

Students' Perception towards the Management of Islamic Business and Economics Undergraduate Programs in Malaysian Public Universities: An Exploratory Study¹

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Abstract

Program management in Islamic-based Higher Education Providers (HEPs) is designed to produce an outstanding human capital, which is at last can serve their obedience to Allah SWT, ummah and the environment. These are among the main aims of Islamic-based HEP, which are aligned with the university vision and mission. The ability to produce excellent Muslim generations is closely influenced by curriculum and co-curriculum design, teaching and learning methods as well as lecturers' knowledge. Despites the demand on various new teaching and learning methods (such as students centered learning - SCL) the viewpoint of students' satisfaction should also been considered. It is important to look at this perspective since they are the main explicit stakeholders and directly exposed to various teaching and learning experiences. This paper aims to explore on the perception of final year students from business and economic programs in two aspects; (i) curriculum and (ii) co-curriculum practices. This study takes the sample from two Islamic-based higher education institutions that implement Islamic education. The method of this study is the adapted Profile Accumulation Technique (PAT) introduced by Johns and Lee-Ross to capture an in-depth information. Generally, this study shows that there are positive responds on teaching methods, academic integrity and benefits of curricular activities in HEPs.

Keywords : program management, Islamic-based HEPs, students' perception, Islamic finance

INTRODUCTION

¹ The earlier draft of the paper has been presented at the Workshop on Islamic Finance Education Hub (2012), organized by Higher Education Department, Ministry of Higher Education. Thank you for inputs and comments from the participants, with special thanks to Professor Dr Norhayati Ahmad, Professor Dr Abdul Ghafar Ismail and Mr Mohd Willieuddin Lim Johan Lim for the constructive comments.

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The Islamic finance and banking sectors are expanding year by year; with the global asset value global reached at USD1 trillion in 2011 and the estimated annual growth at 19 percent a year (Ahmad, 2012). The rapid market growth and business demand far outpaced the manpower supply, thus suggest more manpower to operate in the Islamic based banking and financing industry. A successful Islamic banking system would be established with a supportive on legal framework, talented and knowledgeable labour with strong ethical values and uniform Islamic accounting standards. However, it is not an overnight job to produce technically competent and knowledgeable manpower in Islamic Finance industry. It has to be done intensively by the support from the HEPs as well as the input from industry on their curriculum and co-curriculum designs to avoid mismatch among the supply of manpower by the HEPs and the expectation or demand by the industry.

Currently there are quite numbers of public or private higher institutions that offer the Islamic banking and finance program. These institutions are divided into two categories; (i) integrated Islamic-based higher education provider, and (ii) standard educational framework providers. The integrated Islamic education is formed based on religious objectives. Their curriculum is formulated using the Islamic essence holistically from the core university courses. Programs that offer bachelor degree are listed in Table 1.

In addition, courses for certificate, diploma level are also been offered by several private institution namely Kolej Universiti Islam Selangor, Kolej Universiti Insaniah, Lim Kok Wing University, Taylors University and Politeknik Ungku Omar.

Table 1: Islamic Banking and Finance Degree Programs Offered in HEPs

Types of Bachelor Degree Programs	Universities
Islamic Finance and Banking (Stand Alone) Program	Universiti Utara Malaysia Universiti Malaysia Sabah
Business Management + Islamic Finance program	Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin Universiti Teknologi Mara
Muamalat Administration + Islamic Finance program	Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia Universiti Utara Malaysia Universiti Malaya
Syariah/ Law + Islamic Finance program	Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Source: Adapted from Ahmad et. al. (2012)

This paper is related to the effectiveness of the program and indirectly related to whether the university has already achieved the objective of its establishment on the introduction of Islamic education system based. Despite the high demand on various current teaching and learning techniques (such as students centered learning - SCL) from the Islamic-based HEPs, the viewpoint of students' satisfaction should also been considered. These factors are important since they are the main explicit stakeholders and are directly exposed to different teaching and learning experiences. In other words, this paper aims to explore the perception of final year students in those programs in two aspects; (i) curriculum and (ii) co-curriculum practices. This study will extend the knowledge in education and Islamization³ areas with the support from empirical research since most of the literatures on this area focused on Islamic economics and finance. Additionally, this study will contribute to the improvement of services provided by the Islamic-based HEPs. From this comparison, model on the best practices of the Islamic-based HEPs can be drawn to assist educationists and other similar education providers in developing the syllabus that can fit with Islam, Malaysian education philosophy and students' expectation. This study may contribute to assist educationists and other related parties that aim to pursue for Islamic integrated education to improve their services in the future. This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides the review of the relevant literature, and Section 3 describes the model and the methodology employed in the study. Section 4 presents the results and Section 5 concludes the paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education

