STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF MBA PROVISION BY PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN MALAYSIA

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Policy and Management in the Faculty of Humanities

2011

ROSSILAH JAMIL

Institute for Development Policy and Management
School of Environment and Development
The University Of Manchester
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Abstract

The research was triggered by widespread criticisms from its constituencies about the relevance of MBAs, allegedly instigated by its dual academic and utilitarian purposes in developing functionally and ethically competent managers. Using Malaysia as the research focus, the perceptions of three MBA stakeholders (i.e. business schools / management educators, industries and students) were explored on the adequacy of MBA provisions by its public universities in preparing professionally and ethically competent managers. Their opinions were gauged on several subjective terms, each carrying the dual academic-utilitarian connotations, i.e. the roles of MBAs, the roles of its providers, the definitions of relevance, the definitions of managers and the necessary competencies, and their concerns over the social responsibility of managers and their education. The research employed mainly qualitative approaches. Primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion and e-mails from the three stakeholders. The management educators and students were derived from three selected business schools. The secondary data involved analysis of the MBA websites and prospectuses provided by all the 10 public universities in Malaysia. In total, the research derived data consisting of 28 interviews, 1 focus group, 81 surveys, 3 email questionnaires, and 10 document analyses. The findings suggested that the perceptions of all three stakeholders reflected an imbalanced MBA that was biased towards utilitarian objectives as opposed to social objectives. The findings showed that religion / spirituality and the development of ME in Malaysia had a considerable impact in influencing the perspectives of the respondents. The research contributes to the discipline by demonstrating how a non-western, religious, developing country viewed the research issues dominated by Western literature.
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that no portion of the work referred to the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.
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DEDICATION

To my mother.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to express my deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia for the scholarship and grant that made this research possible.

Throughout the course of my study, I met several wonderful and interesting people who generously offered their time and effort. To all the respondents whose views and collaboration greatly impacted and enriched this research and the numerous other people whose assistance played an indirect part in the successful completion of this thesis, I extend my great heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

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Last but not least, to my family and relatives, especially my husband Ian for always being there for me, to my son Imran who taught me to keep trying and never give up, and to my daughter Aisya who taught me that a pencil, paper and a little bit of imagination can take us a long way.
# ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
<td>AACSB</td>
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<td>AAPBS</td>
<td>Association of Asia-Pacific Business Schools</td>
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<td>AMBA</td>
<td>Association of MBAs</td>
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<td>BS(s)</td>
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<td>CBMBA</td>
<td>Competency-based MBA</td>
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<td>CBME</td>
<td>Competency-based Management Education</td>
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<td>CE</td>
<td>Critical Education</td>
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<td>CME</td>
<td>Critical Management Education</td>
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<td>EFMD</td>
<td>European Federation of Management Development</td>
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<td>EMBA</td>
<td>Executive Masters of Business Administration</td>
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<td>FG</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
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<td>GM</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
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<td>MBA</td>
<td>Masters of Business Administration</td>
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<td>MCI</td>
<td>Management Charter Institute</td>
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<td>ME</td>
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<td>MED</td>
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<td>ML</td>
<td>Management Learning</td>
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<td>MOHE</td>
<td>Ministry of Higher Education</td>
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<td>PU MBAs</td>
<td>Public University MBAs</td>
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<td>PU(s)</td>
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
1.1 Introduction

This thesis is based on a research aimed to explore the views of three main MBA stakeholders on the adequacy of Malaysian public universities MBAs (PU MBAs) in preparing well-rounded managers to meet the country’s development needs. The following describes the research background which is organized following how the researcher shaped the topic through knowledge discovered from the literature analysis. The writing then follows with a description on Malaysia, the context of the research, and finally the research aim and objectives.

1.2 Backgrounds of Research

1.2.1 Theoretical Background

The research was triggered by criticisms surrounding the relevance of BS and its MBA to its constituencies (Goshal, 2005; Khurana, 2007; Dunne et al, 2008; March, 2003; Cornuel, 2005; Connelly and Gallagher, 2010, Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007; Mintzberg, 2004; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Datar et al, 2011; Rubin and Dierdoff, 2011). The amount and intensity of the debates were thought fascinating and shocking. The researcher was curious about why MBAs and BSs (considered the most ‘successful’ and global degree in higher education) had attracted so much negative attention.

MBA curriculum had been persistently condemned as irrelevant to managerial needs and practices (Porter and McKibbin, 1988; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Bennis and O’Toole, 2005; Gosling and Mintzberg, 2006; Antonacopoulour, 2010; Jain and Stopford, 2011). MBAs were described as ‘less success than meets the eye’ (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002:78) and declared flawed as it ‘train(s) the wrong people in the wrong ways with the wrong consequences’ (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2004:6). Instead of producing well-rounded managers, the MBA curriculum had allegedly produced incompetent graduates described as prone to ‘paralysis by analysis’ (Kedia and Harveston, 1998:210) and having a ‘silo mentality’ (Latham et al, 2004:7). It was predicted that if nothing was done to save it, the MBA might face extinction by 2020 (Schlegelmilch and Thomas, 2011).

Whilst earlier complaints accused BS programs of being too academic-oriented, recent allegations have questioned whether BS practices are indeed educational enough to warrant academic respect. BSs have been accused of behaving more like businesses
than academic entities (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; March, 2003; Starkey and Tempest, 2004). BSs had been called as the ‘running dog of capital’ (Dunne, 2008:272). Its curriculum was shown to be profit-oriented (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007). Its research have been turned into a ‘commodity’ attached with ‘market value’ rather than a mission to seek knowledge and scholarship (Connelly and Gallagher, 2010:87). Its teaching was accused for promoting and contributing to immoral management practices (Ghoshal, 2005; Khurana, 2007). Reports about the worrying state of BS students’ ethical attitudes (McCabe and Trevino, 1995; Ozdogan and Eser, 2007; Westerman, et al, 2011) present further concerns about whether BSs have performed their ‘educational’ duties in developing socially responsible individuals. Furthermore, the very commercial approach of BSs in promoting their MBAs through salary and career-enhancing incentives had also been condemned for attracting and encouraging the ‘wrong’ kinds of students who cared more about financial success.

To further complicate the situation, students tend to hold significant power in BS agendas. MBAs in particular a market-oriented education (Starkey and Tempest, 2005). Many students are drawn to MBAs due to their lucrative financial and career prospects1. Unsurprisingly, school selection is often based on the potential of their MBAs in helping realize these motives. Media rankings of BSs / MBAs have significantly influenced student decisions (Policano, 2005) and pressured BS’s to appease their students (Armstrong, 1995; Gioia and Corley, 2002; Pearce, 2007). Zimmerman (2001) declares that media rankings have turn American BSs into prisoners, resulting them to focus on their students’ happiness than their learning effectiveness. Pearce (2007) has shown that teaching experienced managers in a ranking-focused BS context causes ‘fractures (management) scholarship’ (p.104). The considerable power of students and the media have raised concerns that the role of academics as authorities of knowledge is being undermined (Starkey and Tempest, 2005).

Further analysis shows that the main cause of these widespread criticisms is the duality of purposes that guide BS practices (Cheit, 1985; Starkey and Tempest, 2005). BSs are driven by both academic as well as corporate / professional models (Cheit, 1985; Wilson, 1996) where each has different, sometimes conflicting aims and interests that influence the direction and emphasis of curriculum, teaching and

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1 www.MBA-World.org.
research (Cornuel, 2005). This duality has placed BSs in an ‘identity crisis’ (Pfeffer and Fong, 2004:1502) forcing them to seriously rethink the purpose of their existence (French and Grey, 1996; Datar et al, 2011). Although the question of which model BSs should incline towards is debatable (e.g. Bennis and O’Toole, 2005 vs. Starkey et al, 2004 & 2005), there is a general consensus that BS teaching and research should be balanced in both models (Thomas, 2007; Cheit, 1985; Pfeffer and Fong, 2004).

