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<tr>
<td>Sheng-Ju Chan</td>
<td>Professor, Graduate Institute of Education, National Chung Cheng University, Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Department Head, Education Policy Studies, Professor of Education (Higher Education), Pennsylvania State University, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yi-Fang Li</td>
<td>Professor, Department of Industrial Education, National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>President, University of Kang Ning, Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheng-Cheng Yang</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Graduate Institute of Educational Administration and Policy Development, National Chiayi University, Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rui Yang</td>
<td>Professor, Division of Policy, Administration and Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akiyoshi Yonezawa</td>
<td>Professor and Director, Office of Institutional Research, Tohoku University, Japan</td>
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The importance of cross-border cooperation in the quality assurance of TNE

A comparative overview of national approaches to TNE

Fabrizio Trifiro
Independent Higher Education Consultant, Gloucester, UK

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to provide evidence on the importance of cross-border cooperation in the quality assurance of transnational education (TNE) by offering a comparative overview of how TNE is quality assured by both sending and receiving countries. Through this comparative analysis, it will be possible to appreciate the diversity of approaches to TNE. The paper also shows that for the foreseeable future, progress towards effective and efficient quality assurance of TNE cannot rest on the hope of developing an internationally agreed framework, but it must rest on strengthening cooperation between quality assurance agencies operating within different national frameworks.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper looks at four key sending countries of TNE, the UK, Australia, the USA and Germany, considering the main drivers for out-going TNE, its main features and how it is quality assured. It then considers the same aspects from the perspective of receiving countries of TNE, looking at four key receiving locations, China, Dubai, Singapore and Hong Kong. It also offers an overview of some recent international initiatives aimed at fostering cross-border cooperation in the quality assurance of TNE.

Findings – In the backdrop of this overview of different approaches to TNE, this paper will conclude that for the foreseeable future it is not possible to develop an internationally agreed view and approach to TNE and its quality assurance. This conclusion allows the author to focus on the importance of cross-border cooperation amongst quality assurance agencies in sending and receiving countries for the effective and efficient quality assurance of TNE.

Originality/value – This is the first comparative study of different countries’ approaches to TNE and its quality assurance, taking into account both sending and receiving countries. It allows pointing to the key different features in different countries’ approaches and illustrates how these often relate to the underlining national strategic priorities and drivers for TNE (either in-bound or out-bound). It also allows the international community to realise that in the absence of a viable shared and agreed international framework for the regulation and quality assurance of TNE, it is of paramount importance to focus efforts on inter-agency cross-border cooperation in order to ensure that TNE continues to be of good quality and relevant to the respective communities.

Keywords Cooperation, Quality assurance, Transnational education, Cross-border education, QACHE

Paper type Case study

Introduction

The internationalisation of higher education has regularly been accompanied with calls for and attempts to internationalise its quality assurance. In 2004, UNESCO and OECD jointly developed “Guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education” (UNESCO/OECD, 2004) to assist the international community addressing the quality assurance challenges associated with the expansion of all forms of cross-border
higher education. Specifically, the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines aimed to provide an international framework setting out how all key stakeholders, including governments, higher education providers, student bodies, quality assurance and accreditation bodies, and academic and professional recognition bodies of the sending and receiving country, could share responsibilities for the quality assurance of CBHE.

Two years later UNESCO collaborated with Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN) in the development of a toolkit to support the implementation of the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines (UNESCO/APQN, 2006). The UNESCO/APQN (2006) “Toolkit: regulating the quality of cross-border education” is directed at national level policy makers, providing them “with a reference tool to assist with the development of regulatory frameworks for quality assurance in cross-border education, whether from a receiver or provider perspective” (p. 3).

More recently, a consortium of quality assurance agencies and networks, developed as part of the Erasmus Mundus project Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education (QACHE) a “Toolkit for quality assurance agencies: cooperation in cross-border higher education” (ENQA, 2016). The QACHE Toolkit complements the UNESCO/APQN Toolkit’s effort and support the UNESCO/OECD Guidelines’ intention to “provide guidance to key stakeholders on how to share the responsibility of assuring quality provision of cross-border higher education between the sending country and the receiving country” (UNESCO/OECD, 2004, p. 41), by offering practical guidance on how agencies can cooperate in the quality assurance of transnational education (TNE).

In order to fully grasp the importance of fostering cross-border cooperation in the quality assurance of TNE, it is helpful to appreciate the differences between the approaches to TNE and its quality assurance adopted by some of the main sending and receiving countries of TNE. To this aim, this paper offers an overview of the key features of the TNE regulatory landscape in four key sending countries, the UK, Australia, the USA and Germany, and four key receiving locations, China, Dubai, Hong Kong and Singapore. This will help appreciating how the way ahead to achieve progress in internationalising the quality assurance of TNE will need to rest in strengthened cross-border cooperation between agencies operating within different regulatory frameworks, rather than hoping to develop an internationally shared framework.

Out-bound TNE

UK

In the UK HE providers with degree-awarding power are self-accrediting, and as such they do not need to obtain prior approval by government or the national quality assurance authorities to engage in TNE activities. These can take any shape that suits UK providers’ strategies and needs. Collaborative partnerships and distance learning are the dominant models, while branch campuses represent a minor but highly visible share of the UK TNE landscape.

In this context of high degree of institutional autonomy, TNE is seen as a commercial activity, in the sense that providers in receipt of public funding have not been allowed to use taxpayers’ money to support their international operations. One of the key drivers for UK providers to engage in TNE activity is in fact that of increasing international students’ enrolment by increasing enrolment in the UK either through articulation agreements or by enhancing institutions’ international visibility and reputation overseas through in-country (TNE) provision. There are of course other important drivers, such as the internationalisation of the academic offer and the student experience, strengthening international research links, contributing to local capacity development and meeting international demands for quality higher education.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education has monitored TNE provision since its inception as part of its mission to safeguard the standards and improve the quality of UK HE wherever this is delivered. The way QAA has done this has traditionally been twofold: as part of mainstream institutional reviews in the UK, which look at the total provision of a provider including their overseas provision; and through a complementary
dedicated TNE review process. This TNE review process includes visits to overseas delivery sites both to test the implementation of institutional policies and processes for ensuring the quality and standards of TNE, and to gain a better understanding of the TNE student experience (QAA, 2017a).

Given the geographical spread and quantity of UK TNE arrangements – with over 80 per cent of all UK degree-awarding bodies (about 140 overall) offering TNE provision in most countries of the world, and with the number of TNE students (694,000) now well exceeding that of international students coming to the UK (HESA, 2019) – QAA has adopted a country-based approach to ensure the efficiency of its TNE review processes. On an annual basis, a country with significant UK TNE is selected and a sample of provision in the country is reviewed, rather than looking at providers’ TNE provision as part of their mainstream institutional review.

The geographical spread and scale of UK TNE also makes cooperating with host countries’ agencies a high priority in order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the quality assurance of TNE. QAA played a leading role in developing the QACHE Toolkit, and it is a founding agency of the Quality Beyond Boundaries Group (QBBG) and the Cross-Border Quality Assurance Network (CBQAN), two networks aimed at fostering international cooperation in the quality of TNE. QAA has also piloted innovative ways to cooperate with in-country agencies such as the recent joint review of UK TNE in Hong Kong with the Hong Kong Council for the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) (QAA, 2018a), and a joint study on the UK TNE student experience in Dubai and Singapore the Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) and the Singapore Committee for Private Education (CPE) (QAA, 2018b).

However, currently, things are in flux in the UK with regard to the quality assurance of TNE. With the establishment of the Office for Students (OfS), QAA’s cyclical institutional reviews in England have come to an end. Established English higher education providers are now monitored by the OfS through an annual analysis of a set of metrics, and the OfS is working with the Higher Education Statistical Agency to develop data sets capable to capture TNE provision. At the same time, a sector-wide consultation is due to be launched to gather the extent of sector support for continued in-country monitoring of TNE by the QAA.

**Australia**

Australian self-accrediting universities, just like UK degree-awarding bodies, are free to engage in any type of TNE activities without having to seek prior approval from the national regulator, the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA). Collaborative partnerships, or third-party arrangements as referred to in Australia, are also the predominant form of TNE activity.

TNE activities, as in the UK, are not publicly subsidised, and Australian providers share the same key drivers for engaging in TNE activities with UK providers. However, although Australia is one of the main sending countries of TNE and one of the pioneers in out-bound TNE, its TNE landscape is much more limited in scale and scope, with just under 120,000 students studying offshore with about 60 higher education providers (Australian Department of Education, 2017). The different scale of Australian TNE affects the way in which its quality is assured.

Just as QAA, TEQSA maintains an oversight of Australian TNE to ensure the equivalency of the student experience and student learning outcomes. There are two main differences with the QAA. One is that because of the smaller scale of Australian TNE, no country-based approach is currently adopted. TNE is looked only as part of national institutional review processes either at renewal of provider’s registration or at programme accreditation for non-self-accrediting institutions. A further difference is that reviews of TNE delivery sites are undertaken only when justified by risk triggers identified through
desk-based, data-driven analysis – an approach more similar to that adopted by the OfS. On the contrary, QAA approach to in-country review visits has traditionally been more enhancement driven, aimed at looking at good practice in different types of provision for the benefit of the whole sector, including through case studies, and not only at provision regarded as riskier (TEQSA, 2016).

Inter-agency cooperation is also high in the agenda of TEQSA, even if the more limited extent of Australian TNE provision might make it less urgent for TEQSA than for QAA. TEQSA was a partner agency in the QACHE project and is also a founding member of both QBBG and CBQAN.

USA
The key drivers for out-bound TNE in the USA, in addition to those common to the UK and Australia, include a particular emphasis on outward mobility, as well as on exporting the American teaching and learning experience. This explains why the two common forms of USA TNE are study abroad centres, allowing US students to gain an international experience, and American universities integrated in national HE systems – which are to be considered as foreign universities delivering US style education and seeking USA accreditation. The only other form of American TNE is branch campuses.

In the USA, quality assurance is undertaken by different accreditation agencies recognised by the US Department of Education or the Council for HE Accreditation, such as the main six regional accreditation organisations (CHEA, 2018). Different accreditation agencies will have different policies for TNE. However, branch campuses and study abroad centres are generally considered as a substantive change in a provider’s higher education offering requiring initial accreditation (WASCUC, 2018). After initial accreditation, an American university’s TNE would not be reviewed directly unless there is a serious concern or if selected in a sample of overseas activity to look at as part of national re-accreditation. Another common feature is that US regional accreditation agencies would not accept collaborative or third-party arrangements, the most popular forms in the UK and Australia.

There is no available data about US TNE, but it is fair to say that it is much more limited in scope and scale to UK TNE. Cross-border cooperation in quality assurance is not a key priority for most USA accreditation agencies, given the limited extent of USA TNE. A number of regional accreditation agencies are, however, more active internationally such as WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), which has been a member of QBBG.

Germany
Turning to the last sending country under consideration, the German approach to TNE stands out against all the others here considered. In the context of a conception of higher education as a public good, where HE is largely state funded, TNE is not regarded as a commercial activity. For the most part, German TNE is publicly funded through the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), which disburses funding from different governmental departments.

The main drivers of out-going TNE are therefore not primarily commercial, but national policies aimed primarily at fostering the internationalisation of German HE providers, promoting German cultural relations and education policy, as well as supporting international capacity development.

Another key feature is that DAAD puts emphasis on the fact that German TNE provision should be characterised by a truly cooperative approach with local institutions and a high degree of engagement and presence by the German institutions. No validation or franchise arrangements, the main common form of TNE for the UK and Australia, are therefore funded by DAAD. The three types of DAAD funded TNE mirror the types of TNE in the USA:

1. “German study programmes abroad” to facilitate outward mobility;
(2) “German-backed universities”, where under the mentorship of one or more German providers a new HEI abroad is founded which is part of the local HE system, normally seeking accreditation by relevant German accreditation bodies; and

(3) full branch campuses, also generally integrated in the local HE system.

“German-backed universities” are perhaps the predominant or higher profile model. In this mode, German universities will be strongly involved in curriculum development, quality assurance and training of teaching staff, and German staff will usually also provide teaching. Normally such institutions, as the American foreign universities, do not award German degrees but only local degrees, although these degrees will be recognised and often are accredited in Germany.

The different funding model also affects the dominant subject areas. UK, Australian and USA TNE being private endeavours are predominantly oriented towards programmes which are low cost to run, at least in the first stages, such as in business administration or informatics. German TNE can focus instead from the start on resource-intensive disciplines such as engineering or natural sciences, where German university are traditionally strong, but which are more expensive to run. The funding model, however, limits the extent of German TNE, which is more limited than Australian and UK ones, with approximately 20,000 students enrolled in 70 TNE projects funded by DAAD (GAC, 2016).

All programmes of state recognised HE providers have to be accredited by agencies licensed by the German Accreditation Council (GAC). GAC’s standards apply to programmes leading to a German degree, irrespective if the degree is offered inland or abroad.

Given the nature and limited scale of German TNE, inter-agency cooperation in quality assurance has so far not been a high priority, although GAC has a strong interest in cooperation in the accreditation of joint programmes, and was a member of the QACHE project consortium.

DAAD as the principal funder of German TNE will also undertake quality controls on a periodic basis to ensure that the German universities involved in TNE project it funds fulfil the requirements for funding. These requirements include academic and quality assurance requirements, as well as ensuring TNE projects become self-sustainable. DAAD funding is in fact generally limited to a number of years.

**In-bound TNE**

**China**

China presents features that resonate with the German approach amongst the sending countries considered here. In particular, in China the demand and types of imported foreign provision are driven and regulated by national education and social policies and priorities, and TNE partnerships must run as not-for-profit academic ventures.

China sees in-bound TNE primarily as a way to facilitate transfer of knowledge in the country and to develop the capacity of local HE institutions. This key rationale informs the types of TNE accepted in the country and the criteria for approving incoming TNE. TNE can only take the form of partnerships between foreign and national providers; China refers to TNE as China Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS) – covering both jointly run institutions and programmes.

CFCRSs are seen as much as possible as partnerships between equals, or in any case involving substantial if not equal involvement by both partners. Thus, foreign institutions have to commit resources, delivering at least one-third of the programme for instance. The Ministry of Education (MoE) also encourages jointly developed courses and merging of foreign and local courses. Recently the MoE has also put a limit to the number of CFCRSs that foreign providers might enter into, in order to avoid overstretched and the risk that foreign providers are not able to commit enough resources to the partnership.
Responding to previously unregulated growth, the MoE has also indicated priorities subjects and geographical areas, in order to ensure that new CFCRSs meet the labour and development needs of the country. Therefore, programmes in popular subject areas like business, finance and management are not encouraged or favoured, whereas partnerships in western China are encouraged and favoured. The MoE also encourages award of foreign degrees in China where students can complete the whole cycle in China, limiting in this way the impact that TNE might have on brain drain.

