ABSTRACT

Higher education has attempted to define its student population using metaphors over the past decades (Hoffman & Kretovics, 2004). This has inevitably given rise to multiple metaphors of which three are more frequently used - “the student-as-product” (Emery et al., 2001; Srivanci, 1996); “the student-as-customer” (Comesky, Mc Cool, Byrnes, & Weber, 1992; Emery, Kramer, & Tian, 2001; Pitman, 2000; Tovote, 2001); and “the student-as-employee” (Halbesleben, Becker, & Buckley, 2003; Helms & Key, 1994). Although it seems logical to employ multiple metaphors simultaneously given the diverse nature of higher education in general (Hoffman & Kretovics, 2004), this paper aims to (i) examine the appropriateness of adopting “the student-as-customer” ideology within the Malaysian context; and (ii) propose the “student-as-partner” metaphor as more relevant alternative in defining the interaction between students and Malaysian public institutions of higher learning.