To be balance, its curriculum must integrate the ‘knowing’, ‘doing’ and ‘being’ aspects of being a manager (Datar et al, 2011). The teaching should address utilitarian and social needs (Jain and Stopford, 2011). Students should be educated from a ‘paradigm of human well-being’ (Hartel, 2010:588) which inculcate social justice than teaching them how to make fortune. Management cases must include the ugly realities of business and management that are in constant tension with various human rights and environmental concerns (Grey, 2002). Its pedagogy should train students to be critical who can independently question organizational practices and social consequences (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996). The graduates produced must not only serve as organization profit-making agents but rather ‘social entrepreneurs’ (London and Morfopoulos 2010 in Heslin, 2011; Zahra et al, 2009).

The concerns above show that BSs must adequately address both the utilitarian and educational purposes of their existence and its MBA must serve both the development/training and education aspects of managers. Given the popularity and accessibility of MBAs, fulfilling the balance is crucial in ensuring that managers produced to lead organizations are functionally and ethically competent.

There have been several efforts in the past few years to achieve the utilitarian-educational balance in BS and/or MBA teaching. A notable initiative was by Starkey and associates (2004, 2005, 2007, 2008) who focused on the knowledge creation role of BSs. Another very popular attempts have concentrated on the pedagogical issues (e.g. McMillen et al, 1994; Buckley and Monks, 2008; McLaughlin and Thorpe, 1993; Gosling and Mintzberg, 2004; 2006; Karakas, 2011; Brower, 2011; Baker and Comer, 2011). However, the initial step of ME design, i.e. the managerial competencies which must be inculcated in MBA, has not received sufficient research attention.

The available knowledge on the subject tends to be limited in several ways. First, studies which looked at multiple stakeholders’ perspectives in ME/MBA competency
requirements tend to be one-sided i.e. viewing it only from organizational, market points of view (e.g. Camuffo and Gerli, 2004; Shipper, 1999; Neelankavil, 1994). These studies suggested that program effectiveness could be attained by fulfilling companies’ needs and producing strategic-minded graduates. Competency frameworks produced by the studies focused more on fulfilling managers’ economic responsibilities. The schism in curriculum supply and demand was addressed by the proposition that curriculums should tally with industry needs. Their definition of program effectiveness based on utilitarian principles undermines the importance of other stakeholders’ interests. Managerial and organizational ‘effectiveness’ must not only be seen in terms of economic perspective (Drucker, 1985) or it could create serious ethical repercussions on managerial practices (Khurana, 2007; Ghoshal, 2005; Grey and Mitev, 2004). In other words, similar studies on the topic seem biased towards the utilitarian principles and industry stakeholders rather than reflecting the fact that the programme should be guided by the dual utilitarian-educational models and needs to satisfy its multiple stakeholders’ interests. Furthermore, although these studies involved multiple stakeholders’ perspectives, comparisons between what each party wanted from a program in relation to the program’s utilitarian-educational purposes had not been (adequately) done.

The priority to be relevant to industries’ needs as reflected in the above studies has resulted less attention paid on what BSs actually felt or wanted in their programme. The upsurge interest and subsequent emphasis for responsible ME is a relatively recent phenomenon². Calls for responsible ME mainly appear in the forms of individual viewpoints, conceptual papers, conference reports, or BS association directives. The United Nations-led Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiative was only established in 2007. It seems that most of the awareness and controls with regard to responsible ME may either come from the associations or awareness on the current issues in the discipline. But what about BSs who do not belong to any of these association, like most of the BSs in Malaysia, and MErs who are less informed with the current development? Who should ensure that they perform their responsibilities accordingly? Furthermore, other than a research by

² Triggered by the controversial publications of Pfeffer and Fong (2002) and Goshal (2005).
Rayment and Smith (2010), empirical knowledge about what and how general BSs academics feel about this ‘new’ role seems glaringly absent from the literature.

The scarcity of knowledge on management and specifically in ME/MBA practices in non-Western, developing countries is considered theoretically problematic (Tsui, 2007) and research to understand the practices of non-traditional countries is highly encouraged (Hartel, 2010). It is widely acknowledged that management practices of a country may be influenced by its cultural background (Hofstede, 2001; Pearson and Entrekin, 1998, Rees and Johari, 2010), economic level (Hoskisson et al, 2000; Budhwar and Debrah, 2001; Kiggundu, 1989; McCourt and Foon, 2007), and internal business environment (Srinivas, 1995; Loveridge, 2006). The background of a country also influences its ME and MD development (Easterby-Smith et al, 1989; Lorange, 2003). Given these factors, therefore management theories and practices often developed based on Western economic and social backgrounds may be of questionable value to countries with different backgrounds. Knowledge on Malaysian ME/MBA practices in popular journals is extremely limited (Muniapan, 2008). Given this understanding, a research to understand MBA practices in Malaysia, with its unique economic, social and cultural background (Abdullah, 1996), is useful at both international and local levels.

In addition to the above theoretically-driven reasons, from a personal perspective, a research on the subject was also professionally-motivated in order to fulfil the researcher’s career and scholarship requirements. The researcher is an academic teaching management and HRD subjects in a PU in Malaysia and is being sponsored by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education. The researcher hoped to use the knowledge and experience gained throughout the study to benefit ME in Malaysia and to contribute to the betterment of her young faculty which struggles to gain legitimacy in a university dominated by more established science-based disciplines.

In conclusion, the above analysis demonstrates that the existing knowledge is limited in the sense that there is: 1) a lack of effort in meeting the dual utilitarian-educational purposes at MBA competency level; 2) appeared biasness towards utilitarian needs when trying to develop a ‘relevant’ MBA; 3) there has not been enough comparative analysis among stakeholders’ views towards the research issue; 4) dearth of empirical research about what MErs / BSs feel about their dual roles; and 5) limited knowledge.
about ME/MBA practices in non-western, developing countries specifically Malaysia. With this in mind, a research was formulated to explore the possibility to create a utilitarian-educational balanced MBA by attempting to focus at managerial competencies.

Further analysis shows that the competency approach is also interestingly informed by the two similar streams (Garavan and McGuire, 2001; Hyland, 1994). And like the MBA, it also suffers similar instrumentalist bias which prioritizes managers’ economic responsibilities and performance-oriented competencies (Burgoine, 1993). Being originally developed for utilitarian purpose (Boyatzis, 1982; Management Charter Institute, 1987), the competency approach needs to be amended before it can be used in an educational setting. The approach has to adopt a broader definition to include the functional and ethical aspects of managerial responsibilities, acknowledge the different needs of stakeholders, suit a particular context; and that the competencies need to be identified through interpretivist research epistemology (Lee, 1996; Antonacopoulou and FitzGerald, 1996; Hager and Beckett, 1995). In line with these suggestions, the research aimed to gain views from the three important MBA stakeholders (BSs/MERs, industries and students) in Malaysia. Further justifications of relevance of the research in the Malaysian context are presented below.

1.2.2 Contextual Background - The Malaysian Case

Malaysia has a population of 28.3 million consisting of three major ethnicities, Malays (63%), Chinese (24%) and Indians (7%). Islam is Malaysia’s official and largest professed religion. Malaysia was considered one of the success stories of East Asian development (Rudner, 1994). Since its Independence from the British in 1957, Malaysia has progressed from a very ethnically, economically and politically unstable country to a developing nation.

In 1991, Malaysia launched a grand nation development blueprint called ‘Vision 2020’, aimed to raise the country to the status of developed nation by the year 2020. Its current performance however shows that Malaysia is still far from its target. Its gross national income (GNI) per capita in 2009 is USD6,700 or RM23,700, far from its target of at least USD15,000 or RM48,000 by 2020. Its Global Competitiveness Index

\footnote{See http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/pas-maintains-islam-malaysias-official-religion/ for further information.}
has fallen continuously in the past 3 years with ‘government inefficiency’ considered its biggest problem (Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011). Its two biggest sources of national income, i.e. foreign direct investment, and oil and gas, are steadily declining. Its human capital development (HCD) is also lagging in comparison to selected high-income countries (Tenth Malaysia Plan 2011-2015). In 2007 Malaysia’s workforce with tertiary education was only 23.4% compared to Singapore’s and UK’s 35.9% and 31.9%. Malaysia also had the lowest percentage of skilled labour at 26% compared to Singapore at 51% and the UK at 42.5%. Correspondingly, Malaysia’s productivity level was also lower than other high-income countries.