The regulatory system for TNE can be split into the pre-approval and post-approval stage. At pre-approval stage, the agency playing a role is the China Education Association for Internal Exchange (CEAIE), operating under the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and leading on international educational exchanges and cooperation. CEAIE helps the MoE in screening new applications for CFCRSs, and in doing so it seeks cooperation with sending country agencies to ensure the MoE receives only genuine applications. CEAIE has also the statutory responsibility for quality assuring sub-degree level-TNE and runs a voluntary accreditation scheme for higher education-level TNE.

The responsibility to quality assure higher education-level TNE after the approval stage rests with another agency, the China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Center (CDGDC), which in relation to Chinese higher education has the delegated responsibility from the MoE to quality assure post-graduate education. CDGDC monitors TNE through desk-based analysis, and where it detects lack of or risk of non-compliance with the MoE’s criteria for CFCRSs it might carry out a review visit (for an overview of the operating environment for TNE in China, see QAA, 2017b).

Inter-agency cooperation is high on the agenda of both agencies. CEAIE managing international exchange programmes has active partnerships worldwide, and with regard to TNE it seeks to cooperate with sending countries agencies to screen new CFCRS’ applications and as part of its voluntary accreditation scheme. CDGDC holds the secretariat of the fairly recent Asian–European initiative CBQAN, aimed at fostering sector-to-sector cooperation in facilitating the growth of quality European–Asian TNE, and both CDGDC and CEAIE have signed, together with QAA and the British Council the Beijing Statement, a statement of intent to strengthen cooperation in the quality assurance of UK–China TNE (British Council, 2016).

Dubai

The Dubai approach to TNE and its quality assurance can be placed at the opposite side of the spectrum from China. Dubai’s drivers for importing TNE are very different. It is not interested in the development of local providers’ capacity, but rather in meeting the skills and knowledge needs of a growing knowledge economy and a huge expat society representing approximately 90 per cent of resident population. Dubai is also interested in developing education as an industry alternative to oil production through the creation of a HE hub capable to attract students from the region and beyond. For this reason, Dubai wants quality undiluted foreign provision in the form of branch campuses, and it is not interested in collaborative partnerships.

According to the latest International Branch Campuses report by the Observatory for Borderless Higher Education, China has now overcome Dubai as a branch campus destination, however branch campuses in China are generally of a different nature, requiring partnerships with local providers and being integrated in the local HE system, and given the different sizes it is still true to say that Dubai is the location with the highest concentration of Branch campus.

TNE providers in Dubai mostly operate from free-trade zones (FTZs), which are exempted from federal regulations, and therefore do not need to have federal accreditation by the Commission for Academic Accreditation. However, they need authorisation to operate by the Dubai KHDA and have their programmers registered with them.
KHDA adopts an institutional authorisation and programme registration process which is based on what they refer to as an “equivalency model”, whereby through a panel of international experts it assesses the extent to which TNE providers fulfil the QA expectations of the home country agencies. The international panel also checks that TNE providers have policies, practices and resources in place to ensure that the learning experience and learning outcomes are substantially equivalent to those on similar programmes at the home campus. This is generally a desk-based exercise, although KHDA reserves the right to undertake institutional visits where it detects any cause for concern (KHDA, 2016).

KHDA has traditionally required TNE providers to deliver programmes that they already run back home, as a guarantee that the same QA processes are applied. However, KHDA has recently reviewed its programme approval regulations allowing providers with a strong record of performance in the FTZs to delivery programmes in Dubai not already delivered at home in order to better meet local knowledge and skills needs. This reflects a move in Dubai towards an approach to TNE which is more strategically linked up with other broader economic and social policies and priorities of Dubai, the extent higher education provision and new demographic and economic trends (for an overview of the operating environment for TNE in Dubai, see QAA, 2017c).

Looking at inter-agency cooperation this is very high on the agenda of KHDA, primarily because of the quality assurance model it adopts which places great reliance on the quality assurance oversight of the home country agency. KHDA has been the key driver behind QBBG, an informal grouping of quality assurance agencies in main sending and receiving countries aimed at facilitating information sharing, trust building and cooperation.

Singapore

Singapore’s main drivers for importing foreign provision have been varied, including meeting unmet demands, filling skills gap, developing the capacity of local providers and creating a HE hub. For this reason, no type of TNE provision is privileged or discouraged. In Singapore you can find branch campuses as well as partnerships of different types including the most common UK models, franchise and validation. UK providers are by far the main TNE operators in the country.

In recent years, there has however been, as with Dubai, a move towards consolidating quality and the relevance of TNE provision to local socio-economic needs. The approval process for new programmes has become therefore more selective. The gatekeeping role in Singapore is played by the CPE, part of SkillsFuture Singapore, which oversees private education in the country. The near totality of TNE provision is undertaken in partnership with local private education institutions (PEIs), as they are referred to in the country (branch campuses are regarded as private providers themselves.)

All TNE provision in partnership with PEIs needs CPE approval. The key academic criteria for approval are similar to those for Dubai, namely that the foreign degree-awarding body is a legitimate institution in the home country and is in good standing with the local regulatory bodies; that the degree programmes offered at the local PEIs are subject to the same quality assurance processes as the programmes offered at their home campuses; and that the graduates receive equivalent recognition, treatment and privileges as those enrolled in their home campuses. CPE also generally requires programmes to be already delivered at home and with the same title.

The CPE model differs from that of Dubai in that the assessment of equivalency of the learning experience and the quality assurance processes with those at the home campus is conducted by CPE officers rather than a dedicated panel of international experts, and the assessment is more mechanistic, going less in-depth with regard to institutional quality assurance policies and processes. It is more a registration than a quality assurance process, and it is exclusively a desk-based exercise.
However, CPE has now made it mandatory for all PEIs to seek EduTrust certification, a local certification traditionally required only for eligibility to recruit international students (CPE, 2018). CPE will therefore be exercising more of a quality assurance function than it has previously done with regard to TNE, looking at TNE providers partners’ compliance with local standards (CPE, 2017).

CPE is also an important player in cross-border higher education, actively seeking cooperation in the quality assurance of TNE, including through its membership in QBBG.

**Hong Kong**

Hong Kong’s key drivers for TNE are very similar to those for Singapore, namely meeting local unmet demands, filling skills gaps, developing the capacity of local private providers and, to a lesser extent, creating a HE hub. All types of TNE arrangements are accepted; collaborative partnerships with private providers are by far most common, but there are also a high number of TNE arrangements with public universities. The vast majority of TNE in Hong Kong is from the UK.

The gatekeeping role is played by the Education Bureau of the MoE. All TNE programmes, referred to as “non-local programmes”, need to be registered with the Bureau, which seeks the advice from HKCAAVQ as to whether a non-local course meets the criteria for registration. The key criteria is again that the awarding organisation is a bona fide institution in its home country and in good standing with its home country’s regulatory bodies, and that the quality and standards of the learning experience are comparable to those of similar programmes offered at home. This is, as for Singapore, exclusively a desk-based exercise conducted by HKCAAVQ officers. HKCAAVQ will offer expert advice but the final decision for inclusion on the register is with the Education Bureau itself (for an overview of the operating environment for TNE in Hong Kong, see QAA, 2018a, b).

Whereas Dubai and Singapore so far have operated only approval and registration on the basis of the foreign programmes meeting the home country academic expectations, without adding any local requirements (although both Dubai and Singapore have given over the past few years more attention to local market and skills needs), Hong Kong has had for a number of years an additional local accreditation process which is run by the HKCAAVQ. Non-local programmes in Hong Kong can voluntary seek accreditation by the HKCAAVQ against local standards. This will allow them to be recognised under the local Qualification Framework and listed on the HK Qualification Register, both managed by HKCAAVQ. Once accredited non-local programmes are treated as local programmes and their students can be eligible for public financial support (HKCAAVQ, 2018).

HKCAAVQ is also a key player in advancing cross-border cooperation, including through its membership in QBBG and CBQAN, and its recent joint review exercise with QAA.

**Conclusions: inter-agency cooperation**

The comparative overview offered above highlights different national drivers for TNE, different conceptions and landscapes of TNE and different approaches to its quality assurance. These differences raise the question of how it is possible for the international quality assurance community to ensure continued oversight of cross-border higher education on the basis of a shared understanding.

The above overview highlights how cross-border quality assurance of TNE cannot, for the foreseeable future, take the form of an international agreed approach with agreed and shared sets of standards and processes. However, quality assurance agencies seeking to ensure an effective and efficient oversight of cross-border higher education can do so despite their different approaches, regulatory environment and policy frameworks, by working towards strengthening cross-border inter-agency cooperation in quality assurance across differences.
A number of recent international initiatives have been trying to facilitate cross-border cooperation in a number of ways. I had like to conclude this paper by giving a brief look at these initiatives, some of which I have already referred to above.

**Quality Assurance of Cross-Border Higher Education project**
QACHE was a project funded by the European Union managed by ENQA and undertaken a project consortium including the regional networks of key host regions of TNE, the AAPQN and the Arab Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, and a number of national agencies with different experiences with TNE, QAA, GAC, TEQSA, as well as the French High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES), The National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation of Spain. The main outcome of the two-year project is a Toolkit offering practical advice to quality assurance agencies, and their networks, on the things they might be able to do to enhance cross-border cooperation in the quality assurance of TNE (ENQA, 2016).

**Quality Beyond Boundaries Group**
QBBG, established in 2014, is an informal group of quality assurance agencies from the major sending and receiving countries of cross-border education aimed to creating a platform to collaborate, share information and best practices and work together to better address common challenges posed by growing TNE provision. QBBG is led by KHDA and it involves QAA, TEQSA, CPE, HKCAAVQ, WASCUC, as well as the Malaysia Qualifications Agency (MQA) (KHDA, 2018).

**Cross-Border Quality Assurance Network**
CBQAN is a network launched in December 2016 under the Asia-Europe Meetings of Ministers of Education aimed at building a communication and cooperation platform for stakeholders of cross-border HE quality assurance in Asia and Europe. It is led by CDGDC with support from MQA and the UKNARIC, and it also includes QAA, TEQSA, HKCAAVQ, HCERES and the national agencies of Belgium (BDNAC), India (NAAC), Ireland (Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)), Korea (KCCE), Latvia (AIC), Pakistan (HEC) and Thailand (ONESQA) (UKNARIC, 2016).

**QAA – INQAAHE project on the limits and challenges to cross-border cooperation**
QAA received funding from INQAAHE to undertake a study on the challenges and limits to cross-border cooperation with a view to helping quality assurance agencies developing feasible strategies for international engagement. The study can be seen as a follow-up from QACHE, looking at the obstacles agencies face in implementing the advice contained in the QACHE Toolkit, in particular the obstacles and limits posed by the regulatory environment in which each national agency operates. The study is based on a survey eliciting the views of QAA’s partners and key players in the quality assurance of TNE: CDGDC, CEAIE, CPE, KHDA, HKCAAVQ, MQA, TEQSA, WASCUC, as well as the Japan National Institute for Academic Degree and University Evaluation, and QQI, Ireland:

The study stresses the importance of trust building and engaging with other key stakeholders in the TNE landscape, in particular governments, TNE providers, as well as TNE students, as a way to facilitate cross-border cooperation. (Trifiro, 2018)

All these recent initiatives share the same goal to helping improve mutual understanding and therefore build reciprocal trust as a first step towards facilitating cross-border coordination of quality assurance activities. These initiatives demonstrate that a shared view of the role of quality assurance agencies in relation to TNE is emerging. This is the
view that quality assurance agencies should be enablers not inhibitors of quality and relevant TNE, and that key to realising this shared view is building the required trust for facilitating cooperation in the quality assurance of cross-border provision.

This view is based on the realisation that TNE should not only be seen as a high-risk activity posing challenges to quality assurance, but also as an innovative form of higher education provision capable to benefit students, societies as a whole, as well as providers. Inter-agency cooperation is a way for quality assurance agencies to respond in effective and efficient ways to the growth of cross-border higher education provision. Inter-agency cooperation is way to ensure that any regulatory gaps are covered, safeguarding the interests of students and societies from low-quality provision, and that unnecessary regulatory overlaps or obstacles are removed, lessening the burden on providers and quality assurance agencies themselves.

References


Corresponding author
Fabrizio Trifiro can be contacted at: ftrifiro@hotmail.com
Can change leadership impact on staff organizational citizenship behavior? A scenario from Malaysia

Simin Ghavifekr
Department of Educational Management, Planning and Policy,
Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and
Adebayo Saheed Adewale
National Higher Education Research Institute,
Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the impact of change leadership on staff organizational citizenship behavior in a university setting. Moreover, the study aims to explore forces that influencing on staff organizational citizenship behavior in higher education institutions.

Design/methodology/approach – The study adopts a qualitative research design. An interview protocol along with field notes were used as major approaches for collecting in-depth data. Coding and categorizing approach were used to analyze interview transcriptions to help for emerging the study’s themes.

Findings – The findings reveal that change leadership builds confidence of staff, motivate them and helps to ensure trust. Moreover, results show that staff organizational citizenship behavior is influenced by personal, organizational, social-cultural and economic forces. To increase the organizational citizenship behavior of staff in higher education institutions, there is a need for leaders to use appropriate change-oriented style in leading their organizations. Findings also revealed that change leaders must serve as role-model to their subordinates as a way on enhancing staff organizational citizenship behavior.

Research limitations/implications – Academic leaders are the pivot of change in higher education institutions. Accordingly, the effectiveness of higher education institution, staff and students are depending on the effectiveness of the leadership. In this regard, academic leaders’ willingness to change is the most effective factor that not only sets the credibility of the organization, but, more importantly, influence on staff organizational behavior.

Practical implications – It is hoped that the outcome of this research will contribute to the current knowledge of change leadership and organizational behavior in universities.

Originality/value – This is an original research and makes a great contribution to higher education in Asian countries.

Keywords Malaysia, Organizational citizenship behaviour, Higher education, Change leadership

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Leadership is an essential tool in enhancing organizational development (Lussier and Achua, 2016; Chuang, 2013). It is also conceived as a vital instrument for ensuring sustainable change and attaining organizational goals and objectives (Hao and Yazdanifard, 2015; Fullan, 2005). Academic leaders are essential factors in higher education management. These leaders are entrusted with the responsibility of attaining vision, mission, and goals of higher education...
institutions (Ijaz et al., 2012; Leithwood et al., 2006; Ramsden, 1998a). Therefore, these academic leaders face different challenges (Ogunruku, 2012). To meet up with numerous and changing goals of higher education institutions in this modern day, there is a need for effective leadership (Sam et al., 2013; Sathye, 2004). Leadership is conceived as a key factor in successful change in an organization (Coetzee et al., 2012; Harris, 2008). Moreover, leaders are catalysts for effective and sustainable change in an organization (Nilakant and Ramnarayan, 2006). They influence the change process in any organization (Yukl, 2010). In higher education institutions, academic leaders play a vital role in attaining goals of institutions (Ramsden, 1998a). They are responsible for directing, coordinating, and managing all the resources available toward attaining the vision and mission of educational institutions (Harris, 2008; Bush and Middlewood, 2005). Also, academic leaders are responsible for leading the path of change and for encouraging their subordinates to follow (Owens and Valesky, 2011). To do these, academic leaders need to design a clear vision and mission for their organization, communicate their change plan diligently to staff in a manner that will stimulate the interest of their staff (Sathye, 2004; Tomlinson, 2004; Ramsden, 1998b), build trust, encourage teamwork, provide an enabling environment for sustainable change, and lead by example (Bass, 2010; Dufour et al., 2006; Bush and Middlewood, 2005). With these particular attributes, the staff will be convinced of the prospect of change and will be ready to go extra mile in giving their best for their organization.

