Tracing pre-diploma students' academic performance : A case of Universiti Teknologi MARA Malaysia

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Abstract

This research investigates the academic performance and progress of the pre-diploma students of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) after continuing their studies at the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management (FHTM) UiTM. The performance of all pre-diploma students who had enrolled in UiTM for the year 2010 to 2017 was analyzed descriptively using Microsoft Excel. The enrolment data for this program and the faculty were obtained from UiTM's Centre for Strategic Planning and Information. This study reports that a total of 3612 pre-diploma students were successful in their pre-diploma program and managed to further their studies at the diploma level with the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management. Additionally, 369 students continued their study at bachelor's degree and another five at master's level. Based on this study, their progress in academic performance showed that UiTM's Pra Pendidikan Tinggi program has succeeded in helping the students further their studies at a higher level.

Keywords:

Pre-Diploma students, Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Program Pra Pendidikan Tinggi, Academic performance, Higher learning

1 Introduction

Education plays a main role in the economic development of any country. Advancement in workforce comes from the advancement of the education system and human capital development. Constructive workforce leads the country into growth and prosperity. This relationship defines the importance of providing an avenue to every family in Malaysia to uplift their economic position. In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education trust by increasing the accessibility and enrolment of students from the B40 group will allow their children to bring their families out of the poverty cycle in the future (Rabecca, 2019). The B40 group is defined as the group of families with less than RM4,849 monthly gross income (Bernama, 2020).

In response to the Ministry of Education's belief, higher education institutions played their role in providing an opportunity to low-income families. Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) has come forward under its corporate social responsibility inisiative and introduced a special program called as the *Program Pra Pendidikan Tinggi* (formerly known as the *Mengubah Destini Anak Bangsa* (MDAB)). The MDAB one of their initiatives to help and provide a second chance to underprivileged youth of Malays, Sarawak origin descendant, Sabah origin descendant, and Orang Asli students to enroll into institutions of higher learning. The aim of this program is to provide an opportunity to the B40 children to pursue their studies in higher institution through its pre diploma programme (Pppt, 2021). This special program was established since June 2010. This unique program is self-funding by UITM staffs' salary deduction and few corporate contributions to allow these students with underqualified entry requirements. Most of them are with minimal Malaysian Certificate of Education (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia - SPM) results - pass for Mathematics, English and History with minimum 3 Credits including *Bahasa Melayu*. They were selected to continue their study in higher education at UiTM under Pre-Diploma Program (Pppt, 2021). These students are fully sponsored in terms of tuition fees and hostel fees as well as living allowances provided there are from the B40 families.

The Program Pra Pendidikan Tinggi (PPT) runs two different pre-diploma courses: Pre-Diploma in Commerce and Pre-Diploma in Science. PPT is a unique preparatory program which can be considered as remedial programs. This is because its two programs i.e., the Pre-Diploma in Commerce program helps the students to improve their Mathematics and English language. Meanwhile the Pre-Diploma in Science, on top of focusing on these two subjects, also focus on improving the understanding in science subjects such as Physics, Chemistry and Biology. These tracks prepare students to embark on their studies at diploma level and later pursue their education to higher levels. Students who pass with minimum CGPA of 3.00 for Pre-Diploma Science; and CGPA 2.00 for Pre-Diploma Commerce will automatically offer to continue their studies at the diploma programmes of their choice according to their CGPA obtained at UiTM campuses nationwide (Pppt, 2021).

It is believed that the CSR initiative run by PPT is one of the effective strategies to help B40 students succeed in their studies and provide opportunity for them to uplift

their family household income in the future. It is important to determine whether going through such remedial programs will help those less fortunate students excel in their studies and continue to the diploma, bachelor's degree, and postgraduate program. Therefore, this study will attempt to analyse the students' success rate and traced students' advancement from day one they stepped in and up to their current status with the faculty of their choice, such as the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management. This paper aims to share some analysis gathered on the academic performance of pre-diploma program for the past seven years of intakes from the year 2010 till 2017 for the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management.

2   Literature Review

Higher education is one of the sectors that contribute to the development of a country. This tertiary education plays its major role in preparing students for a higher level of specific prerequisites, which focusing on practical and technical skill sets (Walchshofer, 2009). Education serves as a tool to reform the countries' economy, increase the living standards of people and reduce poverty problems (Annie, 2006). Previous studies have been conducted to note that students are motivated and decided to enrol in universities due to an attractive career in the future (Orlanda, 2012). Studies also have shown that education also helps to improve or requalify students when there is a change of their future life's conditions (Belonozhko, 2008).

