Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences, 9(27) August 2015, Pages: 152-156

ISSN:1991-8178

Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences

Journal home page: www.ajbasweb.com

The Innovation And Transformation Of General Education In Malaysia: The Experience Of The Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

[1]Nazri Muslim, [2]Wan Zulkifli Wan Hassan, [3]Mohd Arip Kasmo and [4]Ahmad Zulhakimi Hassim

[1]Center of CITRA, National University of Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia.
[2]Center of CITRA, National University of Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia
[3]Center of CITRA, National University of Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia
[4]Institute of Ethnic Studies, National University of Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 23 June 2015
Accepted 25 August 2015
Available online 2 September 2015

Keywords:
General Education, Innovation, Transformation, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

The General Education in the UKM began simultaneously with the founding of the UKM in 1970 with the introduction of the Science History course which then changed its name to General Science course and after that, Malaysian Citizenship course. Since 1982, Malaysian Citizenship course had changed name to Islamic Civilization and Asian Civilization course. General Education at the time, was aiming to produce students with high Personality, have a broad knowledge and which was complimentary. The courses in General Education were made compulsory for undergraduate students from all Faculties. Between the year 1998 and 2011, General Studies courses were categorised into three main categories namely U1 – Appreciating Noble Values and History; U2 – Thinking Skills, Communicating and Organising; U3 – The Broadening of Knowledge. The total number of categories U2 dan U3 in particular has increased from year to year. However, upon the restructuring of the general study courses in 2011, which is with the exponential growth in the world of employability among fresh graduates from higher learning institutions, the General Education practised at the UKM should be transformed and innovated to the Citra Education. Citra Education is a broader and more sustainable learning approach than General Studies. Thus, Citra Education refers to the fact that students not only specialise in a particular field of study, but they also have a broader knowledge and aiming to aid students to expand their knowledge beyond the area of expertise especially science, technology and sustainability, building competence and social, intellectual and practical skills in their daily lives. Thus, this article will discuss the transformation and innovation in the restructuring of General Education in Malaysia particularly in UKM.

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To Cite This Article: Nazri Muslim, Wan Zulkifli Wan Hassan, Mohd Arip Kasmo and Ahmad Zulhakimi Hassim., The Innovation And Transformation Of General Education In Malaysia: The Experience Of The Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. ***Aust. J. Basic & Appl. Sci.,*** *9(27): 152-156, 2015*

INTRODUCTION

General Studies at the UKM has been administered since 1982 aiming to create a generation of students who have the Personality, have broad knowledge and is characteristically complimentary. Courses in General Studies are taken by all undergraduates from all faculties. Between the year 1998 and 2011, courses under General Studies were categorised into three main categories: U1 – Appreciating Noble Values and History; U2 – Thinking Skills, Communicating and Organising; U3 – The Broadening of Knowledge. The total number of categories U2 dan U3 in particular has increased from year to year. However, the restructuring of General Study courses was carried out in 2011, courses U2 and U3 were still offered to students from the earlier intake (before the 2010-2011 session). From the students of the 2011 intake and above, General Studies courses only comprise of three compulsory courses at the university such as Islamic Civilization and Asian Civilization (TITAS), Ethnic Relations (HE) and Self-development (PD) (kindly refer to table 1.0). These courses were taken by all undergraduate students from various faculties as general courses that they have to take collectively. Although the offering of these courses has put forth the element of General Studies which is collectivety, the total number of courses categorised in the general courses have lessened. General Studies as it is today, may yet to fulfil the overall function as courses that are complimentary, building Personality and broadening as to fulfil the field of expertise of these undergraduates.

Corresponding Author: Nazri Muslim, Center of CITRA, National University of Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia.