Therefore, staff organizational behavior is very significant in educational institutions. It helps to enhance the performance and achieve the development of an organization (Organ, 1997). It also helps to ensure transformation, innovation, and organizational efficiency (Turnipseed and Murkison, 1996; Nasra and Heilbrunn, 2015). Organizational citizenship behavior allows staff to enhance their effectiveness and increase the level of their productivity in the organization. This can be shown by the staff in the context of higher education through several ways, such as providing assistance to students’ needs without hesitation, sharing valuable textbooks with others, and displaying happiness for colleagues’ success (Adebayo et al., 2017; Bashir et al., 2012). Besides, leadership in the organization has a significant effect on organizational citizenship behavior (Nasra and Heilbrunn, 2015; Wang et al., 2005). More clearly, change leadership has a significant impact on the performance of an individual and the organization. This kind of leadership is also considered as a crucial factor in staff motivation (Pradeep and Prabhu, 2011). In short, leaders who implement change policies effectively will inspire staff’s interest in the changes, gain their trust and build their confidence in the change plan.

Today, there is an increased competition among organizations including higher education institutions. This competition implies that staff must border themselves with a lot of activities in order to meet up with the complex situation and meet the requirement of the competitive global market (Burnes and Oswick, 2012; Bass, 2010). Therefore, the trend will go for a long time and later fade away. This decline will result into low productivity, output, and performance. To arouse the interest of workers and enhance organizational development, organizational citizenship behavior becomes important (Shanker, 2018). Leading and implementing change in an organization has posed a great challenge to leaders (Pieterse et al., 2012). The actions of leaders toward change may hinder the progress of the change plan or policy in an organization (Burnes and Oswick, 2012).

In addition, change policies can also be hindered by poor leadership. Yukl (2010) argued that when the leader is not careful about the change plan or fails to manage the change effectively, it will affect the performance of an organization. Poor leadership impacts negatively on the morale of staff, destroy their confidence level and register a wrong perception in their minds (Tehreem et al., 2013; Kellermann, 2004). Similarly, Harris et al. (2007) stressed that poor leadership can also lead to low performance of workers in an organization. Not only that, it also cripples attainment of organizational goals and change plans (Schilling, 2008). In order to address these problems in higher education institutions, this study explored the perceptions of staffs (both academic and non-academic) on the
impact of change leadership on their organizational citizenship behavior with the aim of enhancing effective staff performance in higher education institutions. Therefore, based on the objective of this study, the following research questions were raised:

RQ1. How does the change leadership of leaders impact staff organizational citizenship behavior in higher education institutions?

RQ2. What are the forces that made staff in higher education institutions develop organizational citizenship behavior?

2. Theoretical foundation and conceptual framework

In this study, two different theories, including the change leadership theory and organizational citizenship behavior theory, were examined. Each of these is discussed extensively in the next paragraph.

For the change leadership theory, we adopted the Nilakant and Ramnarayan model of change leadership. This theory was proposed in 2006. In this model, there are four key elements or tasks related to leadership qualities. These key elements or tasks include the following: appreciating change, mobilizing support, executing change and building change capability. Based on these four elements or tasks, Nilakant and Ramnarayan (2006) argued that effective change management does not depend on transformational leadership, instead, on four leadership attributes: cognitive tuner, people-catalyzer, system architect and efficacy builder. In this model, Nilakant and Ramnarayan (2006) argued that appreciating change involves understanding change and the forces of stability in an organization. The essence of this task is to create awareness on the need for the change, state the consequences of the change and present available options for taking the change. To be able to perform this task, they proposed that leaders should be cognitive tuners. Second, mobilizing for change implies collecting relevant information and seeking support from others on the proposed change idea. For leaders to perform this task, Nilakant and Ramnarayan (2006) argued that they must be people-catalyzer. This leadership role involves the ability to motivate subordinates toward imbibing the change idea, seeking their ideas on the change idea and carrying them along in the change process (Yukl, 2010; Kotter, 1996).

In addition, the change leadership model maintained that executing change connotes creating a new process, procedure, and structure for an organization. This task is considered the most essential and difficult (Yukl, 2010; Nilakant and Ramnarayan, 2006). To be able to accomplish this task, leaders must be a system architect. They need to design appropriate structure, process, and procedure necessary for attaining the change ideas (Tehreem et al., 2013). Finally, building change capacity involves making subordinates believe in their ability to confront any challenges and simulating them to master new given tasks (Nilakant and Ramnarayan, 2006). To achieve this, leaders must be efficacy builders. They need to build the self-efficacy of their staff in order to accomplish numerous tasks ahead of the organization (Adebayo et al., 2017). This model incorporates appropriate leadership style with each change task. This enables leaders to know the required character that is expected to them at each stage of change (Nilakant and Ramnarayan, 2006).

The second theory examined is the organizational citizenship behavior theory. This theory was propounded by Organ in 1988 and later re-defined by him in 1997. Different researchers have done a lot of studies on organizational citizenship behavior, but Organ’s theory still remains useful and relevant (Foote and Tang, 2008; Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997; Turnipseed and Markison, 1996). Organ (1997) proposed five common behaviors which he used to describe the organizational citizenship behavior theory. These five behaviors are: altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, consciousness and civic virtue. According to Organ (1988), the term altruism refers to the ability to help others or render assistance to co-workers without anticipating a compensation for the assistance given. Courtesy implies being considerate and polite to co-workers in the workplace. This involves showing concern for other members of
staff. Also, he further argues that sportsmanship implies the ability of a worker not to show negative feelings toward others even when his or her plans do not materialize. A staff demonstrating sportsmanship will not have ill-feelings toward others (Farh et al., 2004). Furthermore, Organ (1988) conceived consciousness as the behavior, which shows self-discipline and a reasonable level of self-control that goes above the minimum requirement expected of a worker in a given situation. Staff will always display consciousness when they come early to work, deliver given task at the stipulated deadline, and plan ahead for the next day’s work in a manner that will not burden other co-workers (Organ et al., 2006). Finally, civic refers to the behavior, which indicates how well a worker associates himself or herself with his or her organization. Workers display civic by speaking good things about their organization and co-workers in any official setting and promoting good image of such organization at all times (Organ et al., 2006; Farh et al., 2004; Organ, 1997).

Staff can display organizational citizenship behavior in organizations, especially in higher education institutions, through numerous ways like sharing useful textbooks with other staff, showing happiness for colleague’s success, sharing their pain whenever they are sad, showing concern for their emotional feelings, providing assistance to students needs without hesitation and a host of others (Adebayo et al., 2017; Rose, 2012; Bashir et al., 2012). Whenever these behaviors are displayed in an organization, they will enhance effectiveness and increase level of productivity (Ehtiyar et al., 2010).

Based on these two theories, we came up with a conceptual framework to guide this study as presented in Figure 1.

A critical look at the diagram in Figure 1 shows that when there is change leadership and organizational citizenship behavior in higher education institutions, academic leaders will be able to gain the confidence of their staff, inspire motivation, build trust, ensure teamwork and collaboration in the area of research, teaching and learning. In addition, student engagement with research, teaching and learning activities will also be high because students will be carried along in all sphere of the university activities and actively engaged. These will result into higher productivity for higher education institutions. Lastly, personal, organizational and socio-cultural forces were also identified to affect organizational citizenship behavior.

3. Literature review
3.1 Change leadership
Change leadership consists of two keywords, namely, change and leadership. Dawson and Andriopoulos (2014) defined change as something which comes with a new thing that redefines, refines and replaces what has gone before or previous practices. It implies dissatisfaction with the old and upholding a strong belief in the new (Yukl, 2010). Also, Harigopal (2006) defined change as the need to make or become different or begin to have a different form. Similarly, Glaser (2006) stressed that change implies a shift in the process of
doing things which later affects staff and organization. Change requires creation of new system, which demands effective leadership (Kotter, 1995).

The term leadership has been given different definitions by different scholars. There is no generally agreed definition of leadership; however, different scholars defined the concept based on their perceptions (Yukl, 2010). For the purpose of our study, we examined some of these definitions. Den Hartog et al. (1999) conceived the term leadership as the ability of an individual to persuade and influence others toward achieving organizational goals. According to Storr (2004), leadership refers to ways of reaching pre-determined goals with, and through others, based on interactive relationship. Korbi (2015) argued that leadership is an essential factor in implementing strategic changes in an organization. Yukl (2010) saw leadership as a process of influencing people to understand and accept what need to be done, how to go about doing it, persuading and mobilizing effort toward accomplishing set objectives.

Putting these two concepts together, Higgs and Rowland (2000) conceived change leadership as the ability to influence and enthuse others through personal advocacy, vision and drive, as well as the access to resources to build a solid platform for change.

3.2 Impact of change leadership on organizational citizenship behavior
Change leadership has a lot of implications on organizations. Wang et al. (2005) found that there is a direct relationship between change or transformational leadership and organizational citizenship behavior in an organization. Similarly, the study of Nasra and Heilbrunn (2015) also found that change leadership has a significant and direct effect on organizational citizenship behavior in Arab educational system in Israel. Change leadership has a huge impact on the performance of individuals and organizations. It was found to be an essential factor in staff motivation (Pradeep and Prabhu, 2011; Boerner et al., 2007; Bono and Judge, 2003; Dvir et al., 2002). In addition, change leadership was also found to have an effect on building confidence in an organization. Whenever leaders implement change strategies effectively in an organization, they tend to build more confidence among their staff (Yukl, 2011; Bush and Middlewood, 2005). Furthermore, past studies affirm that transformational leadership can help to build trust among leaders and followers (Owens and Valesky, 2011; Harris, 2008; Hoy and Miskel, 2008). This implies that when leaders have a clear transformational vision and goal, as well as carry their subordinates along in the new direction using appropriate communication and networking skills, soon, they will build trust in their organizations (Ravazadeh and Ravazadeh, 2013; Nilakant and Ramarayan, 2006; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005; Northouse, 2004). In conclusion, when leaders effectively and efficiently implement change policies, they will build staff confidence in the change plan, stimulate the interest of their subordinates on the change agenda and gain their trust. All these will enhance the followers to go beyond their primary duties and give their utmost to their organization.

3.3 Concept of organizational citizenship behavior
Organ (1997) provided an expanded review of organizational citizenship behavior when he conceived it as an individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly recognized by the formal reward system and that, which in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization. According to Organ (1997), this behavior is discretionary in the sense that it is not enforced on staff, but it is a form of behavior which emanates from the personal choice of the individual worker; thus, its omission is not punishable. Also, he argued further that this behavior is not recognized by the reward system (i.e. doing or displaying it does not attract any compensation or recognition). In spite of these two essential attributes of this behavior, it will help to enhance performance and development of an organization as explained by Organ. Commenting on this behavior, Turnipseed and Murkison (1996) argued...
that it is organizationally friendly because it helps to ensure transformation, innovation and achieve organizational efficiency.

3.4 factors influencing organizational citizenship behavior of staff
Organizational citizenship behavior of people is affected by some factors. These include individual, organizational and social factors. Each of these will be discussed in detail:

- Individual factor: this includes the personality of the individual staff in an organization. The kind of personality trait of people also influences their attitude toward work and organization (Owens and Valesky, 2011; Yukl, 2010). This personality has effects on the individual and the organization (Podsakoff et al., 2009). Similarly, Feather and Rauter (2004) opined that the attitude of an individual worker to work also influences their display of organizational citizenship behavior.

- Organizational factor: this includes organizational policy, climate, and leadership. This factor can enhance the display of organizational citizenship behavior. Adebayo et al. (2017) found that leadership self-efficacy has a great influence on staff display of organizational citizenship behavior. Similarly, Bashir et al. (2012) found that organizational force is one of the determinants of staff display of organizational citizenship behavior. The climate of the organization matters in our discussion. Various studies have found that organizational climate is instrumental to workers’ performance (Madhukar and Sharma, 2017; Permarupan et al., 2013; Owens and Valesky, 2011; Yukl, 2010).

- Social factor: at times, social forces can influence the display of organizational citizenship behavior. Adebayo (2018) found that workers display of organizational citizenship behavior is often influenced by social forces like culture and religion. In addition, these social factors enhance workers’ attitude to work and determine their performance as well (Park et al., 2013; Jolodar, 2012).

4. Method
4.1 Research design
This study adopted a qualitative research design. In the qualitative research design, the researcher is interested in understanding events or situations from the respondents’ perspective using flexible techniques in obtaining information (Fraenkel et al., 2015; Creswell, 2012; Maxwell, 2005).

4.2 Population and sample
The population of this study consists of academic staff in ten faculties from a research university in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as the case study. Therefore, a purposeful sampling technique was used to select ten lecturers (one lecturer from each faculty) to participate in this study. This sampling technique enables the researchers to deliberately sample appropriate person in a particular setting for the right study (Neuman, 2000; Patton, 2000, Creswell, 1997; Miles and Huberman, 1994; LeCompte et al., 1993). It is worthy to note that these lecturers were from different faculties and institutes in the case university.

4.3 Approach
A semi-structured interview protocol along with field notes and documents were used as the main approaches to collect data for this study. The interview protocol consists of ten different questions with regards to the study’s objectives on change leadership and staff organizational behavior. The interview protocol was subjected to expert validation. It was assessed by five different experts including two professors of higher education leadership and management, one associate professor of education; one senior lecturer and one expert in qualitative research. As a result, the interview questions were thoroughly vetted by these
experts. With appropriate validation, researchers can ensure that the information obtained served the purpose of their study (Fraenkel et al., 2015). After the validation procedures, the administration of the interviews was conducted with selected respondents in the faculties. Prior notice was sent to the respondents requesting them to fix a convenient time and place for the interview session. At the agreed time and place, we conducted the interviews for each of the respondents. The interviews lasted for over six months.

In establishing the trustworthiness and credibility of this qualitative study, observation field notes and document analysis were used for triangulation. Creswell (2012) noted the significance of observation field notes and documentary analysis in providing rich sources of data that give a firsthand and multimodal depiction of the research setting in addition to the responses collected from the interviews. In triangulating the findings from the interviews, the observation field notes focused on the interaction between and behavior of the staff, the actions of the leaders and the university environment. Furthermore, documentary analysis covered essential university documents like the university’s annual reports, students’ guidelines or handbook, and circulars.

