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Program and Service Management at Universiti Utara Malaysia: How Satisfied are the Graduates?

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive research dealt with the programme and service satisfaction of graduates in terms of (1) Curriculum, (2) Career and Counseling Services, (3) Teaching Staff, and (4) Facilities at Universiti Utara Malaysia. Differences in satisfaction were also ascertained when the respondents were grouped by demographic characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, entry qualification, field of study, and work status. Data were gathered using a survey questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics via the SPSS at 0.05 significance level.

Findings showed that, overall, the respondents were satisfied most with Facilities, followed by Curriculum and Teaching Staff, and then Career and Counseling Services. "Library" was rated the highest for Facilities, "inculcation of positive values" for Curriculum, "qualifications" for Teaching Staff, and "information on job and career opportunities and further studies" for Career and Counseling Services. There were significant differences in the respondents' satisfaction across the four components when grouped by demographic characteristics. Recommendations are offered and the implications of the findings are discussed.

Introduction and Theoretical Grounding of the Study

Higher education institutions have a social and moral responsibility to provide the most meaningful varied experience to their primary clientele,

the students. Hence, it is no surprise that colleges and universities invest huge physical and technical resources to optimize teaching and learning processes. Karemera, Reuben, and Sillah (2003) noted that the education profession has experienced significant changes and revisions of curriculum and programme requirements in the past decade. They clearly espoused that in the increasingly competitive markets for high quality students entering colleges or universities, there is a need to identify and evaluate the effects of the factors affecting decisions to attend a particular higher education institution (HEI).

The responsiveness and relevance of curricula and student services as well as quality of teaching staff and facilities are among the areas commonly examined by academicians, researchers, and policy-makers. This is understandable, and in fact, expected because according to Kuh and Hu (2001), these factors create a learning environment that affects positive outcomes and performance. Empirical research also show how the preceding factors interplay with certain academic conditions. For instance, Travis (1998) found a relationship between student satisfaction with programmes and the following factors: a written statement of purpose, professional development for administrators, a comprehensive programme, conducting curriculum evaluation, and conducting systematic evaluation. Likewise, Flores (1996) looked into the adequacy of graduates' educational experiences in a Guatemalan university and disclosed that their (73%) present job was related or exactly the kind of job they expected to get while studying; however, the graduates wanted more emphasis in areas such as practical instructional activities, project administration, communication skills, research planning and analysis, and marketing.

In a similar study, Soule (1993) obtained perceptions of a professional education curriculum, specifically established to prepare students for occupational safety and health careers. The outcome revealed the principal strengths of the programme, such as broad-based technical foundation of coursework, academic staff with practical experience, and an internship program that provided some hands-on experience. Barabash-Pope (1990) also attempted to determine if students perceived that the nursing refresher program was able to meet the personal and professional needs of nurses who were returning to the profession after a prolonged absence. The analyses showed highly positive results, with the program viewed as extremely worthwhile.

Examining career and counseling services available at selected universities in southeast Texas, Akubukwe (1998) found that gender, ethnicity, age, family background and parents' educational level relate to

university sophomores' perceptions and expectations toward various counseling services offered at university counselling centers. This is an interesting finding since the present research also utilized gender and ethnicity as among the independent variables, as well as career and counselling services as among the dependent variables.

Another related study was that of Jones (1990), who disclosed that the primary goal clients had in completing the career assessment and counseling service was to increase self-awareness, and that this goal was accomplished. The subjects rated the counselors as professional, honest, and well informed, while they rated positively the environment of the Center. Reed (1982) also observed that in Detroit, Michigan, the majority of students were satisfied with the counseling services, but felt that guidance counselors needed more training, were overworked, and thus had little time for students who sought counseling services. The major finding of the study was that the majority of the students would like to have an evening counselling service; only community colleges offered counselling services after 5:00 pm.