Education is not a new subject matter in the world. The Arabic words of *tarbiyyah*, *ta'lim* and *ta'dib* are used widely to describe the concept of education. Education is a highly recognized discipline in Islam, in which the first versus conferred to Rasullulah SAW indicates the importance of reading to gain the knowledge. Reading functions as one mechanism to disseminate share and gain the knowledge within a society and civilization. Other related versus also signifies the same aim of gaining knowledge, with the different approaches.

³ The Islamic revivalism movement and Islamization are assumed to have connection with the establishment of the Islamic-based higher education providers. The term of 'Islamic revivalism' is defined as the "cleansing of Islam" and this refers to coming back to the Islamic teachings (Yousif, 2004) and the term Islamization is referred to reassessment of the previous Islamic methodology (in certain matters such as roles of *ijtihad* or private reasoning), and of Western established methodology to comply with the Islamic principles (see for example Arif, 1987).

فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

(Surah An-Nahl:43)

So ask the learned if you do not know

By looking at the meaning of each word that relate to education, there are some differences could be found in term of their usage and discussed among Muslim scholars. The word *tarbiyyah* is referred to nurturing and nourishing, and 'ta'lim', is only referred to the teaching and learning. The acknowledged Malay-Muslim intellectual in the education, Syed Naquib al-Attas, prefers to align the word *ta'dib* with the Islamic education (Al-Attas, 1978).

Education in nowadays Islam should no longer be viewed as to be confined to the religious subjects such as Islamic Law, theology, Quranic exegesis and hadith as practiced within the colonialism, but should be extended to more contemporary subjects similar to practices in the glorious phase of the Islamic civilization. Sidek (2011) in his book laid emphasis on *tajdid* (renewal) of knowledge and education as the ideal model of education. He stressed the importance of the integrative knowledge, consisting of subjects related to religion (referred to knowledge to manage the self /*fard ayn*) and other subjects (referred to knowledge to manage the system/*fard kifayah*), which is part of the tradition of Islamic civilization.

There are two mainstreams in relation to the direction of the education system in Malaysia with each of it has its supporters. The first direction is geared up towards supplying students with skills and knowledge that can enhance chances among students to get job once they graduated from the education institutions. The second direction stressed on the basis of well life balance - in spiritual, intellectual, emotion and physical. The delivery of knowledge from the second perspective is not to pursue for getting the job only (National Higher Education Action Plan 2007 – 2010). These two perspectives are important and concerned by the government. Their importance is manifested and stated in the National Philosophy of Education included in the Education Act 1996, which should be used as the basis in all level of education in Malaysia:

'Education in Malaysia is an ongoing 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 family, the society and the nation at large’.

(Education Act 1996, p. 11)

In line with the National Philosophy of Education and to fulfill the challenges in the economic sector, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has strategized the transformation and formulation of higher education plan. The plan consists of four phases, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Four Phases of National Higher Education Action Plan

Phases	Aspects
Phase 1	Laying the Foundation (2007-2010)
Phase 2	Strengthening and Enhancement (2011-2015)
Phase 3	Excellence (2016-2020)
Phase 4	Glory and Sustainability (beyond 2020)

Source: National Higher Education Action Plan (2007, p. 6)

Studies on Islamic studies graduates in Malaysia

Graduate employability

Graduate employability is an important aspect which has been a continuous concern of the government. The lower rate of graduate employability in Malaysia since 1990s entailed the government to take a step by improving the content of the courses and the delivery approach of the offered subjects. Students skills that should be possessed by students are no longer limited to hard skills (such IT skills), but the inclusion of the soft skills such as communication skill. These are done to increase students’ skills and increase their potential to be employed by the industry. Islamic studies graduates are not exempted. The lower rate of graduate employability in Malaysia is said as also contributed from the Islamic studies graduates, together with other Arts Program. The Ministry of Higher Education conducted Tracer Study every year to identify the level of employment among graduates after six month of finishing their last semester. Alias, Zulkefli and Ahmad (2007) conducted a study on Islamic studies graduate employability in Malaysia. Samples were taken from three public higher universities including UM, UIA and UKM. Their study indicated that hard skills (specific skills) and soft skills (such as communication skills, creative thinking and problem solving) are important to students to increase their employability.