Human capital development (HCD) is one of the country’s highest agendas for the preparation of meeting these challenges (Tenth Malaysia Plan 2011-2015). Reforms and initiatives are taking place across the whole spectrum of HCD from early education to luring overseas Malaysian professionals home. Holistic HCD is central in these efforts. One of the eight strategic challenges outlined in Vision 2020 is to create ‘a fully moral and ethical society’. Malaysia aims for holistic nation development in both economic and spiritual aspects, i.e. to create a country with a fully competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient economy; and with united, spiritually and ethically-strong society. Likewise, Malaysia’s National Education Philosophy introduced in 1989 promotes the same message that the people to be educated holistically to produce intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically-balanced individuals. Its Tenth Malaysian Plan (2011-2015) and Economic Transformation Program launched in 2010 further emphasize holistic policies aim to develop all races, protect the environment, and promote racial and spiritual understandings. The country’s emphasis for holistic nation development reflects similar concerns of the research, i.e. achieving a balanced utilitarian-educational MBA to produce technically and ethically competent managers.

Globalization has dramatically changed the operations and management of the PUs (Othman et al, 2011). Malaysian PUs are key catalysts in Malaysia’s development (Asimiran et al, 2010) and have relatively adopted the state-centric model of higher education (Sirat, 2009). However, their quality and performance are often under public scrutiny. PUs’ allegedly had a dismal role in the country’s economic growth (Lim, 2011). Malaysian industries persistently complain that PU graduates are lacking in competencies and have poor English proficiency (The Star/ Asia News Network,
which are two very important criteria for employment (Ismail, 2011; Hoo et al, 2011). To address these problems, the Malaysian government, through the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2007 and Tenth Malaysian Plan 2011 – 2015, have put greater emphasis on the vocational aspect of PU programs to ensure that graduates meet industry’s needs. The policies have also created performance-oriented and competitive cultures in PUs. The government has recently designed a local rating systems i.e. SETARA to assess PUs quality and performance. The system which presently only covers PUs will be extended to include each faculty and private universities. The results will be made public and will be expectedly used by candidates in their university selection. As graduates employability will be one of the assessment criteria, it is likely that the candidates’ decisions will be influenced by the commercial value of a program. As funding on PUs will be decided based on their rating performance, the system will definitely completely change the orientation of PUs.

There are concerns that these new policies will make the PUs more like businesses than universities. Faruqi (2011) observes that the PUs’ emphasis for vocational education has resulted graduates ‘who fail to appreciate culture and civilisation’ (p.47). He subsequently calls for the PUs to go back to their roots as a temple of knowledge and provide ‘holistic education and produce well-balanced graduates who have professionalism as well as idealism; knowledge as well as wisdom; and understanding of realities as well as vision of what ought to be’ (p. 47). These concerns reflect the same utilitarian-educational concerns faced by BSs and MBAs. Malaysian PUs, thus inclusive of their BSs, need to fulfil their industry and academic constituencies and produce human capital needs according to the country’s economic, social and spiritual aspirations. These factors present Malaysia as a perfect setting to pursue the research topic.

Against this backdrop, a research was conducted in Malaysia to explore the adequacy of its BSs in preparing well-rounded, competent managers to meet its development requirements. The MBA was chosen given its popularity and accessibility, thought to be an effective platform to supply Malaysia the managerial talent pool required for its development needs. The utilitarian-educational emphasis surrounding the MBA literatures matched perfectly with Malaysia’s aspiration for a holistic economical and spiritual development. Malaysia’s aim to create a society with strong material wealth and morality was commensurate with the discipline’s call for technically and ethically
competent managers. As such, there was a question regarding the effectiveness of Malaysia’s BSs in PUs in preparing the country’s managerial talents akin to these criteria. Performing their management roles rightfully is crucial given the significance of effective management and of competent managers in the development of a country.

1.3 Research Aims And Questions

Based on the above analysis, a research was conducted with the aim of exploring the views of three main MBA stakeholders (i.e. faculties, industries and students) on the adequacy of PU MBA provisions in Malaysia. They were selected based on the importance of their opinions in influencing the legitimacy and relevance of MBAs. Their perspectives were gained on the roles of MBAs; its providers (i.e. BSs, MErs and/or universities); their definitions of relevant MBA; the kinds of managers and their competencies; and the social responsibility of managers and their education. Each of these concepts contains juxtapositions of utilitarian-educational properties, i.e. MBA roles (vocational – education); BS roles (economic - social roles); relevant knowledge / teaching (pragmatic - rigour); managerial roles (economic – social roles) and managerial competencies (performance-oriented - societal). The ‘adequacy’ of MBA would be analyzed in relation to the dual utilitarian-educational purposes and also in relation to the country’s aspiration for holistic individuals. The research also intended to find out some descriptive information to understand more about MBA provision by PUs in Malaysia. The research questions are listed as follows:

1. What is the current practice of MBA education provided by Public University Business Schools (PU BSs) in Malaysia?
2. What and how do MBA stakeholders perceive the roles of MBA?
3. What and how do the stakeholders perceive the roles of its providers (i.e BSs, management educators, and/or university in general)?
4. How do the stakeholders define ‘relevant’ MBA?
5. What do the stakeholders look for in a manager and what are the associated competencies they think ought to be inculcated in an MBA?
6. To what extent do the stakeholders concern about the social responsibility aspect in managers and MBA?
Qualitative approaches were employed to achieve the above objectives. The main samples involved BS academics (herewith, MErs), MBA students and industries to represent the three main MBA stakeholders. The MErs and students were derived from three purposely chosen BSs. Data from these groups was gathered through individual semi-structured interviews, a focused group discussion and surveys. To gain descriptive information on MBA provision, the secondary document analysis method was employed on websites and MBA prospectuses of all Malaysian PU BSs. The accumulated data consisted of 28 interviews, 1 focus group, 81 surveys, 3 email questionnaires, and 10 document analyses.

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. Literature reviews are presented in Chapters 2 and 3. The research methodology is described in Chapter 4. The research findings are presented in four chapters in which the general information about MBA practices in Malaysia is presented in Chapter 5; and the findings from MErs, industries and students respectively are presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Finally, the research findings are summarized and cross-analyzed in relation to the research questions, discussed in relation to the overall research aim, and concluded in Chapter 9. The final chapter also contains the research contributions to MED theory and practice, recommendations for the practice of Malaysia's MBA/ME, the research limitations, and personal reflections throughout the research journey.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW:
MBA - A PROGRAMME OF TWO WORLDS
2.1 Introduction

The role of a MBA as a formal MED method is noteworthy. However, widespread complaints about its relevance to industries and academia warrant serious attention. Literary analysis reveals that many of its problems stem from the dual utilitarian-academic purposes governing the operations of the MBA providers i.e. BSs which sometimes place contradictory demands. The chapter argues that satisfying its multiple stakeholders and maintaining a proper balance between the two orientations are fundamental for the legitimacy of a MBA.

This chapter starts with the background of the MBA education, its main stakeholders, the criticisms from these constituencies, the dual educational-professional models of BSs which have played a big part in creating the mess, and some suggestions in the field about how BSs and in particular MBAs may satisfactorily fulfil their dual roles. The discussion can be illustrated by a figure showing the contradictory nature of the dual models and suggests that whichever inclination BSs take will have distinct differences in their perceptions towards their main stakeholder(s), their roles as MBA providers, the objectives of their programme, and their definitions of relevant knowledge in MBA. The chapter continues to argue that no matter how difficult, BSs must ensure that the orientation they adopt for the MBA is balanced in both aspects in order for the programme to be deemed a legitimate form of management ‘education’ and ‘development’. The chapter then points at some of the suggestions from the field on how the BSs in general and MBAs specifically can achieve the educational-utilitarian balance. It concludes by pointing that existing studies which gathered the stakeholders’ perspectives on the competency needs of MBAs had oversimplified the complex nature of the MBA as a program of two worlds.

2.2 Background Of MBA

The MBA is a popular program for those aspiring to embark on managerial-related positions (AACSB, 2011). Normally offered by business and / or management schools 4, the MBA is probably the most profitable programme in the history of higher education.