With regard to how academic staff might play a role in college or university success, a study at the relationship between teacher behavior effectiveness and learning outcome was explored by Krichbaum (1991). Findings showed that important aspects of teacher behavior effectiveness include the ability to organize learning activities according to student needs, ask appropriate questions, provide specific and timely feedback to students based on evidence, and convey a positive, enthusiastic attitude about teaching and learning. Likewise, McCargar (1988) attempted to identify whether differences in expectation of teacher and student role (university English as a Second Language, or ESL, program) existed across cultures. One-way analysis of variance and post-hoc statistical tests disclosed that 18 role expectations differed significantly across cultures, namely: student relationship, attitude toward error, question asking, learning motivation, class participation, locus of control, disagreement with teachers, teacher instructional behaviors, teacher cultural sensitivity, knowledge of subject, teacher warmth, classroom management, teacher questioning strategy, teacher response to student errors, teacher organization/clarity, and teacher method variety.

In the Asian context, Nakornthap (1988) described curriculum evaluation activities in government universities in Thailand. A total of 72 individuals were interviewed including 25 institution-level and 47 college-level respondents. It was found that, at the governmental level, the Ministry of University Affairs was involved in the academic planning

and curriculum approval process of the institutions. However, no direct influence of the government on the curriculum evaluation process was observed. At the institutional level, four out of six institutions did not have a clear evaluation policy and guideline. At the college level, it was found that most did not have a formal policy on this matter with only five colleges having a well-established policy for periodic evaluation. Regarding utilization, most colleges indicated moderate and minor outcomes. They also perceived the utility as low due to organizational constraints such as budget, personnel, and so forth. Among the potential factors affecting evaluation were faculty attitudes, policy support regarding evaluation activities, faculty workload, faculty experience in evaluation, and nature of curriculum/professional areas.

In Indonesia, Young (1982) disclosed that evaluation practices were narrowly focused, contributing little to the wise management of curriculum change. At various points in the curriculum development cycle, evaluation could provide valuable information to decision-makers, especially about the implementation process and teachers' responsiveness to innovation. The researcher concluded that the restricted interpretation of curriculum evaluation in Indonesia has limited the effectiveness of project management and that, in the future, a broader range of methodologies should be employed, appropriate to the particular problems being investigated.

Investigating the effects of Chinese culture and locus of control upon Chinese college students' attitudes toward, knowledge about, and perceptions of counseling service in Taiwan, the Republic of China was the focus of Hsiao's (1984) work. The findings showed that students experiencing personal psychological and career problems would be significantly more likely to seek help from a close friend and/or close relative than from a professional counselor or any other potential helper. The study also showed that Chinese college students were more external than internal. No gender differences in locus of control among Chinese students were noted. Finally, locus of control was found to be significantly related to Chinese college students' attitudes toward or expectations about openness and responsibility.

The preceding literature, although not very exhaustive and conclusive, provided certain insights into how the curriculum, career and counseling services, academic teaching personnel, and facilities might influence students' academic outcomes and institutional policies and programs. In the present study, these were the major variables examined in the context

of Malaysia. Specifically, the locale of the research was Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Sintok, Kedah Darul Aman.

In 2002, UUM took the lead in managing a tracer study designed to “evaluate the quality of the programs and services provided by educational institutions.” The study was an initiative of the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister’s Department and the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. In particular, the University Teaching and Learning Center (UTLC) spearheaded the tracer study in the context of UUM, collecting data from those who graduated from the university in that year. At that time, one of the authors of this paper was at UTLC, who then served as its Deputy Director.

This paper highlights significant aspects of program and service satisfaction among the graduates, and subsequently identifies the strengths and weaknesses, if any, of the university’s efforts in providing a well structured, balanced, and meaningful educational environment.

Objectives of the Study

This study examined the satisfaction of Universiti Utara Malaysia graduates in terms of the programs and services offered by the university. Specifically, the study ascertained the graduates’ satisfaction with regard to the (a) curriculum, (b) career and counseling services, (c) teaching staff, and (d) facilities at UUM.

The research also attempted to determine if there were significant differences in students’ satisfaction when grouped by (a) gender, (b) ethnicity, (c) entry qualification, (d) field of study, and (e) work status.