4.4 **Method of data analysis**

For the data analysis, the researchers took notes from the interviewees’ answers, field notes and documentary analysis. This study used a thematic data analysis and each theme characterizes a specific aspect of change leadership and staff organizational behavior in university. The common themes emerged from participants’ answers to the interview questions and through the field notes and documentary analysis. A continuous reflection process from the thematic data analysis was followed by the researchers as interviews were concluded (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

All the interview materials were recorded, transcribed and analyzed by using the open coding, axial coding and selective coding techniques. A broad range of themes regarding participants’ opinion were adopted using inductive in-depth thematic analysis and interpreted through individual perspectives. In order to organize and manage the data more systematically, the raw data were analyzed using NVivo software. Using the computer software helped the researchers to find in-depth and detailed data on the study’s main objectives. In addition, the procedures for coding and categorizing the main themes of this study were guided with the Ladder of Analytical Abstraction (Miles and Huberman, 1994) as a framework for data analysis.

5. **Findings**

5.1 **Impact of change leadership on staff organizational citizenship behavior**

Results from thematic analysis reveal that change leadership builds confidence of staff, motivates them and helps to ensure trust as presented next.

*Confidence.* This is the first benefit of change leadership on organizational citizenship behavior. Respondents maintained that whenever their leaders display effective change leadership, it increases their confidence, which later results in staff display of organizational citizenship behavior as expressed as follows:

[...] I mean confidence level. At times, staff look up to leaders in the display of organizational citizenship behavior. As for me, when my leader tread the path of change sincerely and transparently, it will give me high confidence in the change which will later help in building my organizational citizenship behavior. (RI-0318-11-12)

Your level of confidence will increase when there are effective change practices in your organization[...]. (RI-0318-15-16)

[...] members of staff will build their confidence level, if they see that change leadership is implemented in higher education institutions. (RI-0218-20-21)
My understanding of change leadership is that it is supposed to enhance the confidence of members of staff if it is well practiced and effectively implemented by leaders. (RI8-0318-17-20)

Motivation. Some respondents argued that change leadership helps to increase their level of motivation toward their work and students. This later impacted positively on their display of organizational citizenship behavior as reported in the following statements:

Change leadership motivates me towards my work and helping my students in accomplishing their academic goals. (RI5-1117-3-4)

Once there is a change in policy in an organization, if the leadership style is friendly and effective, workers will be motivated and encouraged to dance to the tune of the new wave. By doing so, these workers will display organizational citizenship behavior. (RI7-0118-8-12)

If the leader is leading the change appropriately and carrying his or her staff along in the change process, soon, staff will cooperate and imbibe the change. They will be motivated to implement the change. This will also enhance their cooperation and teamwork in accomplishing targeted goals of the organization. In the course of doing these, staff will surely display organizational citizenship behavior. (RI2-1217-5-10)

Respondent 9 stressed that she always feel motivated when change policy that helps improve staff and students are introduced. This was clearly stated in the statement:

[…] I feel happy and highly motivated whenever a change policy that will enhance our research in introduced by the university. With this, I am always eager to do more. (RI9-0218-13-15)

From data analysis it was found that staff are motivated toward cooperation, production of quality research and students’ relation. Also, the university guidelines for students as contained in the students’ handbook (Institute of Postgraduate Studies, 2017-2018) encouraged staff toward teamwork, cooperation and support for students.

Trust. This is another by-product of change leadership. Respondents agreed that effective change leadership will improve their level of trust in the system. Once the staff trusts the system, they will trust the leadership and will go the extra mile in discharging their responsibilities. This is evident in the responses:

In my opinion, if change leadership is adequately executed or implemented, leaders will gain the trust of their staff and will be able to use the staff efficiently for the progress of the organization. (RI1-1017-11-13)

[…] members of staff in any organization will be willing to give their best and even go extra step further in discharging their duties if they believe the system and its leadership. Therefore, change leadership if properly implemented will lead to trust which will stimulate staff towards displaying organizational citizenship behavior. (RI5-0118-27-31)

Trust is important. Once there is trust in an organization, members of staff will be ready to help each other. They will also see the organization as theirs. Therefore, they will display organizational citizenship behavior based on the trust they have for their organization. (RI8-0118-8-11)

[…] people will be ready to die for a system or organization which they believe in. Their zeal and commitment for their organizations are borne out of trust they have. Therefore, trust is a key factor in the display of organizational citizenship behavior. (RI10-0218-4-8)

It is evident from our observation that staff who are showing or displaying organizational citizenship behavior all trusted their system. This trust keeps them moving.

5.2 Key forces in developing organizational citizenship behavior

Findings show that respondents agreed they were able to display organizational citizenship behavior in their respective faculties and institutes as a result of personal, organizational,
social-cultural, and economic factors. Each of these will be discussed in detail in the succeeding sub-headings.

**Personal forces.** This includes the personality of the individual staff. Respondents maintained that their personal trait influences their display of organizational citizenship behavior reported as follows:

[...] I think my personality helps me in showing organizational citizenship behavior. Your personality will say a lot of things about you. It will influence your character. (RI1-0118-12-15)

On this question, I strongly believe that my personal effort is upmost in this aspect. The type of personality you uphold will go with you everywhere. Even at workplace. I am showing positive attitude to work and organization because of my good trait and attribute. If you have a good personality, your perception and attitude to work and organization will be positive [...] (RI2-0318-25-30)

To me, showing organizational citizenship behavior is a function of your innate character. Who are you counts? Your inbuilt character will assist you in rendering assistance towards others both staff and students [...] (RI7-0318-31-34)

Also, respondents 4 and 9 argued that they were able to display organizational citizenship behavior as a result of their self-discipline. This is expressed in the statements:

I think self-discipline is responsible. I discipline myself and ensure that I give my best to my university and students. This self-discipline has earned me respect among lecturers in my faculty [...] (RI4-1117-18-20)

As for me, I will say that individual discipline is vital. When you have self-discipline and respect, you will be able to respect and assist others. This worked for me. (RI9-0118-33-35)

**Social-cultural forces.** These include the kind of training people receive from homes, the belief of the society where they live, religious influence and a host of other social factors. Some respondent viewed home training as a major cause of social-force, which motivates people to display organizational citizenship behavior at workplace. This is contained in the statement:

[...] Your home speaks a lot about you. The kind of training a child receives from the family will be transferred to school, then, to workplace. As for me, I was able to show what I described as organizational citizenship behavior because I was raised in a good home [...] (RI3-1217-19-22)

I learnt to help others from my parents. This has been a part of me even before joining the university. Therefore, helping my colleague, students and friends in my faculty is not a problem to me at all. (RI5-1017-5-7)

At times, I just see that I am showing positive attitude towards my work and the development of my institute because this training had been given to me right from childhood. (RI10-0318-14-16)

Furthermore, the tradition of a particular society was also conceived as an integral aspect of social-cultural forces which stimulates staff to display organizational citizenship behavior in higher education institutions. This view was shared by some respondents are presented as follows:

[...] I will say that our cultural value in Malaysia has helped me in the discharge of my duties as a staff of this faculty. Our culture teaches us to participate in human and societal development. This training and orientation have been with me for a very long time. This I brought to my university as a lecturer. So, working tirelessly towards the progress of my students, university and colleague is very easy for me. (RI3-0118-38-43)

What is obtainable in your society is also relevant in our discussion. I came from a cultural background that cherishes communal effort and togetherness. With these two key attributes, I was
able to offer selfless service to my master and PhD students especially when they need adequate guidance in their thesis and research. (RI8-0218-16-20)

I see helping people as a call and responsibility as a result of my culture. As a Malaysian, we are trained to help people irrespective of their background, race, religion and tribe. This orientation was transferred to the university, which gave me a lot of honor and prestige among my students and colleague [...]. (RI10-0318-15-20)

In addition, some respondents are of the view that religion prompted them to uphold organizational citizenship behavior. This is manifested in the statements:

[…] I strongly believe that rendering selfless service is part of religious obligation. Sometimes, I help my colleague and students without expecting any gain, reward or acknowledgement from them. To me, it is an obligation which I learnt from my religion. (RI2-1117-14-17)

You see, the idea of displaying organizational citizenship behavior at times, manifests from your belief. Irrespective of your faith, every religion preaches assistance and communal support to others. People often display organizational citizenship behavior as a result of their faith […]. (RI6-0218-3-6)

Organizational force. At times, organizational factor like organizational policy, leadership and organizational climate often influence staff organizational citizenship behavior of staff in higher education institutions. These will be discussed extensively in the succeeding paragraphs.

On policy, some of these respondents maintained that the kind of policy implemented in their university influenced them to display organizational citizenship behavior reported as follows:

[…] the friendly policy introduced by my university has a great influence on me. This policy of my university on teaching and research has created room for cooperation, teamwork and assistance. During the practice of such policy and guideline, I find that I am displaying organizational citizenship behavior. (RI3-1017-1721)

The rules, regulations and practice of an organization also influence. My institution is a case study. Here, we are expected to collaborate with each other and our students in area of research. During the collaboration, we will exchange ideas, views and expertise. Doing this, is a form of organizational citizenship behavior. (RI5-0118-18-22)

[…] like publication, we are expected to work together with our students in producing quality research which must be published in high impact journals. Therefore, we must work together, think together and come up with a solution to a particular area of problem. As a result, we will share ideas that will be of benefit to all. (RI8-1318-35-39)

Data analysis found that the university under review has a friendly and supportive policy for staff and students. It was noticed that the style of training laid down by the university is supportive and is aimed at producing quality and competent graduates who can compete favorably in any society. Moreover, the researchers examined the student admission letters and student handbook, which revealed that the university made it mandatory for staff and students to collaborate in the area of research and learning.

Moreover, the climate of organization could be an important factor that influences organizational citizenship behavior of staff in higher education institutions as reported by some respondents:

[…]The enabling work environment in my university also contributed. Facilities and atmosphere are conducive for staff and students to interact. These make helping each other much easier. The uninterrupted internet and assistance from the university research centers assisted me greatly. With these, I easily help my students and ready to go extra mile with the assistance. (RH-1117-38-43)
As for me, the university is trying. It provided research assistance to staff and students. Students can seek advice from experts on their work. Lecturers are not left out too. This enabling environment has motivated me in rendering selfless service to my students and other members of staff. (RI5-0318-11-15)

When the opportunity to conduct research is there and there is adequate support for researchers, we will definitely help each other and assist our students. This is what the university has done for us and it allows some of us to show adequate support for students [...]. (RI7-0218-35-38)

Respondent 6 argued that the organizational climate has made the difficult task of academic staff easy:

[…] The enabling work environment has helped to ease lecturers' difficult tasks. Example is the research assistance provided by the university. Apart from this it helps in improving the quality of research produced by the university. That is one of the reasons why this university is highly rated among other universities in the country. (RI6-0318-30-34)

From our observation, it was found that there are a lot of facilities put in place by the university management. Moreover, data analysis revealed that the university supports its staff and students in ensuring that the vision and mission of the university are attained. This also corresponds with findings from past research document, which manifested the provision for facilities and support to increase staff performance in the workplace.

Apart from policy and organizational climate, respondents conceived leadership as an essential part of organizational forces, which stimulates organizational citizenship behavior among academic staff. This is evident in the statement:

[…] when leaders are leading by example, staff will automatically follow their footstep. I learnt a lot from my Dean. She is always there for students both local and international. This act encouraged me to render extra service to my students. (RI1-1017-8-11)

Yes, leadership. This is another crucial thing in an organization. Whenever leaders motivate staff to provide excellent service, staff will automatically follow the lane. (RI6-0218-10-12)

In my own opinion, I think it is the leader […] Leaders impact seriously on the organization. My leader encouraged me in many ways. Through his good leadership style, I was able to learn how to share and give assistance to people without expecting any reward or gain for my effort. (RI10-0318-36-39)

A cross-examination of these interview responses shows that these respondents agreed that they are all influenced by their leaders. This corroborates with the results of our observation. From our observation of some faculties and institutes, we found that leaders like Deans and Directors count a lot. They influence a lot of things in their respective faculties and institutes. Based on review of research document, past studies acknowledged that leadership is crucial to organizational development and staff performance.

6. Discussion

From the results presented in the previous section, it was found that change leadership impacts organizational citizenship behavior of staff in higher education institutions by increasing staff confidence, motivating staff toward their duties and enhancing trust. Commenting on staff confidence, our findings corroborate with previous studies conducted by Yukl (2010), and Bush and Middlewood (2005), who found that staff confidence tends to improve when leaders exercise change leadership effectively in an organization. Concerning staff motivation, our results correspond with the findings of Pradeep and Prabhu (2011), who found that change leadership stimulates employee motivation in an organization. Lastly, change leadership helps to build trust. This finding is in accordance with the position of Ravazadeh and Ravazadeh (2013),
Owens and Valesky (2011) and Nilakant and Ramarayan, 2006), who argued that change leadership will enhance the trust of followers.

Furthermore, the results of this study reveal that the organizational citizenship behavior of members of academic staff in higher education institutions are influenced by individual, organizational and social-cultural forces. In terms of the individual factor, the personality of the individual staff matters a lot in the display of organizational citizenship behavior. This behavior is in-borne and not forced on the individual. The kind of personality trait of the staff is reflected in their display of organizational citizenship behavior. This result corroborates with the findings of Owens and Valesky (2011), and Yukl (2010), who opined that the personality of the individual can influence their attitude to work. If people have good traits and positive perceptions toward life, they will definitely transmit these traits to the workplace, which will result into organizational citizenship behavior (Adebayo et al., 2017; Podsakoff et al., 2009). Moreover, the study found that the organization itself is an essential factor in the staff’s display of organizational citizenship behavior. Forces within the organization itself like leadership and policies can stimulate members of staff to display organizational citizenship behavior (Adebayo et al., 2017). Also, when the climate is conducive, with friendly policies and good leadership, subordinates will be ready to go the extra mile in giving their best to their organization (Madhukar and Sharma, 2017; Permarupan et al., 2013). Finally, we found that organizational citizenship behavior of members of academic staff is also enhanced by social-cultural forces. The culture of the environment also affects attitudes toward workers and their performance at work. This finding correlates with study of Adebayo (2018), Park et al. (2013) and Jolodar (2012), who found that social factors affect employee performance in the workplace.

7. Recommendation
In order to increase organizational citizenship behavior of staff in higher education institutions, the following measures must be carefully looked into and put in place:

1. Academic leaders must lead by example. They must strive to serve as models to their subordinates. With their exemplary leadership, staff will build confidence in their leaders and will show positive attitude toward work and their organization.

2. It should be noted that organizational citizenship behavior requires positive components that allow behavior to develop. One of the main components is change leadership, which leads to desirable consequences in the organization, including increasing the efficiency, performance, positive relationship between staff, providing necessary innovation’s flexibility and offering efficient use of resources.

3. Higher education institutions must pay more attention to the role that change leadership playa in improving staff in terms of building confidence in them, motivating them and helping to ensure trust. Therefore, change leadership and organizational citizenship behavior must be included in the change plans and policies.

4. Organizational citizenship behavior requires some key forces that allow improving staff behavior. Therefore, it should give more consideration to specific forces that enhance organizational citizenship behavior of staff namely: personal, organizational, social-cultural and economic forces.

5. Change plans and policies must be duly communicated to staff. Leaders should strive to seek input from subordinates on change policies and plans.