Program offering by the Islamic-based University

There is a different approach of teaching and learning approaches in the Islamic-based HEPs since the Islamic principles is the backbone of the whole learning program. The differences are mainly shown in their several aspects such as their program structure (that consist of specific subjects) and courses' content. Several studies examined the program structure in the selected Islamic-based universities and the improvement that has been done to ensure the competence and marketability of the graduates.

Haneef and Amin (2008) surveyed the program structure in the IIUM as the established institution in Islamic-based education. There are three main parts in IIUM program structure which as the University Required Courses (17 credit hours), *Kulliyah* Required Courses (36 credit hours), Department Required Courses (36 credit hours) and Elective courses (36 credit hours). These courses consist of 6 categories; a) Conventional economics courses (Conv.), b) Courses with some Islamic input/Comparative courses (SI/Comp.), c) Islamic economics courses (IE), d) *Fiqh* courses (F), e) *Usul al-Fiqh* courses (UF), and f) Other Islamic courses (OI). This study however identified some weaknesses in the program structure and the delivery approach. The weaknesses include the failure to provide the balance content of the Islamic and conventional content in the courses.

Ismail, Sulaiman and Maamor (2008) surveyed the development of the Academy of Islamic Studies (under the UM) as one of earliest Islamic-based HEPs in Malaysia and the improvement made consistent with the global changes. Similar with the changes in the education, the improvement has been made adopting the Student Centered Learning in their delivery approach. As the whole, there are three approaches that are currently used and maintained in Academy of Islamic Studies; 1) Problem-based learning, 2) one way and two ways teaching and learning approaches (lecture and tutorial sessions) and 3) industrial training and smart partnership. Kayadibi and Buang (2011) also highlights that people involves in Islamic higher education such as lecturers and researchers should also adapt the good global changes in their working activities. The usage of new technology in teaching and learning process is considered as aspects that should be appreciated.

Studies on standard curriculum

Based on the authors' knowledge not much literature on higher education in Malaysia and worldwide have been directed to study on the Islamic-based HEPs. Lack of literature in the area perhaps is influenced by its distinctive curriculum and the quantity of the Islamic-based HEPs that adopt the embedded approach. There limited but growing numbers of studies conducted on students' perceptions in standard curriculum university. Most

of studies relate the perception of students on several aspects including teaching effectiveness and good academic performance. Mohidin, Jaidi, Sang and Osman (2009) studied on the perception of accounting students on teaching effectiveness in Universiti Malaysia Sabah using two main variables, which are teaching methods and lecturers' characteristic. Their findings shows that all independent variables used in the survey (learning centered approach, knowledge of lecturer, their attitude and personality) do have effect on students' perceptions.

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on 'holistic and integrative model of education' as highlighted by Sidek (2011), due to its uniqueness in the curriculum design. This model is a not a unique model in Islamic traditions in the past since the system has already integrated Islamic knowledge with the existing knowledge. The model assumed that students should be supplied with the contemporary knowledge as well as the spiritual knowledge, or the spiritual and physical aspects. It can be said that, hard skills and soft skills based on the Islamic framework should be embedded in developing the curriculum and co-curriculum design of the program in the way to produce *insan abrar* (the righteous human beings). Students at the end of their study are expected to have strong foundation of the specialized courses as well as having an appreciation towards ethics.

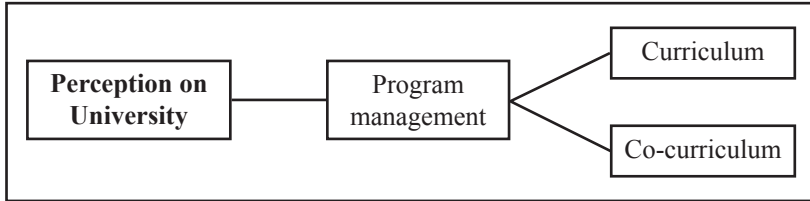
Ismail et al. (2012) in their discussion on the finance education hub criteria, had listed six criteria of education hub based on Ministry of Higher Education Singapore. The six criteria are: (i) management commitment and responsibilities, (ii) corporate governance and administration, (iii) external recruitment, (iv) student protection and support services, (v) academic processes and assessment of students, and (vi) quality assurance monitoring and results. The criteria ideally can be used as indicators for success of the program. Thus, curriculum and co-curriculum design as well as the governance aspects are selected to be included as the bases for the survey (first and fifth criteria).