Factors affecting students' academic performance are many and tend to vary across time, region and content. Some studies have shown that students from well-endowed families perform better in examinations and the adverse effects of poverty on student performance are well documented (Bernstein, 2007). A study conducted by Carter (2013) demonstrated that students coming from low-income families failed in schools and required remedial courses while at the university. It was stated that a remedial course was taken by as many as 1.7 million first-year students entering colleges in the United States of America (USA) and majority of those who need the remedial course are the low-income students. According to Calcagno and Long (2008), a remedial course is defined as coursework below college-level and offered at a post-secondary institution Carter (2013) listed five factors that contribute to low income students requiring the remedial course which are lack of exposure to books; language barriers where English is not their first language; lack of stability in terms of income and health; lack of positive academic role models; and they are the first generation in their families to go to college. Candidates who did not obtain proper training at higher institutions and equipped themselves with the technical and practical skill sets are regarded as candidates with less ability to adapt themselves to working employment conditions (Deborah, 2004). This justify the need for higher education qualification is important for students to apply for jobs in the future and secure a higher level of earnings than students without qualification, practical and skills.

Tourism and hospitality education undergo rather impressive academic intakes in UiTM often combined with high levels of aspiration and performance, leading to high

long-term engagement with careers in the industry. The Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management programs are among strong and popular among the academic programs offered in UiTM. According to UiTM's Centre for Strategic Planning and Information (2018) data, the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management was among the top 3 choices for the pre-diploma in commerce students and top 10 choices for the pre-diploma in science students chosen in continuing their study. The Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management (FHTM) is one of the pioneer faculty in UiTM which was established since 1967. FHTM aims to train future professionals in the disciplines of hospitality and tourism. The Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management offers all levels of tertiary education from Diploma, Bachelor's degree, Masters and PhD Program at UiTM Puncak Alam (main campus) and 5 branch campuses including UiTM Samarahan, UiTM Dungun, UiTM Permatang Pauh, UiTM Alor Gajah, and UiTM Kota Kinabalu (Fhtm, 2021).

A study by Lynch (2018) on USA Delaware scholarships found that giving students scholarships has a significant impact on the students' ability to complete their post-secondary education successfully. Scholarships given out to B40 students through the PPT UiTM program initiative can improve academic success among these low-income students on attaining academic benchmarks. This can avoid biases in quality of life and poverty can be helped through the support of a fair and quality education (Muhammad, 2007). Furthermore, through the designed financial aid, students able to pursue their academic accomplishment rather than hinder themselves with their inability to bear with the cost (Karl, 2013). In another study by Julaihi, Mohamadin, Mohamed, and Karim (2017) has been conducted to investigate the overall performance of all MDAB students from 2011 to 2015, as well as the performance for Pre-Diploma in Science program intakes at UiTM Sarawak (December 2011 to June 2014) in order to justify that this initiative was indeed worthy and also such remedial courses have helped the students. Their results showed that 83.43% of the overall students completed the pre-diploma courses and continued their studies at diploma levels.

3   Methodology

This study employed a quantitative procedure. The data of pre-diploma students who had studied in all pre-diploma programs handled by PPT Office from 2010 till 2017 were collected. The data includes their academic performance during their study at the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management for Diploma, Bachelor's degree and Postgraduate degree at UiTM branches nationwide. The data was obtained from The Centre for Strategic Planning and Information (CSPI), UiTM Shah Alam. The secondary data were then analysed descriptively using Microsoft Excel 2018.

4   Findings

Table 1 shows the intake for ex-Pre-Diploma students into Diploma Programs offered by the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism since 2010 until 2017.

Table 1: Ex Pre-Diploma in Commerce Students intake to Diploma Programs of FHTM

Year	HM110	HM111	HM112	HM115	HM116	Total
2010	123	141	47	170		481
2011	77	210	39	72		398
2012	118	148	37	172		475
2013	120	288	48	111		567
2014	138	319	93	200		750
2015	64	91	43	114		312
2016	54	81	27	131	19	312
2017	89	49	20	114	12	284
Total	783	1327	354	1084	31	3579

Table 2: Ex Pre-Diploma in Science Students intake to Diploma Programs of FHTM

Year	HM110	HM111	HM112	HM115	Total
2010		2	1		3
2011			5		5
2012			2		2
2013			1		1
2014		1	3		4
2015	1		6		7
2016			8		8
2017			2	1	3
Total	1	3	28	1	33