Methodology

Research Design and Respondents

The study was descriptive in nature, and employed a survey method in gathering the data needed. The target respondents of the study were the 5,104 graduates of UUM for one academic session. Of this number, 2,136 (41.8%) graduates responded to the survey.

Of those who participated in the study, majority (75.5%) were female while only one fourth (24.5%) were male. Malays (85.7%) constituted most of the respondents, followed by Chinese (10.6%), and the remainder

comprised of Indians (2.2%) and other ethnic groups (1.5%). Almost half (45.6%) had Matriculation entry qualification, more than one-third (38.7%) possessed STPM, and a few (12.5%) had Diploma. The remainder (3.3%) had other qualifications.

In terms of field of study, Finance and Banking (40.2%) topped the list, followed by Human Resource Management (14.8%), Information System (12.8%), Economics (9.0%), Education (8.5%), Business Administration (4.7%), International Relations and Diplomacy (4.7%), Tourism (3.6%), and Arts and Social Sciences (1.8%). At the time of the survey, 54.1% were not working.

Data Collection and Management

Initially, the study intended to have a complete enumeration of the graduates but only 2,136 responded. Gathering of data, facilitated by the Office of Academic Affairs of UUM, was done using two methods: actual distribution of the research questionnaire and posting of the questionnaire. Dispersal of the questionnaire was done during the period when the graduation gown was distributed to the graduates in the university. Those who failed to do so were identified and then a follow-up attempt was made by posting to the graduates the research questionnaire.

The questionnaire used in the study was devised through a collaboration of all public higher education institutions. It was divided into six self-explanatory parts: (1) Background of the Respondent, (2) Views on Programs and Services Offered by the Institution, (3) Further Studies, (4) First Job and Placement, (5) Current Job Placement and Employment, and (6) Suggestions to Improve the Quality of Teaching and Learning in the Institution. As an initiative of UUM, the University Teaching and Learning Center (UTLC) was commissioned to manage, analyze, and tabulate the data.

For the purpose of this paper, the researchers extracted only the data in Part B, "Views on Programs and Services Offered by the Institution" and some demographic background information, namely gender, ethnicity, entry qualification, field of study, and work status. Part B comprised of 32 items that required respondents to answer in a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "not at all satisfactory" (1 point) to "very satisfactory" (5 points). Of the 32 items, 13 were related to Curriculum, 4 on Career and Counseling Services, 10 regarding Teaching Staff, and

5 were on Facilities. These four sub-dimensions make up the overall concept of “program and service satisfaction” of the paper.

Operationally, “curriculum” denoted the structure of the academic and learning experiences provided to students, such as inculcation of positive values. “Career and counseling services” included information and assistance to students, like those related to job and career opportunities. The “teaching staff” sub-dimension had items that described certain competencies of the lecturers at UUM, such as practical and theoretical knowledge. The last sub-dimension, “facilities,” incorporated items related to how respondents viewed the library or lecture rooms, among others.

Statistical Analysis

The data obtained were treated statistically. The descriptive tools used were frequency counts, percentages, and means. Inferential analyses were done using t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), set at 0.05 significance level.

The descriptive statistics were utilized to ascertain graduates’ views on their satisfaction on curriculum, career and counseling services, teaching staff, and facilities at UUM. The analyses anchored primarily on the mean scores, and results were interpreted as better satisfied graduates with higher mean scores.

The inferential component dealt with any significant differences in the respondents’ satisfaction when the respondents were grouped by gender, ethnicity, entry qualification, field of study, and work status.

Findings

Satisfaction as a Whole Group

When the overall satisfaction of respondents across four areas of programs and services was determined, the findings showed that Facilities (mean = 3.70) was rated the highest, closely followed as the second choice by Curriculum (mean = 3.40) and Teaching Staff (mean = 3.40). Career and Counseling Services (mean = 2.80) obtained the lowest rating. Table 1 summarizes the data.