Table 1: The Structure Of Offering Of General Studies Current Courses (Since 1st Semester, 2011-2012 Session)

Year	Semester I	Semester II	Semester III	Total Credit Hours	Faculty
1	Self-Development ZZZT1054 (Part I) – 2 Credit (SM)*	Self-Development ZZZT1054 (Part II) – 2 Credit (Grade)		4	All faculties except Faculty of Medicine (Medical Doctorate Program)
		Basic Courses in Entrepreneurship and Innovation - 2 Credit		2	All faculties
2	Islamic Civilization and Asian Civilization (TITAS) ZZZT2163 (FTSM, FEP, FKAB, FSSK, FPER, FGG)	Ethnic Relations ZZZT2173 (FTSM, FEP, FKAB, FSSK, FPER, FGG)		3	All faculties
	Ethnic Relations ZZZT2173, FPEND, FUU, FST, FSKB, FFAR)	Islamic Civilization and Asian Civilization (TITAS) ZZZT2163 (FPI, FPEND, FUU, FST, FSKB, FFAR)		3	

The Rationale For Restructuring Citra Education:

With the exponential growth of the employability of the students fresh from the higher learning institutions, General Studies practised currently at the UKM should undergo some alteration and be upgraded to the liberal education. In the Mandate given by the Minister of Higher Learning early 2012, the Ministry has suggested that the Public Higher Learning Institutions give specific attention to Liberal and Multi-Disciplinary Education in all the study programs. At the same time, the stakeholders (employers and the industry) have given the feedback that the marketability of fresh graduates really depends on the communicative, thinking and leadership skills other tan having the knowledge in their respective areas of expertise. This is also raised by the Deputy Prime Minister during the launching of the National Education Dialogue at UKM (2012) where he suggested that the national education system must be re-evaluated to increase the country's ability to compete at the international level.

Citra Education is a learning approach that is broader and more sustainable than General Studies. The term 'citra' carries the meaning of 'loose', 'independent' or 'broad' – giving the picture that knowledge is not something that is rigid, trivial and non-dynamic. Therefore, Liberal Education is interpreted as students who not only specialise in certain areas but they also have a broad scope of knowledge. Citra Education means General Education which carries the element of sustainability and broad knowledge also the acquisition of competency or skills that are multifarious, which will form the students' personality and appearance as a whole. In other words, Citra Education seeks to help students broaden their knowledge beyond their fields of expertise, build competence and social, intellectual and practical skills in their daily affairs.

It is hoped that the upgrading of General Studies to Citra Education will be able to assist the university to mould students to have more credibility, to have a better personality and wide-ranging knowledge to cater for the requirements of the marketability of the students and the wellbeing of the society at large.

The Justifications For Introducing Pendidikan Citra:

The upgrading of the field of 'General Studies' to Citra Education of National University of Malaysia (UKM) is based on the following justifications:

The upgrading of the field of 'General Studies' to Citra Education of UKM is at par with the recommendation of the Higher Learning Ministry about the importance of the provider of the higher learning education in this country, gives specific attention to the Liberal and Multi-disciplinary Education in all programs of study. The University Management Meeting (MPU) No. 7, 2012 dated 3 April 2012 has made the decision that a Special Committee is set up to revise the field of 'General Studies' offered in UKM. The Head Committee of the Liberal-Citra Education Consolidation UKM was founded on 18 October 2012 chaired by YBhg Prof. Datuk Dr. Noor Azlan Ghazali, who at the time was the Assistant Deputy to Chancellor (HEAA). The members of the committee comprise of all Deans of the Faculty; and the Directors of PPU, PPA, PAP and CESMED. Thus, since the end of October 2012 a Secretariat Team from the Center of the General Studies (PPU) was formed to help the Head Committee of the Liberal-Citra Education Consolidation UKM to carry out consolidation work and the restructuring of Citra Education of UKM.

- To fulfil the recommendation of the National Higher Learning Strategic Plan through the

national aspirations and the National Education Philosophy (article 1.02):

Parallel with the second core of the National Mission, the country has to produce human capital that has the first-class mindset to face the challenges of national development that leans on knowledge and innovation. The human capital that is to be developed must have the knowledge, skills and outstanding personal characteristics. In line with the goals of the development of human capital intended, the National Higher Learning Strategic Plan is formulated with the vision to transform higher learning in the context of making Malaysia a hub of excellence among international higher learning institutes. This transformation serves as the foundation towards excellence and sustainability as we approach the year 2020.