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4 The adoption of ‘business’ or ‘management’ in the school name may carry different emphases in the school’s orientation (Ferlie et al, 2010; Mintzberg, 2004). Nevertheless, the term ‘business school’ is used in this writing as MBAs are often more associated with BSs.
education. The MBA was also the first globally-recognized university qualification (Williams, 2002 in Mintzberg, 2004). Since its initial introduction in the US\textsuperscript{5}, the MBA has been a global phenomenon in the education and training of managers. International accreditation bodies like the AACSB (US), AMBA (UK) and EQUIS (Europe) have accredited 554, 140 and 108 MBA providers or courses respectively in various nations. In the UK alone, 10,889 MBAs were awarded in 2000 (CEML, 2002). Though MBA enrolment in its traditional markets of the US and UK have dropped in recent years, its demand is soaring especially in Asia due to its rapid economic development (Datar, et al. 2011; China Economic Review, 2010). The recent establishment of the Association of Asia-Pacific BSs (AAPBS) dedicated to the betterment of ME in the region symbolizes this growing importance. The MBA is a highly proliferated industry. From its conventional full-time structure, newer breeds like the Executive MBA (EMBA) and the International Masters Programme in Practising Management (IMPM) have emerged to meet the demand for custom-made programs to suit corporate clients. Based on the factors of popularity and accessibility of the conventional MBA (AACSB, 2011), the program is the main interest of the research.

Conventional MBAs generally exist as four types (Gupta et al., 2007). The most traditional general MBA is structured around core business areas that aim to provide students with a general understanding of business functions and development of management skills. Specialized MBAs were then introduced on the basis that the traditional structure had not provided sufficient details for students to perform specific tasks (Simon, 1989). The four most common specialized MBAs are marketing, finance, accounting and management (Gupta et al., 2007). Dissatisfaction over the two models that industries complained produced graduates with either too general or too specific knowledge resulted in BSs creating MBAs with specializations that they believed would result in more well-rounded, theoretically-balanced graduates. Given the growing need to manage in non-traditional organizations and industries, MBAs with specializations in niche areas is aimed at people with more

\textsuperscript{5} The world’s first formal, university-level business education was set up in the US in 1881 in the University of Pennsylvania. The school, Wharton School of Commerce and Finance, was named after its businessman donor Joseph Wharton. The world's first MBA was offered by a private school, Amos Tuck School of Business Administration in Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, US. (www.wikipedia.org)
specific interests like health care and project management. Despite the variations, employers and potential students were reported to prefer generalized MBAs over the specialized MBAs (Luow et al, 2001; Gupta et al, 2007; Carnall, 1995). Furthermore, regardless of the structure differences, all MBAs generally follow the same functionalist principle covering the three broad areas (i.e. strategy, business functions, and management skills) typically required to operate in large-scale organizations (Figure 1.1). Research by CEMI confirmed that the functional model was universally followed and reported a high degree of similarity in the core subjects of MBAs offered by top schools in the UK, Europe, North America and Australia / Asia (Scherer and Perren, 2001). However, this structure had also been highly criticized as the wrong approach to develop managers (Latham et al, 2004; Gosling and Mintzberg, 2004).

**Figure 1.1:**

The Traditional MBA Model

![Diagram showing the Traditional MBA Model](source: Talbot (1997:127))

The purported strength of the MBA is that it addresses both the education and training aspects of managers (Brown et al, 1996; Monks and Walsh, 2001), thus suggesting a harmonization of academic and organizational interests. Education is
concerned with the provision of general knowledge, with the intention of developing the person in a holistic manner and and society as a whole. Training on the other hand implies teaching tailored to specific, utilitarian needs of organizations. Thus, the common complaint about the lack of industrial relevance of university degrees should by right not happen in MBAs as the theoretical (education) and practical (training) aspects of a managerial job should receive satisfactory emphasis (Brown et al, 1996). In fact, it was the education-training appeal that had attracted British industry to the MBA when it was first introduced (Wilson, 1996). However, as later argued, there was evidence to show that BSs had not been doing a satisfactory job in preparing MBA graduates for the corporate world and balancing the theoretical and pragmatic aspects of MBA curriculum and teaching is still a challenge.

AACSB reported that ME (thus includes MBA) provided values to individuals, organizations and societies (AACSB, 2005). ME was claimed to have enhanced a graduate’s economic well-being and produced well-rounded managers who could relate both business and society together. To organizations, the report claimed that ME teaching provided cutting edge management theories and practices that enabled organizations to be efficient and effective. Effective organizations would in turn provide commodities, employment, income and taxes for nation development. The economic role of the MBA was emphasized even from its early conception in ME (McCormick, 1987 and Handy et al, 1988). Finally, the report claimed that the MBA provided value to society through the creation of jobs, products and services and sources of income that improved quality of life. Despite positive evidence regarding the values of MBAs to stakeholders (Baruch and Leeming, 2001; Slater and Dixon-Fowler, 2010) later discussions in the chapter show that not only were these alleged contributions questioned but BSs had also been associated with making things worst.

2.3 Stakeholders

The relevance and legitimacy of the MBA are subject to the views of its three most important stakeholders: BSs as ME providers, industry, and students. They inform the design, implementation and control of MBA education (Camuffo and Gerli, 2004). The significance of each stakeholder can also be described as an input-output model (Neelankavil, 1994) where the quality of applicants (input) and education process
(curriculum, pedagogy, teaching staff, etc.) would influence the quality of graduates (output) produced for the industry. The students have become powerful stakeholders, particularly of the MBA because the programme itself has been highly-commercialized as a result of media coverage of BSs and MBAs (AACSB, 2005; Zimmerman, 2001; Pearce, 2007).

As an academic department, a BS should implement teaching that is neutral to benefit wider societal interests (Cornuel, 2005; Jain and Stopford, Datar, et al, 2011). Students should be developed beyond their vocational needs and rather nurtured to become responsible members of society (Grey, 2002; Hartel, 2010). Being an academic department, BS research activities should aim to advance knowledge of scholarly standards conducted through rigorous methodologies that could bring the greatest good to all levels of society (Starkey and Tempest, 2005; Connelly and Gallagher, 2010). For industries, ‘relevant’ knowledge is perceived as whether useful and applicable in ‘real-life’ managerial tasks and strategic goals of organizations (Kellie, 2004; Rubin and Dierdorff, 2007; Garrick and Rhodes, 2000). As profit-oriented entities, it is understandable that organizations want MBA curriculum that contain knowledge that is pragmatic, instrumentalist and able to increase profits (Louw et al, 2001; Truong Quang and Metzger, 2007). They want graduates who are competent enough to practise and view universities as training grounds responsible for preparing human resources for industry needs. From the industry point of view, BSs are considered successful if they produce graduates who can perform well as managers.

Industry is a powerful stakeholder given that management is an applied discipline. Historically, the business and management discipline existed to provide solutions to business problems (Hasegawa, 2006). The legitimacy of their teaching therefore often depended on the views of industry. Secondly, BSs, especially in the US, had always been quite dependent on business philanthropists. The idea of the first university BS in the US could not have been realized without donations from Joseph Wharton to the University of Pennsylvania (Cheit, 1985). The trend continues where many BSs in the US are named after their businessman donors. Similarly in the UK, when the ‘Manchester Experiment’ BS faced a financial crisis in its early days, it was the British industry that stepped in to supplement the government funding (Wilson 1996). From 2009 – 2010, 11.2 billion in endowments were reportedly received by American BSs.
(AACSB, 2011). This practice is copied by BSs elsewhere who have reportedly received 1.1 billion during the same period. Furthermore, maintaining a good, close relationship with industry is imperative for MBAs because their assistance is critical for student internships and recruitment. Hawawini (2005) also suggested non-US schools should follow in the footsteps of the US to seek donations from industry philanthropists and build close relationships with industry to secure their school funding. These show that industries are a very important constituent of ME and their perceptions of ‘relevant’ knowledge matter significantly in MBAs. However, there have been warnings for BSs to not get too close to industry and too dependent on their endowments (Starkey and Tempest, 2005). Pfeffer and Fong (2004) feared that it would challenge academic autonomy and its neutrality to society interests.