Across program and service components, specifically on Facilities, “library” (mean = 4.20) showed the highest level of satisfaction, followed

Table 1: Satisfaction of Graduates as a Whole Group

Program and Service Areas	Mean (Max. = 5.00)
1. Curriculum (3.40)	
a. Program undergone prepares you for the working load	3.20
b. Theoretical component	3.50
c. Practical training	3.10
d. Industrial attachment program/practicum	3.40
e. Computer course	3.00
f. English language course	3.20
g. Inculcation of positive values	3.70
h. Skills/knowledge acquired	3.60
i. Scheduling of lectures	3.40
j. Evaluation system	3.40
k. Marking scheme of assignments and examinations	3.40
l. Assignments included in the evaluation	3.50
m. Co-curriculum activities	3.60
2. Career and Counseling Services (2.80)	
a. Information on job and career opportunities	3.00
b. Information on further studies	3.00
c. Assistance on interviewing skills	2.80
d. Assistance to obtain jobs	2.60
3. Teaching Staff (3.40)	
a. Practical knowledge	3.40
b. Theoretical knowledge	3.70
c. Interaction with students	3.40
d. Innovation/creativity in teaching	3.30
e. Knowledge on current practices in the industry	3.30
f. Up-to-date knowledge on current issues	3.50
g. Delivery skills	3.50
h. Qualifications	3.80
i. R & D activities	3.20
j. Tutor to students ratio	2.90
4. Facilities (3.70)	
a. Library	4.20
b. Laboratory	3.50
c. Lecture room	3.80
d. Size of tutorial room	3.40
e. Sports facilities	3.70

by “lecture room” (mean = 3.80), “sports facilities” (mean = 3.70), “laboratory” (mean = 3.50), and “size of tutorial room” (mean = 3.40).

The Curriculum part seemed to be well accepted also by the respondents, with mean scores that ranged from 3.00 to 3.70. The curricular aspect that had the highest level of graduates’ satisfaction was “inculcation of positive values” (mean = 3.70), while the lowest assessment was on “computer course” (mean = 3.00).

Generally, Teaching Staff was also seen as a strong component of the programs and services at UUM, with mean scores between 2.90 and 3.80. Looking at the specific items, “qualifications” (mean = 3.80) obtained the highest rating. Slightly lower than the midpoint value of 3.00 was the “tutor to students ration,” which had a mean score of 2.90.

In terms of Career and Counseling Services, “assistance to obtain jobs” (mean = 2.60) was rated poorly compared to other items. “Information on job and career opportunities” (mean = 3.00) and “information on further studies” (mean = 3.00) were viewed favorably by the respondents.

Satisfaction by Gender

Of the four sub-dimensions of “program and service satisfaction,” the data in Table 2 showed that Career and Counseling Services obtained a mean score (male = 2.77, female = 2.85) lower than the midpoint of 3.00. This indicated that this component was viewed as “less satisfactory” by the respondents grouped by gender. The rest of the sub-dimensions were relatively satisfactory, as supported by the mean scores that ranged from 3.39 to 3.79.

Table 2: Satisfaction of Graduates by Gender

Program and Service Areas	Male	Female	t	df	2-tailed Sig.
Curriculum	3.37	3.39	-0.98	1814	0.325
Career and Counseling Services	2.77	2.85	-2.03	2117	0.043*
Teaching Staff	3.39	3.39	-0.20	2072	0.840
Facilities	3.79	3.69	2.86	2093	0.004**

* Significant at 0.05 significance level ($p < 0.05$).

** Significant at 0.01 significance level ($p < 0.01$).

Comparing the mean scores by gender, significant differences were noted, specifically in terms of Career and Counseling Services and Facilities. The former sub-dimension was rated significantly more favorable by females, while the latter was thought to be significantly more satisfying by males.

Looking at the details of the questionnaire, the researchers found that, with regard to Career and Counseling Services, the females were more satisfied than their male counterparts in “information on job and career opportunities” and “assistance to obtain jobs.” In terms of Facilities, it was identified that the males were more contented than the females as regards “lecture room” and “sports facilities.”

Satisfaction by Ethnicity

The respondents, when grouped by ethnicity, rated their “program and service satisfaction” between 2.54 and 3.89. Specifically, of the four sub-dimensions, Career and Counseling Services was consistently viewed as “less satisfactory” by the respondents grouped by ethnicity. The mean scores ranged from 2.54 to 2.87 only, lower than the midpoint of 3.00.