- To fulfil the intention of the stakeholders so that the university can produce graduates with broad knowledge other than having the expertise in certain fields and possessing human skills. Citra Education of UKM will cater to the market demand which necessitates a labour force that has all the characteristics aforementioned.
- To create a human capital that has the capacity to dominate and apply human skills to face various challenges in the society in which they live, including enhancing their sense of creativity and innovation.
- The current university's undergraduate curriculum requires an improvement to the university's delivery system. Therefore, the framework of the offering of Citra Education of UKM is proposed to be able to produce quality graduates to fulfil the current requirements of the society and the demands of the stakeholders as they have stated in a series of engagements that have been carried out.
- To produce students who have the UKM identity, through the approach of *shaping the mind*, and *building the character* based on the learning and appreciating Citra Education of UKM.

The Concept of Citra Education of Ukm:

The concept of Citra Education of UKM is a kind of education that is broad and which crosses various disciplines of knowledge. Such an approach is to allow the students from various backgrounds of fields of expertise to learn and get to know other branches of knowledge. The exposure to this expansion of knowledge is useful to ensure that UKM graduates have their own areas of expertise and at the same time, have broader knowledge and also possess related competency-skills. For instance, students can learn the many aspects of entrepreneurship and also learn entrepreneurial skills through the activities that are carried out. In order to see just how far would be the expansion of knowledge intended, the Work Committee of Pendidikan Citra has undertaken a study to analyse the concept and practice of liberal education in 22 universities domestically and internationally. The study was done online. The committee members had also paid a visit to all faculties, workshops with UKM students and lecturers, surveys on-site and online also a series of engagements with the stakeholders including students, alumni, lecturers, NGOs, corporate bodies, government agencies, teachers and parents. From these comprehensive research and discussions, a total of 8 domains of Pendidikan Citra have been identified. These eight domains of learning are able to explain the scope of knowledge that has been mentioned earlier such as (1) Domains of Ethics, Value and Moral,(2) Language, Communication and Literacy, (3) Quantitative and Qualitative Reasoning (4) Civilization, Religion and Culture, (5) Science, Technology & Sustainability, (6) Leadership, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, (7) Citizenship and National Identity, (8) Family, Health & Lifestyle.

As the outcome of the presentation and proposal put forth in the University Management Meeting (MPU) no. 1/2014 dated 21 January 2014, eight original domains of Pendidikan Citra UKM were revised into six domains. Three domains that have been combined are the Domains of Ethics, Values and Personality, Civilization, Religion and Culture and the Domain of Citizenship and National Integrity have become Ethics, Citizenship and Civilization. In the same meeting, the Work Committee of Citra Education of UKM was established to plan and carry out Citra Education of UKM that was expected to commence in the semester of 2014-2015.

The Six Domains of Citra Education of UKM are seen to be inter-related. The Domains of Ethics, Citizenship and Civilization are some fundamental domains that have become the main core in Pendidikan Citra UKM. Students need to be given adequate exposure on the aspects of values, integrity, citizenship and civilization that will create a strong personality within them. The domains of Language, Communication and Literacy, Leadership, Entrepreneurship and Innovation also Quantitative and Qualitative Reasoning are students' learning domains to enable them to acquire knowledge and basic skill-competency very much required in developing human civilization. Domains of Family, Health & Lifestyle also Science, Technology & Sustainability have given the students the chance to acquire the knowledge and skills in aspects of family life applications, living in the society and they raise students' awareness on the contributions of Science and technology in human civilization sustainability. This justifies why Pendidikan Citra actually leads the students towards a comprehensive learning aspects and which adopts the approach of *shaping the mind, building the character* in students, in the courses and also after graduating. Indirectly speaking, Pendidikan

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Citra has been able to form self-identity or the branding of respectable UKM students.