6. Subordinate must be carried along with the transformation agenda of the system.
(7) Leaders must be transparent with their transformation agenda. The innovation plan must be clear to subordinates and should be followed systematically with sincerity and honesty in order to gain trust of subordinates and improve performance.

(8) Staff who display exceptional performance and behavior should be acknowledged and encouraged for better performance.

(9) Leaders should provide a better climate that will stimulate staff toward displaying organizational citizenship behavior.

8. Conclusion
In this study, we found that change leadership can impact the organizational citizenship behavior of staff in higher education institutions. Also, employee display of organizational citizenship behavior can be influenced by individual, organizational and social-cultural forces. In order to enhance efficiency and effective performance of staff in higher education institutions, there is a need for leaders to be transparent with their policies, carry staff along with new plans, lead the path of change diligently, build trust and confidence, and provide suitable organizational climate. If all these measures are put in place, higher education institutions will achieve their pre-determined goals.

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Further reading

About the authors

Simin Ghavifekr is Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Management, Planning and Policy, Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, Malaysia. She is Editor for the *Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Management* (Scopus-indexed). Her research interest includes: educational management and leadership, Higher Education, ICT in educational management. Simin Ghavifekr is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: drsimin@um.edu.my

Adebayo Saheed Adewale is School Administrator and Human Resource Practitioner. He is currently Post-doctorate Research Fellow in National Higher Education Research Institute, Universiti Sains Malaysia. His research interest includes: educational leadership, organizational behavior and human resource management in education.

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The impact of loyalty on the student satisfaction in higher education
A structural equation modeling analysis

Kumudini Sriyalatha Mallika Appuhamilage
Business Economics,
University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka, and
Hiroshi Torii
Meijo University, Nagoya, Japan

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine whether the image of the university, environment, facilities, student expectations, internationalization, services, financial support and perceived value have direct effect on the satisfaction and loyalty of the students of social sciences at Meijo (Private) University, Japan.

Design/methodology/approach – To analyze the data, a confirmatory factor analysis was applied where it explored the associations between items and constructs and, then, utilized structural equation model (SEM) to investigate the relationships existing between constructs with the application of the R program. A structured questionnaire comprising of 52 questions were used with 10 constructs. A total of 257 students from Meijo (private) university filled in the newly developed questionnaires using seven items Likert scales.

Findings – The study reveals a valuable insight on student satisfaction and loyalty toward the university. According to the findings, satisfaction has a positive direct impact from services and financial support provided by the university. And also loyalty has a positive strong impact on student satisfaction. On the contrary, satisfaction reveals a positive strong direct impact on loyalty too. Furthermore, there is an indirect impact of image, services and perceived value on loyalty. All the goodness of fit indices are at acceptable levels. Thus, the satisfaction of students seems to reflect quite well from the above construct, image, services, financial support and perceived values.

Research limitations/implications – This study collected data from two faculties, Faculty of Business Management and Faculty of Economics. The results of this finding cannot be generalized to the entire Meijo university student as a whole.

Originality/value – This study successfully applied an SEM to identify the relationship among constructs. Thus, this research has hopefully opened up avenues for other researchers to carry out such behavioral studies with larger sample sizes by applying R program with SEM analysis.

Keywords Japan, Satisfaction, Loyalty, SEM analysis, Social science students

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The higher education sector has evolved recently due to new trends such as the increasing competition among the universities, internationalization of education, growth of quality standards and also students becoming more demanding. In line with this context, the universities need to re-evaluate their strategies and gain a marketing orientation in order to survive in the market. Thus, higher education sector is moving into more competitive market structures that threaten the survival of some of the existing institutions. At the same
time, globalization and digital revolution has generated a demand for new and wide-ranging disciplines in education. The huge increase in the number of institutions in higher education has led to an intense competition. In this competitive environment, only those institutions can perform well which provides quality education, constructive environment and facilities to their students, as these factors can act as stimulus for students to select the university. Meanwhile, such factors can have an impact on students’ satisfaction in their institutions and can affect their decisions to attend the university.

Recent higher education policy in Japan
Japan faces a diminishing and an aging population with fewer college entrants and limited natural resources. It is a widely accepted view that Japan must improve its workforce quality, productivity, and increase innovation to remain competitive (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2014b). Therefore, the Japanese government policy makers realized science and technology-driven innovation as a key factor to achieve higher productivity. The government policy on education has placed priority on significantly increasing the number of incoming and outgoing international students and developing the competitiveness of universities at the international level. According to Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2014a), target was to double the number of Japanese students studying abroad and the number foreign students studying in Japan by 2020.

Japan Student Services Organization (2016) reported that new internationalization policy has facilitated Japan to gain a new total of 152,062 international student enrollments in higher education in 2015, up from 121,012 in 2005.

Thus, Yamada (2017) pointed out that policy makers have to formulate new policies to increase internationalization of faculties, students, and program requirements to facilitate the development of students with global competencies, such as foreign languages and intercultural communication skills. Still, it is a major challenge due to the act that young Japanese have become increasingly wary of international ambitions and is more often content to limit themselves to a domestic environment, both in academics and the workplace. Sanno Institute of Management in a new survey of graduates showed that 58.7 percent of respondents did not like to work abroad in 2013, compared to 28.7 percent in 2004 (as cited by Yonezawa, 2014). Addressing these issues, education policy in Japan is placing high priorities on foreign language ability for Japanese students. Recent literature suggested that satisfied students are more likely to continue their education until graduation and also recommend the university to their relatives and friends. Thus, student satisfaction, which affects new students’ enrollment and also the current student retention level, is an important matter for higher education organizations in considering seriously attracting students (Schertzer and Schertzer, 2004).

Within this context, the knowing the institutional and other related factors which can influence a potential student to choose one university over another are important to the university administrators. Furthermore, to increase enrollments and attract more students to the institution, it is important to identify these factors. Meantime, it is important for administrators to adopt a right market orientation strategy to differentiate their services from the others and to determine the long-term effective enrollment practices in their institutions. Therefore, the perception of student satisfaction and loyalty are attracting more attention, especially due to the increasing threat of global competition among the educational institutions. In this situation, a key motivation for the growing emphasis in research on student satisfaction is that higher student satisfaction and/or loyalty can have an impact on a stronger competitive position. The lack of studies on students’ satisfaction and loyalty in Japan is the primary motivating factor behind this study.

The main objective of this paper is to examine how student loyalty is affected by student satisfaction. Meanwhile, secondary objectives are to investigate how student satisfaction is
affected by the perceived value, image of the university and services provided by the university. The alternatives of the proposed model are tested through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach using R Studio.

What is R
R is a free, open-source software and programming language developed in 1995 at the University of Auckland as an environment for statistical computing and graphics (Ihaka and Gentleman, 1996). Before we start using R, we have to create a working directory. A working directory is the location where all our data files are saved. This directory works as the default location for the input and output data files working with R. Once we create our directory, we can import data from “csv” file. First command for importing data into R is \texttt{read.csv()}(). This command is followed by the file name and some additional comments to read the file. Thereafter, we have to write the commands as our requirements to continue the analysis. For example, if we want to calculate correlation matrix, simple command is \texttt{cor()} and to get correlation plot, we can use the following command, \texttt{corrplot(r)}. This software is user friendly and more flexible. Thus, this study is employed this free software package to achieve the research objectives.

The study was conducted among the undergraduate students studying at Meijo University which is one of the main private universities in Nagoya, Japan. The population of this study comprised of undergraduate students enrolled in the field of social science in Meijo University which is located in a major urban area of Japan, Nagoya.

The paper is organized as follows. The next part presents the literature review and research model. This is followed by a discussion on the research methodology. Finally, the results are presented and implications are discussed.

Literature review and the proposed model
The success of the organizations such as manufacturing or service providers, profit or non-profit and governmental or non-governmental is determined by a number of factors. Customer satisfaction can be considered as one of the most important factors among them. At present, achieving higher level of customer satisfaction is one of the main concerns of quality management systems in an organization. In recent years, due to increased competition of Higher Education sector, higher education institutions are giving more attention on factors such as student satisfaction. Even though, several studies have observed customer satisfaction and loyalty as important in achieving the success of the organization, one might hesitate to call students as “customers” in the education sector because of the student–teacher relationship. The important fact is that without students, there would be no need for educational institutions, hence, understanding of relationship between student satisfaction, and loyalty will help universities to formulate strategies for operational excellence. The universities in the higher education sector are one of the most important service fields in any country which play a unique role in the society. Therefore, it is vital for service organizations to have a proper understanding of the determinants of consumer’s satisfaction as to have a really high monetary value. Several studies have been carried out to measure the student satisfaction at university level around the world. Those studies have pointed out that different factors can potentially affect the student’s satisfaction.

Image, loyalty and perceived value
Brown and Mazzarol (2009) have examined the importance of institutional image to student satisfaction and loyalty in Australian universities. Results revealed that student loyalty was predicted by student satisfaction, which was, in turn, predicted by the perceived image
of the university. In addition, they found that the perceived quality has an impact on the perceived value. Among these variables, the most important impact was derived from image, which strongly projected the perceived value but at the same time a weak relationship with student satisfaction. Eskildsen et al. (1999) found that the variable image has strong influenced on student’ loyalty in higher education.

Temizer and Turkyilmaz (2012) developed a Student Satisfaction Index model for the Higher Educational Institutes (HEIs) to test the satisfaction of students from different aspects, such as image of the university, expectations, perceived quality, perceived value and loyalty.

The results revealed that there is a significant strong impact on satisfaction from perceived quality and image. The student expectations have the lowest and insignificant effect on satisfaction. Image and student satisfaction were the independent latent variables of loyalty. They showed that both variables have a significant relationship with loyalty in the model.

Thomas (2011) studied how student loyalty is affected by student satisfaction and reputation, in leading universities in South India. The data were collected from 243 students undergoing post graduate programs in arts, commerce, science, and engineering by using a questionnaire. The results confirmed that there is a strong positive correlation between satisfaction and loyalty. This implies that the student satisfaction is a major driver of student’s loyalty.

Alves and Raposo (2006) identified the factors that influence student satisfaction in higher education in Portuguese state universities. They found that the variable image is the one which has the most influence on students’ satisfaction. Again, the results confirmed that image has a direct significant influence on students’ loyalty as well. Furthermore, the findings revealed that student satisfaction in higher education is influenced by its perceived value. The influence of the variable perceived value is indicated as one of the greatest important factors after the influence of image.

Shahsavar and Sudzina (2017) examined the role of different drivers of student satisfaction and loyalty using the European Performance Satisfaction Index (EPISI) methodology in the higher education market place. They especially have investigated the image of university’s image on student’s expectations. The results of this study confirmed that there are significant indirect effects of university’s image on students’ satisfaction and the perceived value via students’ expectations in Danish universities. Furthermore, based on the EPISI model, university’s image, students’ expectation, perceived value, perceived quality of software and perceived quality of hardware are assumed to have direct and indirect impacts on satisfaction and loyalty.

Facility and financial support
Najib et al. (2011) examined the resident satisfaction level with student housing facilities in Malaysia. The findings of the study revealed that the level of student satisfaction with living accommodations as one of the most important factors of leading universities in Malaysia.

Abu Hasan et al. (2008) investigated the relationship between service quality and students’ satisfaction at Kuala Lumpur Infrastructure University College and Kolej Universiti Teknologi dan Pengurusan Malaysia. They found that service quality has a sigificant positive relationship with student satisfaction. Thus, they suggested by improving service quality it may potentially improve the students’ satisfaction.

For many institutions, facilities provided to the students are perceived as an important influence on students’ choice. Price et al. (2003) examined the impact of facilities on student choice of universities in the UK. They found that facilities make a significant influence on undergraduate students’ choice of a university.

Evelyn (2016) examined the critical factors considered by students when deciding to enroll in private higher education institutions and their choice. The researcher has used a
case study approach and draws data from all the six private higher education institutions in Zimbabwe. The findings indicated that six factors influenced student choice of higher education institutions in Zimbabwe. Access and opportunity; promotional information and marketing; influence by others; quality of teaching and learning; fees and cost structure; and finally academic reputation and recognition are considered as the most influential factors.

Jiewanto et al. (2012) examined the influence of Service Quality (SERVQUAL) to word of mouth (WOM) intention mediated by student satisfaction and university image. They used a case study approach and administered a questionnaire among 140 students to identify the relationship between the variables simultaneously. The results revealed that SERVQUAL had a positive significant impact on the student satisfaction and university image, and then, it impacted the positive WOM intention.

Chandra et al. (2018) examined the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction, service quality with student loyalty, and student satisfaction with student loyalty in universities in Riau Province in Indonesia. The findings indicated that there is a positive influence of service quality on student satisfaction and a positive influence of student satisfaction on student loyalty. Furthermore, they found that there was no significant impact from student quality on student loyalty.

Duarte et al. (2012) investigated the factors that influence students’ satisfaction with higher education services in Portugal. They found a positive relationship between service quality and student satisfaction. Similarly, they observed that there is a strong relationship between student satisfaction and student loyalty.

Fares et al. (2013) examined the effect of student satisfaction, service quality, and university reputation on customer loyalty in the International Islamic University Malaysia. The result showed that all independent variables have significant and strong positive impact on student loyalty.

Other antecedents of student satisfaction
Nguyen et al. (2005) studied students’ perception on employment attributes and its implications for university education in Japan. Parallel to this study, they examined the satisfaction level of their course, job opportunities and sources of personal qualities. The results showed that students’ dissatisfaction was revealed with their personal traits in terms of taking initiative, having flexibility and in demonstrating an entrepreneurial mind.

Bray et al. (2008) examined predictors of learning satisfaction in Japanese online distance learners. Distance learners satisfaction was evaluated by using five aspects, such as teacher interaction, content interaction, student interaction, computer interaction and student autonomy. The results revealed that students were mostly satisfied with their distance learning and satisfaction was higher for students who could persevere in the face of distance learning challenges.

Tamaoka et al. (2003) studied the satisfaction of international students in Japanese Universities. They used ten variables to forecast the satisfaction of international students and found five significant variables in predicating the satisfaction. Ten variables included suitability of curriculum, progress of research, having a good friend, cultural adaptation and part-time work. Among these, the suitability of the curriculum was the most significant predictor of satisfaction.

Based on this literature on the student satisfaction and loyalty, we can see that satisfaction and loyalty are very important whether it is in services, in general, or especially in higher education. The findings of various studies about customer satisfaction and loyalty in education sector found different relationships in different directions. Thus, this study intends to test a conceptual model with more constructs of the student satisfaction and loyalty in higher education by using different directions. The model assumes, the dependent variable as student loyalty and it has one independent variable, student satisfaction.
The model also checks for the indirect impact of the perceived value on loyalty through the mediating variable called student satisfaction. The proposed conceptual framework is presented as follows.

The other intention of this study is to find out whether or not the difference in two students attributes such as gender and accommodation affects their satisfaction level or loyalty level. The following hypotheses were made to check the relationship between single student attribute with their satisfaction level and loyalty level.

**Hypothesis of the study**

**H1.** There will be no statistically significant difference between genders of the students’ and satisfaction level and loyalty level.

**H2.** There will be no statistically significant difference between accommodation and the students’ satisfaction level and loyalty level.