When the questionnaire was examined in detail, the researchers found that all the items related to Career and Counseling Services were viewed less satisfactory by the graduates grouped by ethnicity. These items included information on job and career opportunities as well as further studies, and assistance on interviewing skills and in obtaining jobs. The data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Satisfaction of Graduates by Ethnicity

Program and Service Areas	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Others	F	df	2-tailed Sig.
Curriculum	3.42	3.10	3.47	3.37	24.10	1815	0.000**
Career and Counseling Services	2.87	2.54	2.72	2.83	12.09	2118	0.000**
Teaching Staff	3.43	3.06	3.43	3.45	30.45	2073	0.000**
Facilities	3.74	3.49	3.77	3.89	9.22	2094	0.000**

** Significant at 0.01 significance level ($p < 0.01$).

The mean scores in all the sub-dimensions significantly differed ($p < 0.01$) across ethnic groups, indicating their varied opinions of the programs and services. In terms of Curriculum, the Indians (mean = 3.47) gave the most favorable rating. The Malays (mean = 2.87) gave the highest rating for Career and Counseling Services in UUM. Teaching staff (mean = 3.45) and Facilities (mean = 3.89) were assessed highly favorably by those in the “Others” category.

Satisfaction by Entry Qualification

As shown in Table 4, significant differences occurred in the respondents’ views on Curriculum, Career and Counseling Services, Teaching Staff, and Facilities at UUM. Apparently, these differences indicated that graduates had various perceptions on how these program and service areas were provided and carried out.

Table 4: Satisfaction of Graduates by Entry Qualification

Entry Qualification	Program and Service Areas			
	Curriculum	Career and Counseling Services	Teaching Staff	Facilities
SPM	3.41	2.86	3.42	3.89
STPM	3.27	2.67	3.29	3.67
Diploma	3.38	2.76	3.38	3.69
Matriculation	3.49	3.00	3.49	3.77
Certificate	3.25	2.55	3.31	3.56
Others	3.13	2.50	3.20	3.48
F	15.73	17.53	11.86	3.45
df	1813	2115	2070	2091
2-tailed Sig.	0.000**	0.000**	0.000**	0.004**

** Significant at 0.01 significance level ($p < 0.01$).

Looking at the mean scores (maximum = 5.00) across program and service areas, Career and Counseling Services component obtained a consistently lower assessment compared to other areas. Except for those with Matriculation (mean = 3.00) entry qualification, the respondents with other qualifications generally rated between “less satisfactory” and “satisfactory” the Career and Counseling Services at UUM. When the researchers examined what aspects of this component were rated low,

the finding showed weak “assistance on interviewing skills” and “assistance to obtain jobs.”

Those with Matriculation also expressed favorable views on Curriculum (mean = 3.49) and Teaching Staff (mean = .349), while those with SPM (mean = 3.89) rated positively Facilities.

Satisfaction by Field of Study

Across fields of study, Table 5 reflected that generally, the respondents viewed the program and service components between “satisfactory” and “very satisfactory”.

Table 5: Satisfaction of Graduates by Field of Study

Field of Study	Program and Service Areas			
	Curriculum	Career and Counseling Services	Teaching Staff	Facilities
Finance and Banking	3.40	2.93	3.43	3.68
Human Resource Management	3.34	2.69	3.32	3.70
Information System	3.56	2.93	3.46	3.85
Economics	3.05	2.55	3.14	3.54
Education	3.51	3.04	3.49	3.76
Business Administration	3.33	2.76	3.40	3.76
International Relations and Diplomacy	3.30	2.59	3.42	3.89
Tourism	3.26	2.81	3.40	3.72
Arts and Social Sciences	3.27	2.51	3.27	3.78
F	11.89	9.19	6.84	3.58
df	1815	2118	2073	20.94
2-tailed Sig.	0.000**	0.000**	0.000**	0.004**

** Significant at 0.01 significance level ($p < 0.01$).

Specifically, in terms of Curriculum, those majoring in Information System (mean = 3.56) expressed the highest level of satisfaction.