As mentioned, MBAs are also largely influenced by its students, often considered the ‘consumers’. The MBA is being trapped as a market-oriented education due to the rankings of BSs and MBAs by the media (Zimmerman, 2001; AACSB, 2005). The rankings, often measured by the financial success of MBA graduates, have significant influence in a student’s selection of programs/schools (Policano, 2005; Gioia and Corley, 2002). The salary and career-enhancement prospects of MBAs are also the main attractions for students that choose to pursue a MBA (CEML, 2002). For fear of the negative consequences of falling rankings in student enrolment, many US BSs put considerable resources into building their image and keeping their students happy, however unfortunately, in areas that have less to do with the quality of their teaching and learning (Policano, 2005; Gioia and Corley, 2002). Some BSs apparently even tried very hard to ensure that all MBA students passed the course (Armstrong, 1995).

The literature above has demonstrated the significance of students, industries and society in BS teaching. It has shown how the power of each stakeholder entered into BSs either through incidental or non- incidental ways, where BSs appear to have encouraged themselves to become ‘owned’ i.e. by students through rankings and by industries through their endowments. Nevertheless, fulfilling the interests of the two stakeholders was shown to have affected the ability of BSs to fulfil / exercise their obligation to society.
2.4 Criticisms

It is impossible to dismiss the American context when discussing ME as the country is the origin of the MBA and breeding ground for ME theory and practice. On that note, criticisms concerning MBAs and its providers discussed here mostly emanated from the US. Although some claimed that the crisis was American problem as European ME had different characteristics (Fox, 1997, Lewis, 1993 in Talbot, 1997, CEML, 2002), nevertheless the significance of the American ME model in other countries (Amdam, 1996; Wilson, 1996; Kipling, et al, 2010, Neal and Finlay, 2008) suggests these criticisms might be more universal than we imagined.

Despite its celebrated success, BSs and MBAs are continuously bombarded with various criticisms regarding its relevance to its stakeholders. There are serious questions about whether they actually create value in their graduates, organizations and societies. To discuss these criticisms, it is useful to trace the history of ME in the Anglo-American contexts⁶, for instance the influence of several key publications, as they have had a large share in shaping the present practice of ME.

A lot of the criticisms regarding the irrelevance of ME to industry needs may have been caused by the early adoption in BSs of the scientific paradigm, for the sake of gaining academic respectability. In its early days, ME in the US existed more like a collection of trade schools teaching basic clerical, bookkeeping and secretarial work oriented towards vocational education. However, in 1959 the Gordon and Howell report highlighted that ME was flawed as it was too vocational, not general enough and lacked scientific foundation. Subsequent reports by the Ford Foundation and Carnegie Councils suggested similar observations. These reports initiated the *first wave of change* (Latham et al, 2004:4) towards professionalization of BSs. Gordon and Howell, who were both economists, suggested that in order to earn academic respectability, BSs needed to adopt scientific paradigms and to function like a social science department. The proposition conformed to the trend in academia at the time where scientific were valued over non-scientific paradigms. In line with the recommendations, scientific subjects that strived for law-like knowledge and analytical

⁶ Latham et al, (2004) provide a useful reference for mapping the development of early ME.
skills with the use of sophisticated techniques began streaming into BS curriculum. At that time, BSs commonly existed as part of the economics discipline, given the latter’s more established academic respectability. Scholars from more established disciplines such as sociology, psychology, mathematics and of course economics, were brought in to enrich the BS’s theoretical and empirical foundation to improve its academic status (Latham et al, 2004). The strong influence of the economics discipline in BSs had resulted in the emphasis on rationalistic, analytical and market-based concepts such as competition and strategic business which are still prevalent in many BSs’ teaching today. By the early 1970s, BSs were said to have gained academic and professional status when they started receiving recognition from potential students, industry and the international community (Cheit, 1985).

However, BSs had gone too far with their scientific orientation. The adoption of a scientific paradigm in the BS curriculum contributed to the failure of BSs to deliver according to industry expectations (Bennis and O’Toole, 2005; Pfeffer and Fong, 2004). From being criticized for being too vocationally-oriented, their teaching was now being criticized for being too academic, resulting in its irrelevance to the needs of industry. Cheit (1085) reported that beginning in the 1980s the two most common complaints about BS curriculum were: firstly, too quantitative, theoretical and divorced from real business problems; secondly, it overlooked the importance of the soft skill aspects of its graduates (Cheit, 1985). The Porter and McKibbin report (1988), produced as a result of a nationwide survey commissioned by the AACSB to review American ME and development, empirically confirmed the two problems. Industries were reportedly unhappy with the lack of soft skills of BS graduates. For instance, Chaudhry’s (2003) research involving firms across the globe reported that industries felt the priority in technical and analytical skills prioritized in MBA reduced the attention spent in developing the students’ communication and language skills.

Dissatisfaction among the industry emerged within the field itself. Several key publications highlighted that BS curriculum indeed had little relationship with what organizations and students considered important to succeed in business (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Rubin and Dierdoff, 2007; Mintzberg, 2004; Antonacopoulou, 2010). Most criticisms targeted at the functional curriculum structure were felt to be contradictory to the realities of management, which in reality rarely exists in separate
business functions. Mintzberg, the most persistent and outspoken critic, argued that conventional MBAs were flawed as they tended to ‘train the wrong people in the wrong ways with the wrong consequences’ (2004:6) and that they taught students business functions rather than the practice of management (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2006). The emphasis on technical facts and techniques in the functional structure had been blamed for creating graduates who suffered from ‘paralysis by analysis’ (Kedia and Har Veston, 1998: 210), who were specialists rather than team players (Mintzberg and Gosling, 2004) and who had developed a ‘silo mentality’ (Latham et al, 2004:7). Cornuel argued that BSs and management faculties appear as ‘places busy reproducing or miming reality’ (2005:819). The scientific model was also blamed as the real culprit for the widespread problems on MBAs and business (Bennis and O’Toole, 2005). Although MBA curriculum have gone through several modifications the functional silo is still prevalent in many MBAs programmes (Neelankavil, 1994; Scherer and Perren, 2001) and even remains as the foundation in some executive MBAs (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2004). The rigid structure, ideology and ethos practised in MBA education has been found to contradict the programme’s objective of developing leaders (Gabriel, 2005). The irrelevance of BS curriculum to the needs of industry was never a fully resolved issue. Until today, BSs are still trying to find ways to close the gap between their teaching and industry expectations (see AACSB, 2005; Datar, et al. 2011; AMBA, 2009).

Recent developments in the field have now observed a tilt towards the roles of BSs in relation to humanity. BSs have been accused of behaving more like businesses than academic entities (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; March, 2003; Starkey and Tempest, 2004). Their teaching have been criticized for being profit-biased (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007) and for promoting and contributing to immoral management practices (Ghoshal, 2005; Khurana, 2007). Their research activities have also been condemned as reflecting less like the concerns of an academic department (March, 2003; Connelly and Gallagher, 2010). Survey on research published from 1972 to 2001 in the Academy of Management Journal reported a huge imbalance between economic and social interests pursued in management research with very little attention paid to the latter (Walsh et al, 2003). BSs had been called the ‘running dog of capitalist’ (Dunne, 2008). High-profile corporate scandals and economic crises associated with BSs have raised debates on the extent to which BSs teachings have indeed influenced the morality of their students. Some MEs have accepted that they were partly responsible
for the rise of corporate scandals such as Enron (e.g. Khurana, 2007; Salbu, 2002 in Starkey and Tempest, 2005). Reports about the worrying state of a BS student’s ethics presented further concerns about whether BSs had performed their ‘educational’ duties in developing socially responsible individuals. Research shows that compared to students in other disciplines BS students were found to have more ethical problems (McCabe and Trevino, 1995) and higher levels of narcissism, an attitude that impacts negatively in the workplace environment (Westerman, et al, 2011). Westerman, et al further suggested that the ‘get rich’ emphasis which BSs promoted in their programmes may have attracted students with higher narcissistic tendencies. And like McCabe and Trevino (1995), he found that students who pursued an MBA for financial gain were more likely to cheat compared to those who studied for other non-financial reasons.