Student satisfaction is caused by different factors, such as image of the university, perceived value, environment of the university (e.g. location, new and clean) available facilities (e.g. parking, class room, athletic, cafeteria, elevators, etc.), perceived value, opportunities of internationalization (exchange program, language learning support), services provided by the academic and administrative staff (administrative matters, academic matters and searching job opportunities) and financial support. Each factor in the model is a latent construct which is operationalized by multiple indicators. It is expected that students’ expectations and student satisfaction should have an impact on student loyalty.

In this study reputation of the university (e.g. Nobel prize winners), reliability and trustworthiness, contribution to the society, leading position among the society, being a place of active and new thinking have been considered to measure university’s image.

To measure expectation construct, the following were taken into consideration: what students expect from the structure of the programs and the range of updated courses offered, the internship facilities, career education and content of the lectures have been considered in this study.

Fernández and Bonillo (2006) described that students’ perceived value as the overall assessment of utilizing the service according to their perception of what is received instead of what is given. In addition, the likelihood of accomplish objectives that students pursue during student life at the university also reflects the value of education. The price pay for the university to gain benefits such as the quality of service, education and facilities are the elements used in this study to measure their perceived value.

To measure students’ loyalty construct, the study used proud of being a student at the university, student’s choice for further and supplementary programs after graduation and recommending their university to others. Student satisfaction indicates how much students are satisfied as a student of the faculty and the university and how well their expectations and career goals are met. This construct evaluates overall satisfaction level of students.

**Sample and methodology**

A structured questionnaire, developed to measure the manifest variables, was prepared in Japanese language, and the first draft was distributed among 30 students to ensure that the wording, format, and sequencing of questions were appropriate. The final questionnaire contained 52 questions, 42 of that pertaining to the proposed conceptual framework, five were for demographics and other five were for the purpose of cross checking the reliability of the responses. The questions about satisfaction and loyalty were placed at the end of the questionnaire. A seven-point Likert scale was used where 1 expresses highly satisfied and 7
expresses highly dissatisfied. Five point scales, seven point scales or ten point scales are all comparable for analytical tools such as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and SEM. This model contains a number of latent variables and mediating variables; thus, SEM is considered as an appropriate technique for the analysis. We used R version 3.5.1 and Latent Variable Model (lavaan’ version 0.6-3). Surveys were conducted to randomly choose recent undergraduate students from the field of Social Sciences at the Meijo (private) university in Nagoya, Japan, in October, 2018.

Meijo University was selected as the context of this study for a number of reasons. It has an over 90 years of history that can be traced back to the establishment of the Nagoya Science and Technology Course in 1926. It is a comprehensive learning institution that supports a wide range of academic fields from humanities to physical sciences. It was established as a university in 1949 and it is one of the largest universities in the Chubu region of Central Japan. It has nine faculties and 23 academic departments including the Faculty of Science and Technology. Meijo University is home to large numbers of outstanding researchers who continually announce leading-edge breakthroughs in fields of research and education. It currently enrolls about 15,000 internal undergraduate students. Approximately, 20 percent students belong to the Faculty of Business Management and Faculty of Economics. Based on this background information, we decided to select respondents from the above two faculties at Meijo University.

A total of 257 students responded to the questionnaire of which 216 responded to all the questions relevant for this study. In total, 41 cases were removed from the original data base because of the data outlier.

Table I shows the profile of respondents by gender, year of study, current residence, faculty and the time spend to come to the university. The Student Satisfaction and loyalty of Meijo University were based on survey data gathered from students attending two faculties, faculty of Business Management and Faculty of Economics. Gender distribution of the sample was 65 percent (140) males and 35 percent (76) females. The sample was composed of 70 percent Business Management undergraduates and 30 percent Economics undergraduates.

In Table II, we present an overview of the validity and reliability of the variables: image, environment, facility, expectations, internationalization, service, financial support, perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty based on the Cronbach’s $\alpha$ value. All constructs were pre-tested and found to be valid and reliable. The Cronbach’s $\alpha$ for these variables was greater than 0.7 the threshold suggested by Nunnally (1978).

### Analysis and results

In general, researchers do not know in advance how many latent variables to specify when performing a factor analysis. There are several ways to identify a good number of latent variables. One of the simplest ways is to look at the Sum of Squared (SS) loading values and use the rule of thumb where if a value is greater than 1.0, then the factor is significant. In our

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>140</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of study</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>Own house</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Business management</td>
<td>148</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>62</td>
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**Table I.** Respondents’ profile

<table>
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<th>Time spend to arrive</th>
<th>&lt; 30 min</th>
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<td></td>
<td>68</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>14</td>
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</table>
study, all are greater than 1. Cumulative Variance tells us the cumulative proportion of variance explained, so these numbers range from 0 to 1. In our model of 0.64 seems moderate level. The results are presented in Table III.

The proposed model used 42 items comprising the ten constructs which were subjected to the CFA with the 216 input. It allows testing the hypothesis to find a relationship between observed variables and their underlying latent constructs exists. In this study, several indicators designated to the image, loyalty, service and financial support constructs were dropped out to improve the quality of the research model after validity and reliability tests on different models. The indicators remained in the research model were included for further analysis. After testing various models, we reached to finalize the model 1 and 2, which are provided higher goodness-of-fit measures in this study.

**Descriptive statistics**

The arithmetic means of the respondents’ answers for each criterion are presented in Table IV below. There were 42 criterions under the ten constructs. The mean value for each service item ranges from the minimum value 3.69 to maximum value 4.82.

The CFA was analyzed by R version 3.5.1. The results of the overall fit statistics are reported in Table V for two models which were used based on the literature.

An analysis of the goodness-of-fit measures presented in Table V shows that nearly all the measures present a satisfactory level of acceptability and that the model explains about 90 percent data variance (value of goodness of fit indices).

**Loyalty and satisfaction models**

Shahsavari and Sudzina (2017) examined the student satisfaction and loyalty at Danish universities in Denmark by applying the EPSI. They measured the strength of determinants of students’ satisfaction and the importance of antecedents in students’ satisfaction and loyalty. The findings show the significance of antecedents in students’ satisfaction and loyalty at Danish universities; the university image and student satisfaction are the antecedents of student loyalty with a significant direct effect, meantime perceived value, quality of hardware, quality of software, expectations and university image. Based on these findings, we applied model 1 (Loyalty model) into this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Cronbach’s α</th>
<th>No. of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>0.930</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>0.707</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility</td>
<td>0.849</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>0.905</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internationalization</td>
<td>0.844</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>0.915</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>0.820</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived value</td>
<td>0.944</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.898</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>0.861</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table II.**

Reliability statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SS loadings</td>
<td>6.898</td>
<td>4.344</td>
<td>4.068</td>
<td>3.532</td>
<td>2.636</td>
<td>1.933</td>
<td>1.778</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>1.211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative variance</td>
<td>0.157</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td>0.348</td>
<td>0.428</td>
<td>0.488</td>
<td>0.532</td>
<td>0.572</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table III.**

Factor loadings
## Table IV.
Descriptive statistics of the criterion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>q1</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>q16</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>q31</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>q2</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td></td>
<td>q17</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td></td>
<td>q32</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>0.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>q3</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td></td>
<td>q18</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td></td>
<td>q33</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>q4</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td></td>
<td>q19</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>Perceived value</td>
<td>q34</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>0.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>q5</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td></td>
<td>q20</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td></td>
<td>q35</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>0.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>q6</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td></td>
<td>q21</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td></td>
<td>q36</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>q7</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td></td>
<td>q22</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>q37</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>0.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>q8</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td></td>
<td>q23</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td></td>
<td>q38</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>0.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>q9</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>Internationalization</td>
<td>q24</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>0.092</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>q39</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>q10</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td></td>
<td>q25</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td></td>
<td>q40</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>0.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility</td>
<td>q11</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td></td>
<td>q26</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td></td>
<td>q41</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>0.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>q12</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>q27</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td></td>
<td>q42</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>q13</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td></td>
<td>q28</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>q14</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td></td>
<td>q29</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>q15</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td></td>
<td>q30</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>0.103</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gruber et al. (2010) investigated how students perceived the services offered by German university and how satisfied they were with these services. The results showed that students’ satisfaction with their university was based on a relatively stable person–environment relationship. In this study students’ satisfaction was considered as a dependent variable.

Alves and Raposo (2006) illustrated that the main antecedents of satisfaction as expectations, the university’s image perceived by the student, quality perceived in both technical and functional aspects of the education service, as well as the perceived value. These influences can be direct or indirect through students’ loyalty and WOM. The model illustrates loyalty and WOM actions as the main consequences of satisfaction.

The findings of these studies about student satisfaction and loyalty in education sector found different relationships in different directions. Therefore, this study applied both direction as indicated by Model 1 and Model 2.

Table VI and Figure 1 present results of the final model after removing the least significant indicators. From the table, it is possible to verify that all the indicators are statistically significant to a level of significance of 0.05. Thus, one can say that all the indicators are significantly related to their specific constructs. There is a significant positive and a direct effect on students’ satisfaction from image, services and value with the regression coefficient values of 0.376, 0.294 and 0.376, respectively. Image and financial support have a significant positive direct effect on the perceived value. According to regression relationships for loyalty, student satisfaction (0.908) has a significant strong impact on loyalty. The results further confirm several findings of previous studies of student satisfaction (Fernandes et al., 2013; Mark, 2013).

A particular attention was paid to student satisfaction construct as it is the ultimate factor in the model. Service, perceived value and loyalty are the independent latent variables of this constructs with the regression coefficient values of 0.175, 0.252 and 0.680, respectively (Table VII). From the results, it is evident that students are satisfied with higher education in Meijo University. As all the variables are significantly and positively related to students’ satisfaction, it is concluded that loyalty and service have a direct impact on satisfaction. However, financial support and image have direct impact on the perceived value and indirect impact on the perceived value to satisfaction. Results of the model 2 are shown in Figure 2 (Figure 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>AIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty (1)</td>
<td>0.884</td>
<td>0.828</td>
<td>0.957</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>8,606.651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction (2)</td>
<td>0.888</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.959</td>
<td>0.946</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>8,603.496</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table V. Fit measures for the final models

| Construct          | Estimate | SE    | z-value | P(>|z|) | Std.lv | Std.all |
|--------------------|----------|-------|---------|--------|--------|---------|
| Satisfaction       |          |       |         |        |        |         |
| Image              | 0.376    | 0.101 | 3.709   | 0.000  | 0.346  | 0.346   |
| Service            | 0.294    | 0.134 | 2.184   | 0.029  | 0.232  | 0.232   |
| Value              | 0.376    | 0.114 | 3.307   | 0.001  | 0.35   | 0.352   |
| Loyalty            |          |       |         |        |        |         |
| Satisfaction       | 0.908    | 0.053 | 17.220  | 0.000  | 0.914  | 0.914   |
| Perceived value    |          |       |         |        |        |         |
| Image              | 0.197    | 0.069 | 2.848   | 0.004  | 0.194  | 0.194   |
| Financial support  | 0.914    | 0.093 | 9.805   | 0.000  | 0.720  | 0.720   |

Table VI. Regression results (loyalty model (1))
Figure 1. Proposed conceptual framework

Figure 2. Loyalty model (1): latent variables relationships

Table VII. Regression results (satisfaction model (2))

| Construct      | Estimate | SE  | z-value | P(>|z|) | Std.lv | Std.all |
|----------------|----------|-----|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| Satisfaction   |          |     |         |         |        |         |
| Service        | 0.175    | 0.064 | 2.721   | 0.007   | 0.140  | 0.140   |
| Value          | 0.252    | 0.070 | 3.592   | 0.000   | 0.238  | 0.238   |
| Loyalty        | 0.680    | 0.061 | 11.052  | 0.000   | 0.682  | 0.682   |

Perceived value

| Study variable | E   | SE  | z-value | P(>|z|) | Std.lv | Std.all |
|----------------|-----|-----|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| Image          | 0.205 | 0.07 | 2.745   | 0.006   | 0.200  | 0.200   |
| Fin            | 0.917 | 0.097 | 9.414   | 0.000   | 0.721  | 0.721   |
Second, SEM was conducted on the overall satisfaction level with the treatment of student attributes, such as gender and accommodation. After analysis, it is seen that student attributes, gender and accommodation showed insignificant relationship. Lavaan summary of the goodness-of-fit measures (Table VIII) show that nearly all the measures present are not at the satisfactory level of acceptability.

**Conclusion**

The HEIs/the universities especially, face more competitive market structures and also have to provide services that fulfill students’ requirements and expectations. These challenges have threatened the survival of some of the existing institutions. To confront these different challenges, HEIs use various strategies, such as providing financial support, improving facilities, affiliating with other institutions and industry. These will be important as these factors influence students’ satisfaction. Thus, HEIs are motivated to spend more time and effort on the concept of student satisfaction and loyalty to succeed and survive in this context.

This study aimed to test the student satisfaction and loyalty by using SEM analysis in Meijo University, Japan. Student satisfaction was evaluated from different aspects, such as image of the university, environment, facility, expectations, internationalization, services, financial support, perceived value and loyalty of students. Student satisfaction is subjected to many factors, which combine together to influence the overall level of satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>AIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>0.669</td>
<td>0.578</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>8.792</td>
<td>0.747</td>
<td>0.754</td>
<td>9,244.726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.676</td>
<td>0.587</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>8.788</td>
<td>0.749</td>
<td>0.752</td>
<td>9,241.749</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of this study indicated that image, service and perceived value have a direct positive relationship to students’ satisfaction (Model 1). Although service, image and perceived value have no direct effect on loyalty, those factors still show a positive indirect effect via student satisfaction to loyalty. Furthermore, image and financial support have a significant positive direct effect on the perceived value. According to regression relationships for loyalty model, student satisfaction has shown significant strong impact on loyalty. This result was consistent with the results of Temizer and Turkyilmaz (2012), Thomas (2011), Webb and Jagun (1997) and Eskildsen et al. (1999). Furthermore, Alves and Raposo (2006) pointed out that student’s loyalty was the main consequence for student satisfaction.

The second model analyzed interrelationship between satisfaction and other constructs. The results revealed that the biggest direct impact on satisfaction was from loyalty followed by perceived value and afterwards services. Therefore, this result revealed that loyalty, services and perceived value have a positive direct relationship to student satisfaction. This corresponded to the studies done by Chandra et al. (2018). On the contrary, financial support and image have shown direct impact on perceived value and indirect impact through perceived value to satisfaction.

The results of the study provide valuable strategic information for the university academics and administrators about the affecting factors on student satisfaction and loyalty. According to the results, for student satisfaction and loyalty, the administrators of the university should focus on the services and financial support they provide, image of the institution from the eyes of their students and the benefits they provide for the price paid for the university.

References


**Corresponding author**
Kumudini Sriyalatha Mallika Appuhamilage can be contacted at: kumuduni@sjp.ac.lk
Gaps between competence and importance of employability skills: evidence from Malaysia

Husaina Banu Kenayathulla
Faculty of Education, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Nor Aziah Ahmad
UTHM, Parit Raja, Malaysia, and

Abdul Rahman Idris
Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to identify the gaps between the importance perceived and the competence gained by the hospitality students in terms of the employability skills.