The findings also revealed that those in the Education program viewed most favorably Career and Counseling Services (mean = 3.04)

and Teaching Staff (mean = 3.49). Graduates specializing in International Relations and Diplomacy (mean = 3.89) were most satisfied with Facilities.

Moreover, the data showed that of the four program and service areas, Career and Counseling Services had the lowest rating, with mean scores ranging from 2.51 to 3.04. Low levels of satisfaction were expressed by those majoring in Arts and Social Sciences (mean = 2.51), Economics (mean = 2.55), and International Relations and Diplomacy (mean = 2.59).

When the researchers attempted to determine which specific items were assessed poorly, they found that “assistance to obtain jobs” and “assistance on interviewing skills” were the two aspects of Career and Counseling Services where respondents showed low satisfaction.

Satisfaction by Work Status

Whether or not satisfaction in programs and services offered by UUM would vary significantly by work status was also examined.

Looking at the mean scores of those working, it can be seen in Table 6 that Teaching Staff (mean = 3.41) was rated the highest, very closely followed by Curriculum (mean = 3.40), then Facilities (mean = 3.72). The lowest mean score was in Career and Counseling Services (mean = 2.90).

For those not working, Facilities (mean = 3.71) was perceived to be the most satisfying component, followed by Curriculum and Teaching Staff, as supported by a similar mean score of 3.38 for each. Career and Counseling Services (mean = 2.90) had the lowest rating (mean score = 2.77).

Table 6: Satisfaction of Graduates by Work Status

Program and Service Areas	Working	Not Working	t	df	2-tailed Sig.
Curriculum	3.40	3.38	0.91	1805	0.363
Career and Counseling Services	2.90	2.77	3.66	2105	0.000**
Teaching Staff	3.41	3.38	1.55	2063	0.121
Facilities	3.72	3.71	0.36	2084	0.722

** Significant at 0.01 significance level ($p < 0.01$).

Comparing all the mean scores, a significant difference is observed in the views of graduates when grouped by work status in terms of Career and Counseling Services, with those working being more satisfied than those who were not engaged in work.

Discussion and Implications

The findings on Universiti Utara Malaysia's programs and services disclosed both interesting and challenging results that need careful attention. Specifically, the research attempted to ascertain the satisfaction in programs and services among graduates of a certain academic session in terms of the (a) curriculum, (b) career and counseling services, (c) teaching staff, and (d) facilities at UUM.

One of the results that need to be highlighted deals with program and service satisfaction of the respondents when grouped according to certain demographic characteristics. For instance, it was found that females were more positive about the Career and Counseling Services at UUM compared to their male counterparts. This finding supports Akubukwe (1998), who also noted gender to be related to university students' perceptions and expectations toward counseling programs. It might be rationalized, as Jones (1990) puts it, that career assessment and counseling services are intended for self-awareness development. In the practical context of the present research, females were significantly more satisfied than males with regard to information on job and career opportunities and assistance to secure jobs. These were the areas of Career and Counseling Services in the university which the females felt had benefited from. Perhaps, this component subsequently helped the female respondents to land decent jobs faster and thus engage in gainful employment. Consequently, this led to higher levels of satisfaction among the graduates, in particular the females. On the other hand, the males reported higher satisfaction than the females in terms of Facilities, specifically with regard to lecture rooms and sports facilities. These components of facilities may be subsumed under a more general construct called "university environmental characteristics and services" (Karemera, Reuben, & Sillah, 2003), which, according to Graham and Gisi (2000), interact to yield greatest satisfaction and performance.

The significant differences in all sub-components of program and service satisfaction among respondents classified by ethnicity, entry qualification, and field of study implied tailored curricula, responsive career

and counseling services, reflective teaching, and state-of-the-art facilities. More aggressive and client-focused career and counseling activities and programs need to be instituted. Special emphasis should be directed to job-seeking initiatives, including opportunity hunting and interviewing skill acquisition, among others. For university counseling services to be more useful to the students, Akubukwe (1998) clearly suggests that university counselors should take into consideration the students' gender, ethnicity, age, family background, and parents' education while offering services to the students. However, since family background and parents' education were not examined in the present investigation of UUM graduates, these might be potential variables to be explored for future research implications.