BSs were also condemned for their very commercial approach in promoting their programmes, particularly MBAs. MBAs are often associated with the significant positive impact on graduate careers and earnings (MyMBACareer, MBA World Directory) which is also the main reasons why students flock to BSs (CEML, 2002; BusinessWeek, 2006). BSs were shown to have no problems promoting their programmes based on this indicator (Finney, 2011; Pfeffer and Fong, 2004), even though the alleged salary-career enhancing impact of MBAs had been dismissed (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002). BSs that marketed programmes based on career-salary impact had arguably resulted in their being viewed as places to get rich rather than to learn, causing them to attract the wrong kinds of students (Pfeffer and Fong, 2004). Powerful students have had a great impact on the sovereignty of BSs as academic entities (Pearce, 2007; Zimmerman, 2001; AACSB, 2005; Connelly and Gallagher, 2010). Starkey and Tempest (2005) accused BSs of ‘dumbing down’ knowledge to please their students (p.65) and argued that the “consumer voice has given too much power to consumer choice and the role of the academic as arbiter of knowledge and the curriculum that is its mediator has been undermined in the need to serve and service the customer so as to receive the good evaluations necessary to individual career advancement and to the prestige of the school” (Starkey and Tempest: 65). Zimmerman (2001) described that media rankings had caused BSs to be ‘locked in a dysfunctional competition’ facing a ‘prisoner’s dilemma’. Given the problem viewing students as customers, others have suggested alternative metaphors like ‘clients’ (Armstrong, 2003:371; Carnall, 2005:19) or ‘junior partners’ (Ferris, 2002:185).
although they also carry similar market-oriented connotations. March (2003) on the other hand suggested that in a higher education setting students should not be viewed as customers but as 'acolytes' (p. 206) suggesting the sacred and higher purpose of the aim of education.

In conclusion, the above criticisms show that BSs and their teaching were questioned on the extent to which they actually provided value to their graduates, society and organizations. BSs were criticized for failing to meet the expectations for pragmatic teaching by industry, failing to contribute to humanity, and their MBAs especially were too commercial that some educationists might have felt it shameful to even consider it a university degree. The following section argues that these criticisms may be explained by the dual purposes that guide BS operations.

2.5 Dual Purposes of Business Schools and ME

The above criticisms demonstrated that practitioners complained BSs provide curriculums and graduates irrelevant to their utilitarian needs. On the other hand, academics condemned business schools for being too commercial, having too highly-instrumentalized curriculums, neglecting its moral and social responsibilities, and selling out to capitalism. These contradictory criticisms are suggested to be caused by the dual purposes of BSs (Cheit, 1985; Starkey and Tempest, 2005). As mentioned earlier, BSs are driven by academic and corporate/professional models (Cheit, 1985; Wilson, 1996) each with different aims, interests and priorities that would influence curriculums, teaching, research activities and measures of achievements of BSs.

The decision to house BSs or rather to offer ME programmes under a university was controversial. Many were sceptical about the idea of education for commercial and pragmatic purposes (Cheit, 1985) feeling that it would downgrade the status of universities as 'ivory towers' (e.g. Bloom, 1987 in Starkey and Tempest, 2005). In Britain, many academics initially objected the idea on the grounds that ME had no academic content, was too vocationally-oriented to deserve an academic degree, and its economic orientation contradicted the ethos of a university (Wheatcroft, 1970 in Brown et al, 1996). Industry was equally suspicious about the plan as it perceived university education as often irrelevant to their needs (Wilson, 1996). This showed
that even at the beginning critics had anticipated and warned about future conflicts in the roles of BSs having to serve the academic concern for a higher purpose with capitalist profit-making. They were right about the inherent tension. The above criticisms show that BSs are now being confronted with contradicting and inconsistent demands from its stakeholders. BSs were described as being in a serious ‘identity crisis’ (Pfeffer and Fong, 2004: 1502) and had been called ‘peculiar academic animals’ (p.212) because they neither resembled their business nor academic parents (Aaronson, 1996). With regard to MBAs, Datar et al, (2011) described them now as being at a ‘crossroads’ (p. 451) and that BSs should decide their future. There were even suggestions that the widespread problems were due to the ‘flawed’ conception of BSs given their dual purpose, and there were proposals to remove BSs from their academic parents through privatization to solve the mess (Griffiths and Murray, 1985 in Brown, et al, 1996). At a broader level, similar educational-utilitarian conflicts had also been noted by Hasegawa (2006) who argued that the essence of management discipline itself contradicted concerns of humanity. He argued that management disciplines evolved around capitalism and the existence of the discipline was to support the profit-making objectives of organizations. He showed that the ‘logic of management’ contradicted the ‘logic of society’ (p. 70) in the sense that the ethos of management disciplines, which aimed to provide immediate, pragmatic solutions to business short-term monetary problems contradicted society’s concerns about long-term, holistic and sustainable growth. This argument showed that the crisis was not only exclusive to the MB field but also deeply rooted in the whole of business and management disciplines.

As discussed earlier, BSs and industry do not always see eye to eye in terms of what constitutes a relevant curriculum (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002). For instance, the growing obsession of BSs in specialist MBAs is opposed to the preference in industry for general MBAs (Luow, 2001; Gupta et al, 2007, Carnall, 1995). Crowther and Carter (2002) argued that specialist MBAs were created to satisfy the interests of BSs in seeking their own academic legitimacy rather than as a response to industry needs. They further maintained that the trend towards ‘specialism and self-referential legitimation is ultimately self-defeating’ and BSs were actually ‘legitimating their own irrelevance and marginalisation’ (p. 268). In another case, Brotheridge and Long (2007) discovered that some of the issues that were vibrantly debated within the academic circle such as
ethics, organizational change, strategic planning, social and environmental responsibilities were in reality, hardly faced by managers regardless of their personal and organizational characteristics. Instead, people-related issues like leadership, communication, employee relations and attitudes were the most problematic and of concern. There is more evidence that demonstrates the mismatch between what BSs offer with what industries need (see Pfeffer and Fong, 2002).

There have been discussions on how business schools can regain their academic and corporate respectability. In general, many call for a balance between industry and academic demands, although they differ in terms of the degree of priority of the orientation. Some academics believe that BSs should be biased towards the professional model (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005; Hawawini, 2005). For instance, Bennis and O'Toole (2005) argued that to regain relevance BSs ‘must rediscover the practice of business’ (p.103). They claimed that business is not an academic discipline but a profession and BSs should provide education to serve business and management professional needs. Its teaching should follow professional models that place emphasis on experience, imagination, practical relevance, integration of theory into practice, and be oriented towards needs of organizations. They called for greater involvement and interference of industry to govern ME in BSs. They warned that reforms in ME curriculum would not be successful unless BSs changed their scientific-academic model. They accused BSs of adopting the model because it ‘advances the careers and satisfies the egos of its professoriate’ and it provides the professors with ‘scientific respectability’ in research activities which they prefer, and avoids ‘vocational stigma’ (p.99) which they feared, and that doing scientific research seems a lot easier compared to having to understand the challenges and complexities of the managerial world. However, Bennis and O'Toole maintained that being more professional did not mean the curriculum had to be less rigorous. Instead, there should be a balance between rigour and relevance. They believed that BSs should look at other professional schools where relevant teaching was more prioritized and valued than research.

On the other hand, efforts to tailor so much to industry interests have also raised concerns from more leftist BS academics. For instance, Starkey et al, (2004; 2005) argued that the purpose of BSs was not to serve the economic interests of
organizations, but to be the centre of management knowledge creation and dissemination. They argued that the objectives of BSs and their ME should relate to the actual aims of the university which is to develop educated people and society to create a better world. March (2003) criticized that the ‘consequentialist reasoning doctrine’ in BS teaching ‘fails to capture the fundamental nature of the educational soul’. He likened the university education to a religion in which ‘they only become truly worthy of their names when they are embraced as arbitrary matters of faith, not as matters of usefulness’. He further argued that ‘higher education is a vision, not a calculation... a commitment not a choice... students are not customers (but) acolytes... teaching is not a job (but) a sacrament... (and) research is not an investment (but) a testament’ (p. 206). At the extreme, there were ‘critters’ (p.673) (i.e. critical management theorists) who had suggested the abolition of BSs altogether because the whole idea of BSs totally contradicted the beliefs of critical management studies (Rowlinson and Hassard, 2011). On the other hand, Pfeffer and Fong (2004) seemed to have taken a more middle position and proposed that BSs should ‘rediscover their roots as university departments’ (p.1514-5) and function more like academic and research institutions and less like a business. They proposed that BSs should emulate medical schools where research and teaching closely inform each other. They believe that these changes would enable BSs to perform their duties to society and the management profession.