Taking the model reviewed by Ismail et al. (2012) as a consideration, elements of hard skills and soft skills (curriculum and co-curriculum approaches) offered by the selected universities and other embedded elements are considered to be included in the survey. The framework of this study is illustrated in Diagram 1.

The main themes under students' perception on their Islamic-based HEPs are selected based on the representative indicators for Islamization within universities. These themes are parallel with literature in the public higher

education area that stress on program management themes (such as Mohidin, et al. 2009; Haneef & Amin 2008; Ismail, et al. 2008).

Diagram 1: Theoretical Framework



Source: Adopted from Ismail et al. (2012)

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire is relatively easy and inexpensive to create, analyze and communicate the findings. According to De Vaus (2002), quantitative research is often portrayed as being unimaginative and stereotyped but well suited to providing certain types of factual, descriptive evidence, better known as the hard evidence. In this context, it will be administered to the selective public higher education students which represent the population being investigated. It will include four sections which are: respondent's profile, future contribution (e.g. to local community, Islamic economics and the environment), expectation and perception towards the respective universities. The researchers adapted questions from Profile Accumulation Technique (PAT) introduced by Johns and Lee-Ross (1995; 1997) to gain in depth data. This approach is an open-ended survey question, broad in nature; and is utilized to encourage respondents to answer freely to the given questions. The PAT is used widely in the service experience (Xu and Chan, 2010) and thus suit with this study. Furthermore, since the study aims to gain the perception of students who have different experience regarding their universities, thus this approach is selected to gain as much as information of subjective and personal view (rather than general information). However, minor changes had been made by identifying the variables that will be involved in this study. Standardized questions will be used making measurement more precise to ensure that similar data can be collected from different institutions then interpreted comparatively (between-group study).

Respondents of this study are final year students at their Islamic-based HEPs with age ranged between 20 to 24 years old. 300 questionnaires were distributed to two Islamic-based HEPs (iS1 and iS2) respectively.

The analysis is performed by grouping the keywords of respondents' statements into specific dimensions. The title of the dimensions later will be

identified based on the responses. The importance of each dimension will be appraised accordingly based on their weightage.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Demographic Profile

In general, 510 responses were received representing 85 percent of total respondents. Table 3 presents the response rate from the participated Islamic-based HEPs. Overall, the totals of respondents' rate are over 70 percent, dominated by female respondents for both institutions. In detail, iS2 lead the respondents' numbers, with 98.67 percent comprising 62.88 percent female respondents and the rest are male respondents.

Table 3: Response Rate

University	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total	Response Rate
iS1	48.46	51.54	214	71.33%
iS2	37.12	62.88	296	98.67%
Total			510	85.00%

*The real name of institutions are disguised due to confidentiality of information

Respondents' Perceptions on Programme Management

This paper explores the respondents' perception towards programme management that includes curriculum and co curriculum themes. These themes are created based on students' best answers.

I. Curriculum theme

Regarding on the respondents' best answers, the responses can be divided into three dimensions which are teaching and learning method, academic integrity and curriculum structure.

Table 4: Curriculum Theme

Dimension	Example of Phrase by Respondents
Teaching method	Interesting way, two ways communication, methods, discussion, presentation, bored, sleepy, teaching aids, effective and efficient, learning system and equipment.
Academic integrity	Professionalism, respected, knowledgeable and lecturer teaches good.
Curriculum structure	Schedule and time, long learning period, tutorial class is very full and late to know assignment work, subject not related with field and so many exam.

Table 5: Respondents' Perception on Curriculum Theme

	Positive perceptions*	Negative perceptions*
iS1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lecture is conducted interestingly • Two way communication between the lecturers and student. • Wise and deep explanation, good. • Professionalism, values, attitudes and ethics in high performance. • Lecturers have varieties of method to teach students. They give lecture, discussion and also presentation among students in class. • Through teaching and learning, few lecturers also encourage the student in Islamization topic from a few aspects that are related. • They are well respected internally and externally. They also pretty good. • Knowledgeable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bored and made the student felt sleepy. • Sometimes the equipment of teaching and learning are not functioning well.

