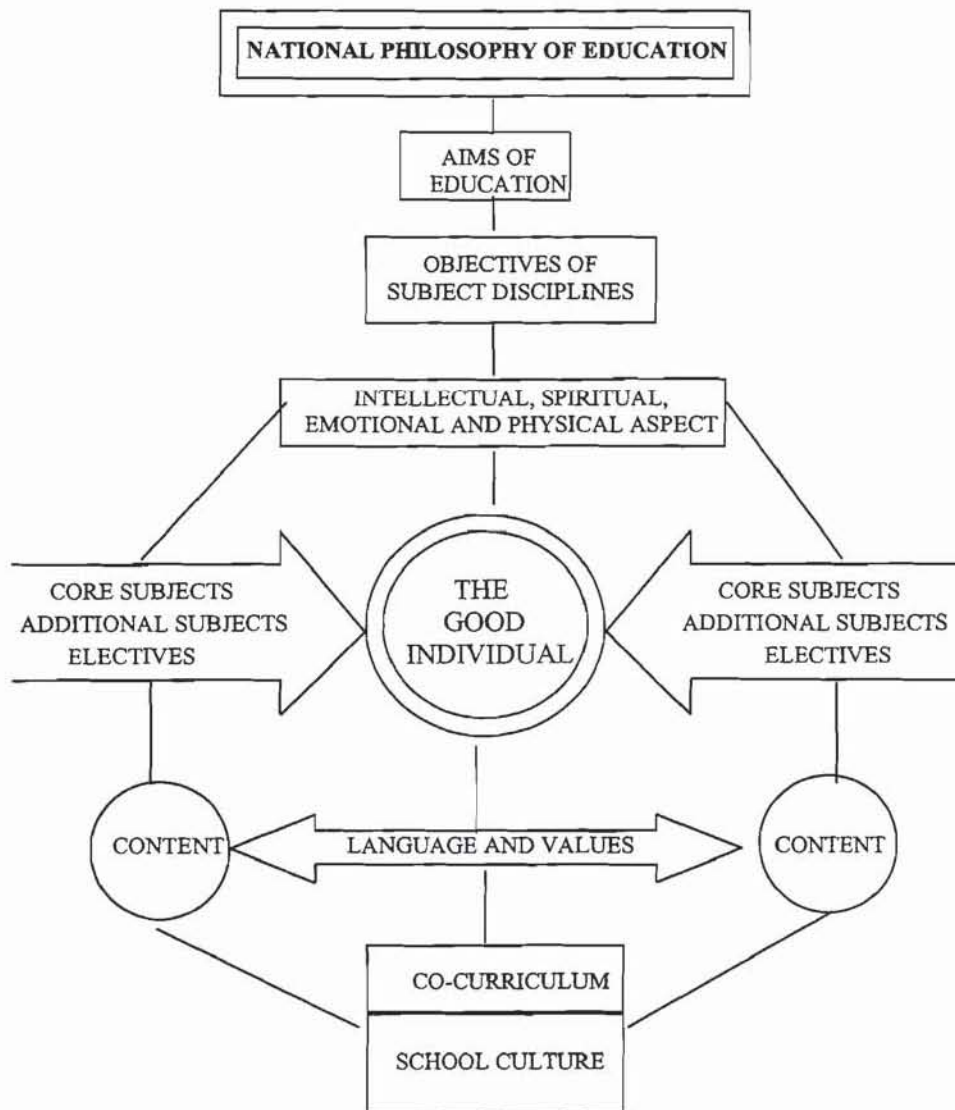
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                    │ NATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION     │
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                              │
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                        │   AIMS OF     │
                        │  EDUCATION    │
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                    │ SUBJECT DISCIPLINES    │
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                │  INTELLECTUAL, SPIRITUAL,       │
                │ EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL ASPECT   │
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CORE SUBJECTS
ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS
ELECTIVES

THE GOOD INDIVIDUAL

CORE SUBJECTS
ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS
ELECTIVES

CONTENT

LANGUAGE AND VALUES

CONTENT

CO-CURRICULUM

SCHOOL CULTURE

(Source: Ministry of Education, Malaysia (1989))

**APPENDIX 2C**

## 16 CORE MORAL VALUES IN NATIONAL SCHOOL CURRICULUM

1.  *Cleanliness of body and mind*: personal cleanliness, cleanliness of the environment
2.  *Compassion and tolerance*: compassionate, generous, charitable, tolerance, considerable, hospitable, patience
3.  *Co-operation*: mutual responsibility, fraternity
4.  *Courage*: courage as opposed to foolhardiness
5.  *Moderation*:      moderation in thought
                  moderation in speech
                  moderation in action
6.  *Diligence*: industriousness, hardworking, perseverance, dedication
7.  *Freedom*:      freedom with law
                 freedom to choose
                 freedom from slavery
8.  *Gratitude*: gratefulness, thankfulness, appreciation
9.  *Honesty*: truthfulness, trustworthiness, faithfulness, sincerity
10. *Humility and modesty*: as opposed to showing off and arrogance, and admission of one's fault
11. *Justice*: a sense of fair play, concept of reward and punishment
12. *Rationality*: flexibility of thought, weighing of alternatives
13. *Self-reliance*: responsibility, independence, autonomy
14. *Love*:    love for environment
            love life and humanity
            love for nation, patriotism
            love for peace and harmony
15. *Respect*: respect for rules, law and authority
            respect for time and punctuality
            respect for institutions
            respect for exemplary behaviour
            respect for parents
            respect for elders, teachers, and leaders
            respect for another's beliefs and customs
            respect for knowledge and wisdom

16. *Public spiritedness*: spirit of 'gotong royong' (working together), sensitiveness towards societal needs.