More recently, Ferlie et al (2010) called for attention on the possibility of BSs adopting the public interest model. They felt that the earlier propositions (i.e. by Bennis and O’Toole, Pfeffer and Fong, Starkey, and Grey (i.e. critical BS) would not be fully effective in solving the criticisms of BSs. They instead proposed the public interest model which they argued would be able to build the professionalization of management, emphasize the values of scholarship research, and maintain a balanced relationship with the corporate world. They posited that the adoption of public interest would mean BSs have to shed the ‘business’ term from their names to reflect their neutral interest and be known instead as ‘school of management’.

The literature suggests that the adoption of a particular model by BSs (which influences its academic-practical inclinations) may be influenced by several factors such as the country of reference (US or Europe), status or provider (university or professional provider), and the discipline backgrounds of its staff. A lot of the
criticisms discussed in this chapter and the challenge of fulfilling the dual utilitarian-educational purposes may characterize American BS schools more than elsewhere. Thomas (2007) related that UK and European BSs adopted a variation of US-styled BS models. Some have argued that the criticisms of MBAs concerned problems related to the US and were less about other countries as the latter adopted a different model from the American BS, more balanced academic-pragmatic objectives in ME (Fox, 1997). Schools like Henley, Ashridge and Cranfield adopted professional models that emphasized practical teaching (Thomas, 2007). Thomas further noted that schools in Lancaster, Bath and Warwick were built on social-science disciplines whereas Leicester school was more toward liberal education, thus adopting a critical management approach. Ferlie et al (2010) also noted that their proposed public interest model could be more easily adopted by European than Anglo-American BSs the latter were built on and tied to capitalist institutions, i.e finance and banks. Given the distinct differences in the American and European BS models, the model adopted by BSs in other countries with less developed ME may largely be influenced by the country that they looked up to and perhaps where their MErs received their education.

This section argued that the criticisms of MBA education may have emanated from the schism between the dual academic and professional models. It argued that trying to fulfil one stakeholder might have caused the responsibility to the other stakeholder to be jeopardized. However, maintaining a balance in relevance and rigour is crucial especially in a MBA (Thomas, 2007; Cheit, 1985) given its special situation of being bound by three equally powerful stakeholders i.e. industry, students and academia. The next section discusses some suggestions in the field to harmonize these dual expectations.
2.6 Harmonizing the Dual Expectations

The allegations about the negative impacts of BS teaching on its graduates, industry and society have triggered various debates about the future of BSs, particularly the MBA and the subsequent propositions to make them balanced in economic and social objectives (Datar et al, 2011; Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2008; AACSB, 2002; AMBA, 2009; French and Grey, 1996). The writings have touched various aspects concerning the schools teaching (Datar et al, 2011; Mintzberg, 2004; French and Grey, 1996; Alvesson and Willmott, 1996; Karakas et al, 2011; Hartel, 2010) and research (Starkey and associates, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008; Hannah and Peredo, 2011; Hasegawa, 2006). The United Nations Global Compact, the largest corporate citizenship initiative in the world consisting of organizations, civil service and academic institutions, have also recently established 7 Principles for Responsible ME. In general, these new developments have called for BSs to be balanced in serving their society and organizations stakeholders. BSs must not only perform their economic/technical role (Grey, 2002; Drucker, 1985) to provide trained workforce, but also their citizenship/societal role (Boyle, 2004; Cornuel, 2005) to develop humanity. MBA must serve both as a training platform (vocational-oriented, short-term and current needs of organizations) but also an educational platform (holistic, long-term development of individuals). Their teaching must fulfil pragmatism and instrumentalism (usefulness of knowledge to organizational performance) but also rigor and scholarship (concerned with the value of knowledge) aspects. The development of managers must address their economic responsibilities (Drucker, 1985) to serve shareholders, and their responsibility as social entrepreneurs (London and Morfopoulos 2010 in Heslin, 2011; Zahra et al, 2009). In relation to that, development of managerial competencies should address their functional competencies (performance-related) and also societal competency (Hayawini, 2005). A balanced MBA is one which may satisfy these expectations to produce well-rounded managers. These concepts are shown in Figure 1.2. The figure shows that the MBA is governed by two models, each with different interests and characteristics regarding the programme. The literature suggests the importance of maintaining a good balance between both orientations to ensure the programme is connected to industry needs and that it remains a legitimate method for management learning. Preserving the balance is also crucial because moving too much in one direction would result in it being perceived as irrelevant to the other party.
Figure 1.2
Dual Models of Business Schools / MBA

Well-Rounded Managers
↑
Balanced MBA

ACADEMIC MODEL
- Main Stakeholders
  - Societies
- Ultimate Objective
  - Society Interests
- Roles of Business Schools
  - Societal
- Purpose of MBA
  - Holistic Development
  - Educational
- Vocabularies of Relevance
  - Scholarship
  - Theoretical
  - Rigour

PROFESSIONAL MODEL
- Main Stakeholder
  - Organizations
- Ultimate Objectives
  - Utilitarian Interests
- Roles of Business Schools
  - Economic / Technical
- Purpose of MBA
  - Training of Potential Managers
  - Vocational
- Vocabularies of Relevance
  - Instrumentalism
  - Practical
  - Pragmatism

Source: Author’s Construct

As mentioned above, various efforts have been implemented for BSs and MBAs to satisfy educational and utilitarian expectations. With regard to ME teaching, popular attempts to bridge the practical-theoretical gap had concentrated on the pedagogical issues (e.g. McMillen et al, 1994; Buckley and Monks, 2008; McLaughlin and Thorpe, 1993; Gosling and Mintzberg, 2004; 2006; Karakas, 2011; Brower, 2011; Baker and Comer, 2011). While pedagogy is undisputedly crucial for closing the gap, these issues are important but there is still a lack of effort to find out the kind of managers that MBAs need to produce. Also as mentioned before, the lack of competency development in students in MBAs has never been fully resolved. Yet competencies are regarded the most important criteria in a managerial job (Mintzberg, 2004). What are the competencies needed to produce balance managers? This initial step in the formulation of ME design is the most basic yet has not received sufficient research attention. Furthermore, the competency subject is more commonly associated with
utilitarian purposes. And this is what is being done by many existing studies on the subject. The studies which looked at multiple stakeholders’ perspectives in ME/MBA competency requirements tended to be one-sided focusing on fulfilling the utilitarian roles in their quest to produce relevant MBAs (e.g. Camuffo and Gerli, 2004; Shipper, 1999; Neelankavil, 1994). This chapter has shown that to be relevant MBAs (thus the competencies developed in it) must not only serve organizational interests but also social interests. The existing studies therefore are felt to have failed in capturing the multiplicity of opinions of the MBA stakeholders resulting from the dual purposes of the MBA. The development of competent managers in both functional and social aspects are important and the stakeholders need to be asked what they want in a MBA i.e. what kind of managers they want. This conceptualization of MBA graduates / managers is particularly important in a country like Malaysia whose BSs may still be quite out of reach\textsuperscript{7} of the emphasis for responsible ME. Given this understanding, exploring the role and possibility of competencies in developing well-rounded managerial graduates to reflect the dual expectations is a fertile ground waiting to be explored.

2.7 Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the background of the MBA education, its main stakeholders, its main criticisms and the presence of the dual educational-professional models of BSs which have played a big part in instigating these criticisms. The research argues that maintaining a balance between the two models is crucial for the MBA to be accepted as relevant to its three equally important stakeholders. The chapter has argued that there is a lack of effort to discover the potential of competencies in MBAs that can close the gap of the dual expectations, especially in ways that have adequately considered the multiplicity and contradictory nature of stakeholder opinions. The next chapter will discuss the literatures relevant to the competency approach.