Design/methodology/approach – Questionnaires were distributed to 841 hospitality students in five regions in Malaysia. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data.

Findings – The findings show that there are significant differences between importance perceived and competence attained in teamwork, leadership, basic, technical skills and ethical skills. Additionally, the finding of this study indicates that the culinary and bakery students perceive that they are not given adequate exposure to possess such skills. It is important to ensure that graduates are equipped with the twenty-first century skills such as problem solving and analytic, decision making, organization and time management, risk taking and communication.

Research limitations/implications – The findings provide insights to curriculum developers and policy makers on the appropriate interventions that need to be taken to improve the employability skills of the graduates.

Originality/value – An original contribution is made by linking employability model to TVET sector.

Keywords Skills, Malaysia, Employability, Workforce, Hospitality, TVET

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Malaysia needs high-skilled workforce to support growth of the industry. With dynamically changing job market and progressive technological change, employees are expected to keep abreast of global economics (Singh et al., 2013). In the process of achieving the status of developed nation by the year 2020, Malaysia needs to restructure its workforce to ensure that middle-level workers are highly skilled. Malaysian future workforce has to be able to cope with the changing nature and demands of works. Future workforce needs to acquire the employability skills required by all industries. Technical and Vocational Education can play a major role in providing future workforce with employability skills. Malaysia seeks to expand student enrollment in TVET to support the Government’s push for more medium and high-skilled workers under the Economic Transformation Programme. This field now comprises only 25 percent of the workforce (Eleventh Malaysian Plan, 2016–2020). The Eleventh Malaysia Plan aims to boost this workforce to 35 percent, at par with academic and professional graduates (MOF, 2015).

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Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education) emphasizes that Malaysia needs graduates who are able to successfully navigate complex challenges such as global warming, economic crises and others. Thus, graduates not only required to have the right knowledge and technical expertise, but also the capacity to make ethical decisions and the resilience to deal with rapid change. The 2012 McKinsey Study, Education to Employment, showed that over 70 percent of universities belief that they have adequately prepared students for the workplace. However, only 40 percent of employers’ belief students are adequately prepared for workplace.

These skills can be developed with the cooperation of students, higher education institutions, employers and policy makers. As one of key player in enhancing employability, the higher learning institutions need to identify how they can enhance skills of their students. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in Malaysia has aggressively embarked on a mission to take in students and enhance their soft skills development in order to produce high quality human capital, knowledgeable, competitive workforce that has the creative, innovative features and move in line with industry requirements and social needs of the country. These soft skills such as human relations skills, communication skills, ethical behavior skills and cognitive skills are the attributes that employers consider when reviewing job applicants.

A survey undertaken in 2013 covering final year students who have successfully completed their Industrial Training program was taken to evaluate the employer perspective on the four elements of employment skills based on the generic student attributes established by MOHE such as communication skills, teamwork skills, critical thinking and long-life learning. Evaluation on the performance output generally categorized on the generic skills, give an indication on the feedback and perception on industrial training by the host organizations and students.

Employers often look for a specific set of skills from job-seekers that match the skills necessary to perform a particular job. For instance, financial skills are needed for the position of accountant. But beyond these job-specific technical skills, certain skills are nearly universally sought by employers (Hansen, 2010). It is important for vocational colleges to prepare graduates that meet the required skills for employability. Such skills might vary based on industry needs.

Employability skills is referred to as the skill required to secure and retain a job and recent usage of the term that is often used to describe the training or foundation skills upon which a person must develop job-specific skills. Employability skills are those essential skills necessary for acquiring, keeping and performing well on a job (Shafie and Nayan, 2010). Such skills include managing resources, communication and interpersonal skills, teamwork and problem solving and acquiring and maintaining a job. Employers today emphasize on getting good workers who not only have basic academic skills like reading, writing, science, mathematics, oral communication and listening, but also higher order thinking skills like learning, reasoning, thinking creatively, decision making and problem solving (Shafie and Nayan, 2010). According to Robinson (2006), there is a great demand for educated people with general employability and specialized technical skills. Workers in the twenty-first century need skills such as problem solving and analytic, decision making, organization and time management, risk taking and communication to be employable in the workforce. A study conducted by the Stanford Research Institute and Carnegie Melon Foundation involving Fortune 500 CEOs found that 75 percent of long-term job success depended upon people skills and that only 25 percent on technical knowledge. Further analysis found that the key traits employers are keen to look for are on the achievement orientation such as self-motivation, proactive, high integrity, reliable, able to work independently with minimal supervision, emotionally stable and able to perform well under pressure.
From the perspective of the production industrial employers, technical graduates master sufficient technical skills, but lack of motivation, interpersonal, critical thinking, problem solving and entrepreneurship skills (Sattar et al., 2010). Husman (2005) contends that 62.3 percent graduates in technical fields are still jobless because they lack of employability skills rather than technical skills required by the industry. In this case, short courses can help upgrade these skills. Hence, Sattar et al. (2010) also addressed issues in Mohamed and Mohd (2005) research on polytechnic graduates found that about 50.5 percent technical graduates of Malaysian Polytechnics are jobless for almost nine months of the year because of lack employability skills. He found that these graduates lack competencies in communication, writing and computer skills.

Previous research in Malaysia also indicates that tourism and hotel management program students should demonstrate good communication skills and higher order thinking skills. Most of the curriculum in the hotel management program does not expose students to higher order thinking skills. Students are mostly trained in personal and practical skills. However, students generally lack higher order thinking skills which is important to be effective managers. But, not much empirical research has been conducted for hospitality industry. This research aims to identify the gaps between the perceived importance and competence of culinary and bakery students in terms of employability skills. This study provides insights to policy makers and curriculum developers on the appropriate intervention that needs to prepare future workers in hospitality field.

2. Literature review

Conceptualizing and defining employability skills

Employability skills may be broadly defined as the basic academic, personal and teamwork skills that employers expect from their workers, which are expected to be developed by the educational system. According to Munro (2007), employability skills involve the ability to contribute to work efficiency in an organization combined with good oral and written communication skills and critical thinking, which form the foundation of both academic and workplace success. Bennett et al. (2000) argued that employability skills include not only the attributes that are desired from prospective employees but also the basic requirements an individual needs to be considered for employment. These skills are required to perform a task efficiently and to contribute to the growth of an organization. Employability skills are group of skills which help in supporting the ability of an individual to perform effectively in the workplace. It is non-technical skills and sometimes called “transferable skills” or “soft skills” or “generic skills.” The employability skills consist of basic skills, thinking skills, resource skills, information skills, interpersonal skills, system and technology skills and personal qualities (Clarke, 2007). Employability skills are those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping and doing well on a job. Zinser (2003) stated that employability skills include areas such as managing resources, communication and interpersonal skills, teamwork and problem solving and acquiring and retaining a job. Employability skills are those essential skills necessary for getting, keeping and doing well on a job. These are the skills, attitudes and actions that enable workers to get along with their fellow workers and supervisors and to make sound, critical decisions. Unlike occupational or technical skills, employability skills are generic in nature rather than job specific and cut across all industry types, business sizes and job levels from the entry-level worker to the senior-most position (Robinson, 2006).

Overtoom (2000) defined employability skills as transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge, skills and attitudes required in the twenty-first century to function effectively on the job. Overtoom (2000) suggested that employability skills are necessary for success in the job market regardless of the employee’s chosen career path, employment level or educational background. Employability skill is a
group of important skills instilled in each individual in order to produce productive workforce (Overtoom, 2000; Kazilan et al., 2009). This is parallel with individuals who have strong characteristics such as a high sense of self innovative, productive, skillful and competitive, a strong sense of determination and creative in facing the challenges of the nation as well as globalization in the twenty-first century. Besides that, employability skill is also crucial in all professions as well as in education. Employability skills are skills that apply across a variety of jobs and life contexts. They are sometimes referred to as key skills, core skills, life skills, essential skills, key competencies, necessary skills and transferable skills.

Workers in the twenty-first century need skills such as problem solving and analytic, decision making, organization and time management, risk taking and communication (Lynch, 2000; Robinson, 2006; Slusher et al., 2010) to be employable in the workforce. Lynch (2000) posited there is a tremendous need to determine what types of skill sets are demanded of TVE graduates by industry because there is a general consensus that occupational preparation should begin sometime in high school.

Core competencies of employability skills
The core competencies required in all work settings. The Conference Board of Canada’s Employability Skills Profile identifies three critical skills: academic, personal management and teamwork. Employability skills can be defined as a range of abilities or competencies that you may develop during your life through the education, training, work experience, interests and extra-curricular activities. These skills are often referred to as generic skills, life skills, core skills, essential employment skills, key competencies or transferable skills. Core employability skills build upon and strengthen those skills developed through basic education, such as reading and writing, the technical skills needed to perform specific duties, such as nursing, accounting, using technology or driving a forklift and professional/personal attributes such as honesty, reliability, punctuality, attendance and loyalty. Core work skills enable individuals to constantly acquire and apply new knowledge and skills, they are also critical to lifelong learning.

It is increasingly becoming evident that employability skills make it easier to obtain employment, to remain in it and to adapt easily to the changing demands of the labor market (Riordan and Rosas, 2003). Employers today are looking for workers who are knowledgeable, who get along well with other people, who are able to work as part of a team, who are dependable and reliable, who are eager to learn and who have good written and oral communication skills. Levy and Mumane (2001) use the words “competencies” and “skills” synonymously and have identified the following six key competencies critical to economic success:

1. basic reading and mathematics skills;
2. the ability to communicate effectively;
3. the organization of work within firms;
4. teamwork;
5. familiarity with computers; and
6. formal educational credentials.

Kelly (2007) has identified the following employability skills that make individuals flexible, adaptable and mobile in the labor market. The employability skills are communication, information technology, working with numbers, working with others, problem solving, improving your own learning and performance.
According to Pretorius (2001), the skills sought by employers in the workplace include proficiency in mathematics, computing, reading, writing and reasoning, the ability to use resources and information constructively, interpersonal skills, the ability to understand systems and master technology, as well as the flexibility to cope with changes in the workplace.

The importance of employability skills as opposed to specific skills is clearly underscored by the United States of America’s Secretary’s Commission for Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) report (Department of Labor, 1991), which recommends specific competencies and skills required from someone entering the labor market. The SCANS Report (Department of Labor, 1991) identified the following competencies and foundation skills which are essential for successful employment.

Competencies – effective workers can use these productively:

- resources – allocating time, money, material, space and staff;
- interpersonal skills – working in teams, teaching others, servicing customers, leading, negotiating and working well with people from culturally diverse backgrounds;
- information – acquiring and evaluating data, organizing and maintaining files; interpreting and communicating and using computers to process information;
- systems – understanding social, organizational and technological systems, monitoring and correcting performance and designing or improving systems; and
- technology – selecting equipment and tools, applying technology to specific tasks and maintaining and troubleshooting technologies.

Foundation skills – here competence requires:

- basic skills – reading, writing, arithmetic and mathematics, speaking and listening;
- thinking skills – thinking creatively, making decisions, solving problems, seeing things in the mind’s eye, knowing how to learn and reason; and
- personal qualities – individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management and integrity.

Previous literature revealed common trends in employability skills sought by employers in respective countries. Employability skills such as problem solving, working in teams, managing information, numeracy, communication and using technology all feature as important in the workplace and represent those skills that employers require from workers.

**Employability studies from developed and developing countries**

Studies of competencies needed by hospitality graduates have adopted multiple models to define and categorize specific knowledge, skills and attitudes or attributes (KSAs) essential for success. Sandwith (1993) suggested that a competency domain model could be used to determine job performance requirements, with the resulting job profiles then guiding the design and development of training programs. He identified five areas of managerial competencies:

1. Conceptual/creative – cognitive skills associated with comprehending important elements of the job and generating ideas for action.
2. Leadership – skills in turning ideas into action.
3. Interpersonal – skills necessary to interact effectively with others for communication and related skills, including oral presentation, telephone, conflict management and negotiating skills.
4. Administrative – skills in the personnel and financial management of the business.
(5) Technical – knowledge and skills associated with the actual work that the organization does.

Other studies have used both more complex and simpler models to categorize KSAs. Chung-Herrera et al. (2003) constructed a model using eight overarching factors divided into 28 dimensions and 99 specific behavioral competencies, whereas Tesone and Ricci (2005) simply used the three areas of KSAs to categorize the 41 items they studied. A two-category competency model used in a number of studies (Banupriya, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2010; Shub and Stonebraker, 2009) but rarely used in the hospitality field (Spowart, 2011) divides KSAs into hard and soft categories. The majority of these studies define hard competencies as a combination of technical and/or cognitive knowledge and skills and soft competencies as personal behavioral attributes, values or traits, including ethics, communication, leadership, interpersonal and teamwork skills (Banupriya, 2011; Ling et al., 2000; Mitchell et al., 2010; Shub and Stonebraker, 2009; Sutton, 2002; Towner, 2002). James and James (2004) defined hard skills as task-oriented competencies learned through education and/or training and soft skills as aspects of attitude and emotion that are demonstrated through effective communication and interaction with customers and employees. A review of the literature in the hospitality industry finds that numerous hard and soft competencies have been identified as important for hospitality program graduates, with soft competencies most often considered more essential than hard ones (Su et al., 1997; Chung, 2000; Connolly and McGing, 2006).

More recently, Whitelaw et al. (2009) concluded that academicians are pushing for the development of higher order skills such as critical thinking, management and strategy development, whereas the industry places a greater emphasis on frontline supervisory and interpersonal skills. Finally, Spowart (2011) suggested that key competencies necessary for success in the work environment, identified as soft skills such as customer service and communication skills, should be included and assessed as part of the hospitality curriculum. In summary, most but not all studies found that competencies in listening, communication, human relations, leadership and management of others were most important for success. A few studies found leadership and interpersonal competencies to be of lesser importance than being adaptable to a changing environment or possessing strong financial competencies. Even fewer studies identified working knowledge of the product as essential for managerial success.

Most studies in Malaysian literature consistently show that the highest ranking employability skills from an employer’s perspective was communication skills (Azian and Mun, 2011; Rahmah et al., 2011; Rasul et al., 2010; Zubaidah and Rugayah, 2008). Islam et al. (2013) found that there are 13 attributes perceived as important by Malaysian employers, but their satisfaction levels for business-related field graduates are low. Those attributes are the ability to encourage and motivate others, manage others, search for and manage relevant information from various resources, to write effectively in English, to speak fluently in English, to present a project effectively, to express own ideas clearly, effectively, and with confidence; to recognize and analyze problems, to explain, analyze and evaluate data/information, to generate creative ideas, to think critically, to think out-of-the-box and to make logical conclusions by analyzing relevant data.