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| iS2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfied since lecturer teaches well, easy understand, can discuss anytime. • Satisfied because completed with perfect teaching aids. • No problem with teaching and learning, effectively and efficiency. • Very effective leaning system. • Some lectures practice teaching and learning system, where students and lectures both give their own input and output. • To learn in improving self-confident & enhancing knowledge to become intellectualist. • Academic staffs have enough experience and high knowledge. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm not satisfied because I have to take the subject which do not relate with my field, and learning period at my university longer than other university • Delivery method not really interesting • My learning experience here, ok, but sometimes I think some of the subjects are not supposed to be in the syllabus such as creative thinking and entrepreneurship problem solving, because these subject no need to teach. • Reduce subjects and focus on specialize field. • Quality should be highlighted in comparison to quantity. • Related with cost. • Sometimes not understand. • Tutorial class very full. • Late to know about assignment work. • I am not satisfied with some academics staff since my university is international university, therefore most of the staff/lecturers are foreigners. So their explanation during lecture very unclear because their pronunciations really need subtitles/explanations. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All are competent and reliable. | |

*Original statements from the interview

Respondents' answers are divided into positive and negative perceptions. Interestingly, the numbers of respondents with negative perceptions reflected for iS2 are more than from iS1, which only two negative perceptions. In other words, iS2 receive more negative perception from the student than the iS1 does.

Under the teaching and learning dimension, respondents from iS1 stated positive perceptions through their answer such as: lecture conducted in the interesting way, two ways communication and varieties methods. While respondents from iS2 stated their positive perceptions through answer such as: completed with perfect teaching aids, teaching and learning effective

and efficient, lecturer practice teaching and learning system. In line with the previous finding, the two negative perceptions from iS1 are categorized under teaching and learning dimension. Respondents stated that 'bored and make students sleepy; and equipment of teaching and learning not function well', illustrated their negative perceptions. Even many negative perceptions from iS2, only one respondent stated negative perceptions towards teaching and learning dimensions, where the answer is, 'delivery method not really interesting'.

For second dimension, academic integrity, the authors found that the respondents from iS1 stated only positive perceptions. Their answers' includes professionalism, values, attitudes and ethics in high performance, respected internally and externally and knowledgeable. While respondents from iS2, have both positive and negative perceptions. The positive perceptions from respondents include lecturer teach well, have enough experience and high knowledge, all are competent and reliable. Then, "I did not satisfy with some academics staff since my university is international university, therefore most of the staff/lecturer are foreigner. So their explanation during lecture very unclear because their pronunciations really need subtitles" is the only negative answers from respondents under academic integrity dimension.

Besides, the responses also cover on the curriculum structure dimension. Respondents from iS1 did not state any opinion on this dimension. However, respondents from iS2 only stated their negative perceptions by the statements such as, 'too many exam, short period to cover all courses, need to learn on subject not related to their field, long learning period compare to other universities, some subject no need to be includes in syllabus, reduce subject and focus to the majoring course, and tutorial class very full'.

In general, findings under this dimension show that curriculum elements do have higher impact on students' perception on their universities. The importance of the curriculum activities is also supported by the previous study such as Mohidin et al. (2009).

II. Co-curriculum theme

Respondents' answers for co-curriculum theme are divided to four dimensions which are skill, experience, networking and implementation.

Table 6: Co-curriculum Theme

Dimension	Example of Phrase by Respondents
Skill	Soft skill, communication skills and skill.
Networking	Change opinion and close relationship.
Experience	More experience, boring, purity and exposure.
Implementation	Administration not ready, not so much encourage students on Islamization, promotion, implementation still weak, not comprehensive, cause the class full, makes extra activity as compulsory and contain credit.

Table 7: Respondents' Perception on Co-curriculum Theme

Positive perceptions*	Negative perceptions*
iS1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a lot of activities organized by the students of this university. So, the student can joint those activities that can help us in term of communication skills. • Time management. • Give more experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this university activities are limited. Maybe their administration not ready to give more curricular activities. • The extra curricular activities not so much encourage student in Islamization aspect. • Many activities. Less promotion to students. • Still focus at resident colleges, not involve students outside campus. Activities are not comprehensive. • Many activities that have made students felt bored.

iS2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exist purity. • Changes of opinion. • Close relationship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of extra curricular activities is still weak. Only certain students join these kinds of activities.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very satisfied because have chances to learn how show talent and learn useful skill. • Exposure on programme outside . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not involve with any curricular activities cause the class full. Didn't have many time. • I'm not satisfied on extra activity curriculum at my university because makes extra activity as compulsory and contain credit.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification. • For the benefits in creating and building competitive advantage in terms of soft skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes did not know well. • Lack of promotion.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm not actively joint the curricular activity in my university. However, I used to join orientation week organize by student development as a sub-committee of registration. I've learn a lot in this event which help me to develop my communication skills, and make me easy to adapt with any situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not join any activity. • Not really enthuse for those activities.