Based on table 1, the total number of pre-diploma in commerce UiTM students studying diploma programs at the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management from year 2010 until 2017 is 3579. The table shows that the most popular program chosen among the students was HM111 (Diploma in Tourism Management), followed by HM115 (Diploma in Culinary Arts), HM110 (Diploma in Hotel Management), HM112 (Diploma in Food Service Management) and HM116 (Diploma in Pastry Arts) a newly program offered by the faculty in 2016. The statistics also showed that the highest number of enrolments was in the year 2014 (750 students), followed by 2013 (567 students), 2010 (481 students), 2012 (475), and 2011 (398). The remaining showed reducing trend where in the year 2015 and 2016, both years recorded with 312 students and 2017 students for the year 2017.

Table 2 shows the result for ex pre-diploma in science students enrolled in programs offered by the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism. On the other hand, the number of students enrolled on these programs are negligible as compared to those from the Pre-Diploma in Commerce track. There is only a total of 33 students from this track joins the Diploma Programs. Of the four programs offered, the majority favors the HM112 (Diploma in Food Service Management) and the greatest number of applicants for this program was in 2016.

The total number of students for both pre-diploma in commerce and pre-diploma in science who studied their Diploma at the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management was calculated as 3612. Out of this number, 369 students (10.22%) continued their studies to the next higher level, the bachelor's degree program. The rest of 3243 students (89.78%) were not continuing their study due to failure or not interested. The Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) results of these students were not available to validate these reasons. The Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management offers four programs at this level such as HM220 (BSc. Hons in Hotel Management), HM221 (BSc. Hons. In Tourism Management), HM222 (BSc. Hons. In Food Service Management) and HM225 (BSc. Hons in Culinary Arts). It was found that majority of these students from the pre-diploma in commerce track enrolled into the HM241 program (119 students) followed by HM240 with 103 students, HM245 with 80 students and the least is HM242 with 49 students. As for the pre-diploma in science track students, out of 35 students, only 18 of them continue their bachelor's degree studies where the majority chose HM242 program (13 students).

Table 3 showed the progress of ex pre-diploma students' enrolment for postgraduate program. Interestingly, these students who were previously failed get a place to continue their studies at universities because of insufficient merit in SPM results. They were given the second chance to further their studies to university through this program offered by PPT UiTM reveal the potentiality of these students to continue to the highest level of study. Statistics have shown that five students (1.3%) continued their studies to master's degree program at the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management. Most of them chose to enrol in HM770 (Master in Hospitality Management), while the remaining have enrolled in HM711 (Master in Tourism Management) and HM772 (Master in Food Service Management).

Table 3: ex Pre-Diploma Students intake to Postgraduate Programs of FHTM, UiTM

Year	HM770	HM771	HM772	Total
2010	2			2
2011		1		1
2011	1		1	1
Grand Total	3	1	1	5

5 Conclusion

This study can be established as evidence to justify the initiative made by UiTM and financing of this program to B40 students whose family income is less than RM4849 to uplift the poverty and their academic achievement. Having better academic qualification will enhance students' opportunity to get jobs and improve themselves and take them out from the B40 category to improve their family economic positions. However, the number of students who have continued their study from Diploma to Bachelor's degree was still little with only 10.22%, and another 1.3% continued their study at Master's

level. This result also meant the success of this pre-diploma program managed by PPT UiTM served as a remedial course for the underqualified and an opportunity for these students to change their future by getting a higher education qualification. However, initially, they were not accepted to enrol at any Malaysia's public university. Hence, this study suggests a more concentrated effort between the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management and PPT in attracting and motivating these students on the importance of pursuing their studies to the highest level of education. This statistical evidence is useful for researchers and universities to ascertain the academic performance context of the concerning groups of students.

This study is the first to trace the academic performance and progress of the underqualified and underprivileged UiTM pre-diploma students who enrolled in program offered by the Faculty of Hotel and Tourism. This is vital to justify the relevance of pre-diploma programs and efforts made by the university in allowing student continuation to study at higher levels and validate the usefulness of such remedial courses. However, this study has few limitations. This study is limited to the university's secondary data without considering other contextual factors such as students' motivations. Therefore, future study should investigate underlying factors that influence the likelihood of these students continuing their studies through primary data collection.

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