Husain et al. (2014) developed and validated employability model for Malaysian engineering students. The model consists of the following constructs: critical thinking and problem-solving skills, lifelong learning and information management skills, communication skills, teamwork skills, technology utilizing skills, entrepreneurship, leadership, ethics and moral, social skills and spirituality. Overall, both Malaysian and international literature shows that technical and generic skills are important for employees. But, Malaysian literature mostly focuses on undergraduates in general. However, it is important more research in Malaysian context for technical and vocational education students.
3. Methodology
In this study, employability skills are categorized under 15 major components based on Mayer Key Competencies model: communication skills, teamwork skills, problem-solving skills, initiative and enterprise skills, planning and organizing skills, self-management skills, learning skills, technology skills, leadership skills and entrepreneurship skills. This framework is also linked to the framework developed by Jelas and Azman (2005). In this study, the generic skills consist of ten skills: communication, numeracy, IT, learning how to learn, problem solving, working with others and subject-specific competencies (Jelas and Azman, 2005; Bennett et al., 2000; Cornford, 1999). The major 15 employability skills consist of communication skills, teamwork skills, problem-solving skills, initiative and enterprise skills, planning and organizing skills, self-management skills, learning skills, technology skills, entrepreneurship skills, leadership skills, basic skills, learning how to learn, working with others, ethical and professional moral, technical and vocational skills.

Participants
The participants consisted of final year students in a bakery and culinary program. Stratified sampling was used to select students in these hospitality programs from 22 vocational colleges in Malaysia. The researcher personally visited the vocational colleges and follow up the official approval about her intentions with the Principal of the vocational colleges. After confirmation with the teacher of the colleges, the researcher started to distribute the questionnaire to the students according to their courses (bakery and culinary). Questionnaires were distributed to 841 students in five regions in Malaysia. In general, the respondents spent 30 min to 35 min to respond the questionnaire completely. Descriptive analysis and paired sample t-test was conducted to analyze the data.

Assessment tool
Researchers designed the questionnaire for the final year students. The instrument for the study consisted of two sections: demographics and employability skills. Part A of the student questionnaire consists of demographic information including gender, race, household income, parental education and current CGPA. While Part B measures the employability skills of the students and it contains 150 items adapted from generic skills questionnaire developed by the SCANS (1991), Sattar (2009), Md Tabir (2010), Soft Skills (MOHE, 2006) and MQF (2005) including communication skills, teamwork skills, problem-solving skills, initiative and enterprise skills, planning and organizing skills, self-management skills, resource management skills, technology skills, leadership skills and basic skills. However, based on the literature review, other skills that are included are entrepreneurship skills, learning how to learn, working with others, technical and vocational skills, ethical and professional moral skills.

Questionnaire was validated by experts in the field such as hospitality professor in technical university, lecturers in private colleges and also industrial management. The assessment used a Likert scale format, with the following choices. Sample questions are as below.

The quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 for Windows. The main types of data analysis for both measurement level of competence and level of important in employability skills were obtained from a five point Likert scale. The score rating of employability skills were stated in Tables I and II.

Instrument reliability
In this research, a Cronbach’s α was used to determine the reliability coefficients of the instruments. As Pallant (2005) suggested that Cronbach’s α coefficient of construct should be at least 0.7. However, if a domain consists of fewer than ten items, Cronbach’s α 0.6
is acceptable. In this study, $\alpha$ value 0.7 and above was determined to be acceptable for each domain. In addition, Haier et al. and Pallant (2005) advised a good corrected item at 0.30 and above is accepted as a good item to measure what they had expected to measure.

Table III shows the reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha$) of 15 domains in the employability skills survey.

### 4. Findings

**Sample demographics**

This researchers collected data from 841 vocational students who were in hospitality field at Vocational Colleges in Malaysia. The return rate for data collection was 63.7 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Level of competency</th>
<th>Level of importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>COMMUNICATION</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 I am able to interact with customers in a polite and friendly manner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 I am able to ask questions and actively listen to customers to determine their needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table III.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employability skills</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cronbach’s $\alpha$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative and enterprise skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and organizing skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource management skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning how to learn</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical and professional moral skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and vocational skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table IV presents the respondent’s profile according to gender, ethnicity, CGPA, father’s occupation, mother’s occupation, family income, location, program, internship upon graduation and internship with industry.

In addition to the questionnaire, the differences between importance and competence of employability skills among bakery and culinary students are explored using a paired sample t-test. The paired sample t-test, sometimes called the dependent sample t-test, is a statistical procedure used to determine whether the mean difference between two sets of observations is zero. In a paired sample t-test, each subject or entity is measured twice, resulting in pairs of observations. The analysis report and the discussion in this part aim to answer the research question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency (n)</th>
<th>Total (n)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>841</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>347</td>
<td></td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>494</td>
<td></td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td>841</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>664</td>
<td></td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>121</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGPA</td>
<td></td>
<td>841</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00–2.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.51–3.00</td>
<td>426</td>
<td></td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.01–3.50</td>
<td>415</td>
<td></td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.51–4.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father’s occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td>841</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government servant</td>
<td>364</td>
<td></td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private servant</td>
<td>205</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>212</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td>841</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government servant</td>
<td>126</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private servant</td>
<td>414</td>
<td></td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>167</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>134</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income</td>
<td></td>
<td>841</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below RM 2,000.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM 2,001.00–RM 3,000.00</td>
<td>370</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM 3,001.00–RM 4,000.00</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above RM 4,000.00</td>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td></td>
<td>841</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>463</td>
<td></td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>378</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td></td>
<td>841</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakery and pastry</td>
<td>463</td>
<td></td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>378</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship upon graduation</td>
<td></td>
<td>841</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>841</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship with industry</td>
<td></td>
<td>841</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>841</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table IV.** Respondent’s demographic profile
Competence and importance results for bakery students

A paired sample t-test was performed to compare whether there are differences between the perceived competence and importance of bakery students (Table V).

**Teamwork skills.** The findings indicate that there is significant difference between competence and importance of teamwork skills. The mean value for competence of teamwork \((M = 42.9815)\) is lower than the mean value for importance \((M = 43.9733); t (486) = −8.8186, p = 0.000.\) This result suggests that the competence gained by bakery students in terms of teamwork skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

**Information technology.** There is significant difference between competence and importance of technology skills. The mean value for competence of technology \((M = 43.3922)\) is lower than the mean value for importance \((M = 43.9446); t (486) = −4.451, p = 0.000.\) This result suggests that the competence of bakery students in terms of technology skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

**Resource management.** There is significant difference between competence and importance of resource management skills. The mean value for competence of resource management \((M = 43.9528)\) is higher than the mean value for importance \((M = 43.5010); t (486) = 5.49, p = 0.000.\) This result suggests that the competence of bakery students in terms of resource management skills is higher than the importance perceived by those students.

**Ethical.** There is significant difference between competence and importance of ethical and professional moral skills. The mean value for competence of ethical and professional moral \((M = 42.3039)\) is lower than the mean value for importance \((M = 43.9446); t (486) = −11.142, p = 0.000.\) This result suggests that the competence of bakery students in terms of ethical and professional moral skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

**Technical and vocational skills.** There is significant difference between competence and importance of technical and vocational skills. The mean value for competence of technical and vocational \((M = 39.1704)\) is lower than the mean value for importance \((M = 43.5010); t (486) = −31.691, p = 0.000.\) This result suggests that the competence of bakery students in terms of technical and vocational skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean competence</th>
<th>Mean importance</th>
<th>(t)</th>
<th>(df)</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>43.7392</td>
<td>43.5651</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>42.9815</td>
<td>43.9733</td>
<td>−8.19</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>43.6694</td>
<td>43.5915</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>43.8994</td>
<td>43.9918</td>
<td>−0.67</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and organizing</td>
<td>43.6140</td>
<td>43.6099</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td>43.9487</td>
<td>43.8665</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>43.5906</td>
<td>43.5996</td>
<td>−0.09</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td>43.3922</td>
<td>43.9446</td>
<td>−4.45</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource management</td>
<td>43.9528</td>
<td>43.9010</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>43.3707</td>
<td>43.5195</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>43.7392</td>
<td>43.9446</td>
<td>−1.75</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>43.5770</td>
<td>43.5010</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with others</td>
<td>43.4209</td>
<td>43.5195</td>
<td>−0.74</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>42.5039</td>
<td>43.9446</td>
<td>−11.14</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech vocational</td>
<td>39.1704</td>
<td>43.5010</td>
<td>−31.69</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>648.5462</td>
<td>655.4415</td>
<td>−7.85</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table V.**
Paired sample t-test for the means of competence and importance of employability skills (bakery)

**Note:** *Significant at 0.05 level
Summary for baking students. Therefore, the overall gap analysis between competence and importance of employability skill has significant differences. The mean value for competence of employability skills ($M = 648.5462$) is lower than the mean value for importance ($M = 655.4415$); $t (486) = −7.848, p = 0.000$. This result suggests that the competence of bakery students in terms of employability skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

Competence and importance results for culinary students
In order to validate the results of this gap analysis, a paired sample $t$-test was performed between the means of importance and competence of employability skills among culinary students. As shown in Table VI, the biggest employability skills gap is in resource management skills and the smallest gap is in technical and vocational skills. Overall, all gaps between importance and competence on skills are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that improvement efforts and corrective actions must be taken, in order to improve the overall satisfaction of these 15 variables. These variables are communication skills, teamwork skills, problem-solving skills, initiative skills, planning skills, self-management skills, learning skills, technology skills, resource management skills, entrepreneurship skills, basic skills, leadership skills, working with others skills, ethic skills, technic and vocational skills.

Teamwork. There is significant difference between competence and importance of teamwork skills. The mean value for importance of teamwork ($M = 43.9266$) is higher than the mean value for competence ($M = 43.0113$); $t (353) = −5.559, p = 0.000$. This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of teamwork skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

Resource management. There is significant difference between competence and importance of resource management skills. The mean value for importance of resource management ($M = 43.4181$) is lower than the mean value for competence ($M = 43.8672$); $t (353) = 4.655, p = 0.000$. This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of teamwork skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

Entrepreneurship skills. There is significant difference between competence and importance of entrepreneurship skills. The mean value for importance of entrepreneurship skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean competence</th>
<th>Mean importance</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>43.1661</td>
<td>43.6836</td>
<td>−1.137</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>43.0113</td>
<td>43.9266</td>
<td>−5.559</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>43.7062</td>
<td>43.4379</td>
<td>1.799</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>43.8446</td>
<td>43.8870</td>
<td>−0.268</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and organizing</td>
<td>43.5888</td>
<td>43.6271</td>
<td>1.668</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td>44.0113</td>
<td>43.7684</td>
<td>1.547</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>43.5141</td>
<td>43.6215</td>
<td>−0.757</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td>43.6997</td>
<td>43.8503</td>
<td>−1.363</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource management</td>
<td>43.6872</td>
<td>43.4181</td>
<td>4.655</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>43.6582</td>
<td>43.4379</td>
<td>2.035</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.043*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>43.3333</td>
<td>43.8503</td>
<td>−3.765</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>44.0819</td>
<td>43.4181</td>
<td>4.414</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with others</td>
<td>42.9576</td>
<td>43.4379</td>
<td>−3.284</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>42.1215</td>
<td>43.8503</td>
<td>−8.265</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech vocational</td>
<td>38.8870</td>
<td>43.4181</td>
<td>−23.319</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>647.9689</td>
<td>654.6228</td>
<td>−5.956</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>0.000*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Significant at 0.05 level

Table VI. Paired sample $t$-test for the means of competence and importance of employability skills (culinary)
(\(M = 43.4379\)) is lower than the mean value for competence (\(M = 43.6582\)); \(t\) (353) = 2.035, \(p = 0.043\). This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of entrepreneurship skills is higher than the importance perceived by those students.

**Basic.** There is significant difference between competence and importance of basic skills. The mean value for importance of basic skills (\(M = 43.8503\)) is higher than the mean value for competence (\(M = 43.3333\)); \(t\) (353) = −3.765, \(p = 0.000\). This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of basic skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

**Leadership.** There is significant difference between competence and importance of leadership skills. The mean value for importance of leadership skills (\(M = 43.4181\)) is higher than the mean value for competence (\(M = 44.0819\)), \(t\) (353) = 4.414, \(p = 0.000\). This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of leadership skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

**Working with others.** There is significant difference between competence and importance of working with others. The mean value for importance of working with others (\(M = 43.8503\)) is higher than the mean value for competence (\(M = 42.9576\)), \(t\) (353) = −3.284, \(p = 0.001\). This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of working with others is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

**Ethical.** There is significant difference between competence and importance of ethical and professional skills. The mean value for importance of ethical and professional skills (\(M = 43.8503\)) is higher than the mean value for competence (\(M = 42.1215\)), \(t\) (353) = −8.265, \(p = 0.000\). This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of ethical and professional skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

**Tech vocational.** There is significant difference between competence and importance of technical and vocational skills. The mean value for importance of technical and vocational skills (\(M = 43.4181\)) is higher than the mean value for competence (\(M = 38.8870\)), \(t\) (353) = −23.319, \(p = 0.000\). This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of technical and vocational skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

**Summary of culinary results.** Therefore, the overall gap analyses between competence and importance of employability skills have significant differences. The mean value for importance of employability skills (\(M = 654.6328\)) is higher than the mean value for competence (\(M = 647.9689\)), \(t\) (353) = −5.956, \(p = 0.000\). This result suggests that the competence of culinary students in terms of overall employability skills is lower than the importance perceived by those students.

**5. Discussion and conclusion**

Overall, the findings indicate that the competence gained is lower in terms of teamwork, information technology skills, ethical, technical and vocational skills for bakery students. In terms of culinary, the findings show that teamwork, working with others, ethical, technical and vocational skills gained by students is lower than the importance perceived by them. Thus, students had higher perceptions in terms of skill importance than they did for skill possession (Harris, 2013). This suggests that although students recognize the importance of the given skills, they may not be receiving adequate instruction or course demands to equate to proper possession of the skill in performing the skill.

With the rapid advancement in technology, current human resource requirements seek graduates to have basic management and information skills, communication and technological skills (Singh et al., 2013). The technical industry in Malaysia also emphasizes on these elements, in line with the definition of employability (Robinson, 2000; Singh et al., 2013).
In Husain et al.’s (2010) study, they find that all employers, especially from civil engineering, electrical and mechanical fields agree that these competencies (as above) are in line with local and crucial global market needs. Clearly, emphasis on industry-based curriculum competencies is in equipping TVET students with employability skills.

However, the finding of this study indicates that the culinary and bakery students perceive that they are not given adequate exposure to possess such skills. It is important to ensure that graduates are equipped with the twenty-first century skills such as problem solving and analytic, decision making, organization and time management, risk taking and communication (Lynch, 2000; Robinson, 2006; Slusher et al., 2010). Thus, curriculum developers need to incorporate generic and technical skills in designing the curriculum. Further research needs to be conducted taking into consideration view of lecturers and industry partners so that appropriate intervention can be taken to improve the employability skills of vocational graduates majoring in hospitality.

References


Further reading


Corresponding author
Husaina Banu Kenayathulla can be contacted at: husaina@um.edu.my

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