Another convincing evidence that supports for aggressive and relevant career and counseling services was the finding on satisfaction of graduates grouped by work status. As disclosed, those who were working indicated significantly higher satisfaction than those who were not. Although the researchers are cautious of any conclusive statements regarding the relationship of finding jobs and university career and counseling services, the results of the research seem to suggest that these services may have some bearing on each other. This could be so, because the questionnaire on career and counseling services included items that required respondents to assess how the university had extended assistance on them in terms of "information on job and career opportunities" and "assistance to obtain jobs." In other words, those who were working may have attributed their landing of jobs to the quality of career and counseling services at UUM, thus, boosting their satisfaction in this component. Although other respondents were not working, they nevertheless expressed relatively satisfactory assessment of the other areas of programs and services at UUM, namely Facilities, Curriculum, and Teaching Staff. It was only in Career and Counseling Services where respondents expressed less satisfaction.

Refocusing on the other perspective, the findings also implied that efforts should be instituted to maintain and better still, nurture the strong points or areas, such as Facilities, Curriculum, and Teaching Staff. An excellent component of Facilities, on the overall scale, was the university library. Unarguably, this is a critical aspect of the teaching-learning processes and thus, needs consistent efforts so that the library meets to expectations of the university's primary clients – the students. In addition, the "inculcation of positive values" revealed that aspect of programs and services (Curriculum) where the respondents had the highest levels of satisfaction. This attests to the importance of strengthening desirable

values that could be utilized in the work environment or might be useful on a personal basis. It is interesting to note that the respondents rated “values development” as an outstanding area of UUM’s curriculum because it highlights the university’s commitment towards humanistic curricula that emphasizes not only intellectual enhancement but also emotional growth.

With regard to Teaching Staff, “qualifications” came out as the most satisfying aspect of the academic personnel at UUM, implying that they had impressive credentials as perceived by the respondents. As Westermann et al. (2002) pointed out, instructors’ competence in conveying knowledge was the most important factor in student satisfaction with a class.

Just like any other higher educational institutions, UUM has the mission of, as paraphrased from Selvaratnam (1989), preparing students to meet society’s high-level manpower needs and performing useful service to the state of Kedah Darul Aman through research, teaching, and other related activities. The present investigation of UUM graduates’ satisfaction on the university’s programs and services was a modest attempt to examine which academic and non-academic components needed to be improved, as well as in identifying which aspects had to be maintained.

Obtaining empirical data on how satisfied the students were with curricula, career and counseling services, teaching staff, and facilities at UUM would indicate how the students have gained from their three years or so of hard labor while mustering knowledge, skills, and values in the university. Research-based information would also serve as a springboard for the university personnel at all levels to modify and reinforce their approaches and strategies in their pedagogical responsibilities, guidance and counseling efforts, and student development activities, among others.

With the state government’s vision of *Kedah Maju 2010* (Kedah a developed state), UUM has interwoven roles of educating the youth and uplifting the socio-economic and cultural conditions of the State of Kedah Darul Aman. These interconnected roles imply that UUM works more closely and dynamically with the State Government in numerous programs such as consultancies, researches, community outreach projects, and publications, to name a few. Specific areas of concern may include business and management, entrepreneurship and innovation, information and technology development, human and technical resources management, work and social behavior studies, and allied or related endeavors. The university has a pool of experts in wide scopes of

disciplines and thus, UUM, by all means, could complement the State's initiatives of bringing the populace to greater heights and take the lead in educational pursuits.

With UUM's goal of becoming a world-class university, support from and networking with the State Government is indispensable. On academic matters, the University Teaching and Learning Center (UTLC) will always lend support and initiatives in spearheading instructional development programs.

Hopefully, the present research has established a baseline and an impetus for future attempts to strengthen the programs and services of the university.

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