The Aim of Citra Education of Ukm:
General Objectives:

Assisting the university to produce graduates who have the personality that can further represent the notion of 'Citra UKM,' and have a national integrity and dominating the human skills that can fulfil the current and future needs.

Specific Aims and Objectives:

i. To ensure that the graduates obtain a holistic basis of education so that they can be independent and adaptable to the consistently changing environment.
ii. To produce graduates who are competent, competitive, have the endurance and can fulfil the criteria of the job market.
iii. To produce graduates who are able to become global citizens, who are able to work in groups and have the cross-cultural communicative skills.
iv. To produce graduates who not only have the knowledge in their fields of expertise, but also the knowledge in other fields that can give some added values to their self-development and career paths.
v. To produce graduates who are ethical and have the integrity as a human, worker and citizen.

Citra's Education Structure:

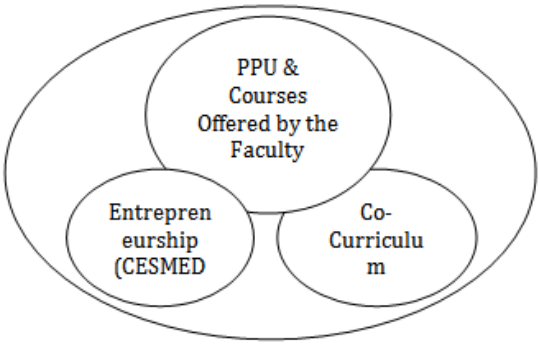

Diagram 1: The Structure of Citra Education of UKM

Diagram 1 illustrates the structure of Citra Education of UKM supported by three Centre of Responsibility which are Centre for General Studies (PPU), Centre for Learning Accreditation (PAP) also Centre for Entrepreneurship (CESMED). PPU will handle and monitor the offering of Citra courses from the faculties to five domains of Citra UKM namely Ethics, Civilization and Nationhood, Communicative Language & Literacy, Quantitative & Qualitative Reasoning, Technology Science & Sustainability and Family, Health & Lifestyle. The courses offered are in the form of the domination of theory and knowledge. Meanwhile, the PAP concentrates on the application of the *Domain Citra UKM* in the form of activities, Learning Contract and the co-curriculum. The achievement of the domains of Leadership, Entrepreneurship and Innovation will be implemented by CESMED through Entrepreneurship courses and activities. With the introduction of Pendidikan Citra UKM it is anticipated that it will help students broaden their knowledge outside their fields of expertise, and allow them to seize the opportunity to interact with other students from various faculties in UKM.

The Proposed Implementation Of The Total Credit Hours Of Citra Education Ukm:

It is recommended that for non-professional programs, the total credit hours offered by Citra Education of UKM are 40 Credits and for professional programs, the total are 30 Credits. This total Credit is contributed by courses that have been suggested by the PPU and the faculty with the endorsement from the Work Committee of Citra Education *UKM*. The details of the implementation of the total Credit of Citra Education of UKM shall be discussed by the Work Committee of Citra Education of UKM in a series of discussions and workshops that are going to be organised.

Pendidikan Citra's Method of Teaching and Learning:

Courses under Citra Education of UKM contained in six domains of Citra UKM offered in all semesters (long and short semesters) adhere to the academic plan outlined for Bachelor Degree program at the UKM. These Citra Education of UKM courses are administered using the student-oriented learning through:

i. Lectures and Tutorial
ii. Problem-based Learning
iii. Learning contract based on courses and/or Learning contract based on project/activity/services.
iv. Learning experience
v. Seminar/ Discourse
vi. Workshop/Courses
vii. *Blended Learning*
viii. *Service Learning*

Conclusion:

It is hoped that the restructuring of the Citra courses proposed is able to improve the university's delivery system in equipping students with proper education, as to produce students with good personality, that can well represent Citra UKM and have a national integrity through the expansion of their knowledge and mastery of human skills-competence as to fulfil both current and future needs.

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