*Original statements from the interview

Table 7 presents the respondents' best answers on co-curriculum. Most of the respondents for both universities viewed this theme in positive way by focusing on benefits they acquired in terms of skills, networking and experience. As reported in table 7, respondents only stated positive perceptions towards skill dimension including soft skills and communications skills. For skill dimension, respondents from both institutions highlighted the communication skill.

In addition, on the networking dimension, the responses only stated a positive perception. Besides, only respondents from iS2 viewed their perception toward this dimension. The perceptions include changes of opinion and close relationship.

Respondents answer towards this theme also can be group under experience dimension. For experience dimension, there are only positive perceptions from iS2 respondents. Respondents answers; give more experience (iS1), exist purity and exposure on program outside (iS2) were explained their positive perception. In contrast, 'many activities that provided make students boring' are the negative perception gaining from iS1 respondents.

Finally, for implementation dimensions, respondents' perceptions are totally contra with the perceptions towards skill and networking dimension where the respondents from both institutions highlighted negative perceptions, especially in terms of promotion. For example, iS1 answer such as: 'in this university activities are less, maybe their administration not ready to give more curricular activities; extra-curricular activities not so much encourage students in Islamization, less promotion to students and still focus at resident colleges, not involve students outside campus, activity not comprehensive'. While iS2 responses includes : 'the implementation of extra-curricular is still weak, only certain student join these kind of activities; I'm not satisfied on extra activity curriculum at my university because makes extra activity as compulsory and contain credit and lack of promotion'.

The result on co-curriculum aspects shows that some students appreciated co-curriculum activities, and regard these activities as complementing the curriculum aspects that are more focusing on the teaching and learning activities. However, negative comments have been given on the implementation process of those co-curriculum activities. The result supports the study conducted by Alias, Zulkefli and Ahmad (2007) that highlighted hard skills (specific skills) and soft skills (such as communication skills, creative thinking and problem solving) as important to increase students' employability.

CONCLUSION

This paper explores perceptions of final year students from the Islamic-based HEPs regarding on business and economics program. In addition, the analysis focuses into two major aspects, curriculum and co- curriculum which are posited under the program management. In this study, the authors employ the Profile Accumulation Technique (PAT) introduced by Johns and Lee-Ross (1995; 1997) to get in-depth information from respondents. This technique is preferable for exploratory study as compared to the structured survey questionnaire.

Generally, findings on students' perceptions on curriculum aspects show positive responses mostly on teaching methods (except for the dysfunctional the equipment – in iS1) and academic integrity. However, there are negative responses on curriculum structure and these are related to several aspects including the composition of courses in the program and content of the courses. Moreover, negative response was given on the ability of foreign lecturers in delivering lecture in an understandable and clear meaning (iS2).

There is less evidence found on negative responses particularly on the quality of curriculum activities offered by both Islamic-based HEPs. Most

of responses agreed on the positive correlation between curricular activities with the benefits gains in term of excellent skills (such as communication skill). Nevertheless, there are negative response that is related to unavailability of some information with respect to the curricular activities and the non-comprehensiveness of activities to student that live in private-rented accommodation. Focal finding that should be given attention by the institutions is the disconnection of the co-curriculum activities with Islamic elements (iS1).

As such, universities should improve on the delivery process (teaching and learning process) through several training and knowledge sharing session conducted with special attention to the foreign lecturer. Further study should be conducted to find the best approach to fulfill the expectation of shareholders, without trading-off (decreasing) the quality of the program. Since students may not realize benefits of the courses composition in the program and content of courses, a continuous briefing related to these two aspects should be delivered and promoted to the students. In return, this can help and facilitate them to appreciate the mission and vision of Islamic-based HEPs that are linked through the curriculum and co-curriculum activities.

In sum, the Islamic higher education system should be continuously encouraged by the Ministry of Education as this system can serve the stakeholders' needs. With the continuous encouragement from the policy maker and efforts from the Islamic-based HEPs, it is assumed that the system can deliver a significant contribution to the ummah and nation. It is suggested that future research can be done on Islamic education system at the public schools (primary and secondary levels) to identify its current state, and effectiveness.

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