\textsuperscript{7} As mentioned before, responsible ME is a relatively recent concept and to date emphasis on responsible ME in their curriculum mainly comes from BS associations, accreditation bodies or subscription to the values of PRME. There is thus a question for other BSs that do not belong or are still new to any of these associations.
CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW - MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES
3.1 Introduction

Competency is a very popular concept. Although initially prevalent among Anglo-American cultures (Burgoyne, 1993), it has spread to other countries including Malaysia (Azmi, 2010) and remains significant even decades after its conception. However, despite its significance the approach is plagued with long-standing controversies concerning its validity in guiding managerial education and development. Literature suggests that some of these problems are due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the competency approach and the adoption of flawed epistemologies in its studies.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. Theoretical underpinnings of the approach is presented and followed by a discussion on its key criticisms. Suggestions for its improvement are then presented. In line with the intent of the research to gain the stakeholders’ views on the relevant competencies in MBAs, the different interpretations on the competency subject and their underlying reasons are discussed. The writing argues that competency can be a useful and acceptable concept to guide MBAs provided they are developed based on a rigorous research epistemology and that it emphasizes both the functional and the individual aspects of being a manager.

3.2 The Nature of Managerial Work

Two important elements which need to be analyzed prior to the development of a competency framework are the job and its context (Boyatzis, 1982). Thus, the following describes the general responsibilities of managers and Malaysian management practices being the context of this research.

Theories of managerial work are constantly evolving. Classical theories had been debunked by contemporary theorists like Mintzberg (1973) who found that in reality managerial tasks were rarely rigid and systematic. More recent research shows that such descriptions still prevail (Hales and Mustapha, 2000). Likewise, changes in business environments and the world in general have constantly redefined managerial roles from ‘organization man’ (Whyte, 1956), ‘individualized cooperation’ (Bartlett and Goshal, 1997) to ‘social entrepreneurs’ now (London and Marfopoulos, 2010). Problems
in the world have resulted in increasing demands for businesses and their managers to think about their actions and contributions to the society.

The significance of the social responsibility of managers has been raised by Peter Drucker, a key thinker in modern management (Huczynski, 1994), in which he said:

“The fact remains that in modern society there is no other leadership group but managers. If the managers of our major institutions, and especially of business, do not take responsibility for the common good, no one else can or will. ... The leadership group in this society, and this means the managers of the key institutions, whether they like it or not — indeed whether they are competent or not — have to think through what responsibilities they can and should assume, in what areas, and for what objectives.” (1985:325).

Drucker outlined three equally important but essentially distinct responsibilities of managers. First, organizations and managers must always prioritize economic performance and profitability in every decision. He argued that “a business management has failed if it fails to produce economic results... if it does not supply goods and services desired by the customers at a price the customer is willing to pay... and if it does not improve, or at least maintain the wealth-producing capacity of the economic resources entrusted to it” (p.40). Secondly, they are responsible for making work productive and the employees feel they have achieved by appropriately applying relevant human resource interventions. Thirdly, they must manage the social impacts and social responsibilities of the firms. Drucker argued that “free enterprise cannot be justified as being good for business. It can be justified only as being good for society” (p.41). In other words, Drucker suggested that organizations and managers must simultaneously serve and protect the interests of organizations, employees and the public. And since managers are the ‘leadership group of the modern society’ (p.325), their education must therefore be balanced both in the economic and social aspects (Drucker, 2001). This view is now echoed by other management authors (eg, Cornell, 2005; Cabrera and Bowen, 2005).

The influence of a country's culture and economy on its business and management practices has been widely noted (Hofstede, 2001; 1980; 1993; Hoskisson et al, 2000; Budhwar and Debrah, 2001). In the case of developing countries, differences in their business environments and organizational structures (Srinivas, 1995; McCourt and Foon, 2007; Loveridge, 2006) affect the roles and thus the competencies expected of their managers (Youssef et al, 1997; Pearson and Entrekin, 1998). The Malaysian
workforce is highly multicultural, therefore managing in this context requires managers to understand and appreciate management values of each culture. The multitude of races and religions in Malaysia's workforce have been acknowledged to have an influence on management values and practices (Abdullah, 1996; Noordin et al, 2002; Wolfe and Arnold, 1994). For example, some of the management values related to the Malay culture are face-saving, indirectness, high status and filial piety (Abdullah, 1996). At the same time Islam, the religion of most Malay managers, would also have an impact on their management practices, therefore concepts like faith in God, participation and obedience to leaders are considered important (Abdullah, 1996). Managing in this environment is challenging because managers need to understand the other groups' points of view which are sometimes in opposition. The persistence of religious and cultural differences, like that observed in Malaysia, has precluded any single cultural paradigm from gaining predominance (Mellahi and Wood, 2004).

The broad nature of managerial responsibilities highlighted above suggests the need for managers to gain holistic competencies to cover the functional, personal and ethical sides of their responsibilities. And the context in which managers need to operate play a significant role in their competency needs. Before further discussion on the subject, the theoretical background of the competency approach will first be discussed as below.

3.3 Theoretical Backgrounds of the Competency Approach

The US and the UK are the two nations that have significantly shaped the competency landscape. The US approach, formulated from large-scale empirical research by Boyatzis (1982), looks at competencies as individual attributes that are related to effective performance. Many of subsequent studies on competency in the US emanated from the Boyatzis model (e.g. Spencer and Spencer, 1997). From its use in practice-oriented business settings, the competency approach gained formal attention in ME when the AACSB conducted research in the teaching of non-cognitive skills in American BSs (Porter, 1983 in Langbert, 2000). The emergence of the competency approach in the UK took a very different route. The 'competence movement' in the UK is a controversial government-initiated political agenda
(Easterby-Smith and Thorpe, 1997). The policy was introduced to enhance the effectiveness of the British workforce, resulting in the formulation of the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) to develop the standards of various occupational groups. The influence in the approach of the ME setting was triggered by simultaneous publications by Handy et al and Constable & McCormick (1987) in which both associated the poor performance of British managers at international level with the country’s ignorance on MED, recommending greater emphasis on the systematic education and development of British managers. The reports were responsible for starting the professionalization of management in the UK with the formation of the Management Charter Initiative (MCI) in 1987 followed by the Management Standards Center (MSC) in 2000. The objective of the MCI is to develop standards for managerial jobs and to award accreditation to ‘qualified’ managers. Given these functions, the term ‘competence’ is more common in UK-based literatures, reflecting the achievement of occupational standards. The US approach (also known as ‘behavioural approach’) instead looks at competencies as individual attributes that are related to effective performance.

The competency-competence terms may differ and overlap in certain aspects. Grzedzka (2005) considered competency as an independent variable (personal inputs) whilst competence as a dependent variable (performance output) to managerial performance. Hoffmann (1999) stated that the US approach tends to be used to guide programme development (input approach) whereas the UK approach is suited for HR purposes (output approach). He further noted that the competence approach is more acceptable for tangible jobs but less suited for complex jobs like management. To distinguish the two terms, some English writers (e.g. Brown, 1993) used ‘meta competence’ to refer to the US-based definition. The two terms may have overlapping meanings. Competencies are necessary for competent performance and vice versa (Woodruffe, 1994; Young, 2002; Mumford and Gold, 2004). Although not stated, there is also the connotation of measurability in most US-based competency definitions, which implies a comparison to a standard, thus making the US approach similar to the UK approach. For instance, Spencer and Spencer (1993) define competency as “an underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion-referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job, or situation” (p.9). The definition by Hirsh and Strebeler (1994) also show the overlapping of meanings where they
suggested that ‘competence’ has three elements, i.e. job context, ‘competencies’ which are related to effective performance, and observable job behaviours.

Despite the background and terminology differences, competence and competency share a similar purpose. Both aim for job effectiveness often from an economic perspective. Given this purpose, it is therefore not surprising that the competence/y approach tends to be biased towards a utilitarian perspective of job performance. Later discussions will show that this very utilitarian characteristic becomes a basis for widespread criticism. For the purpose of this research, the term ‘competency’ shall be used as the author believes it is more suitable to describe the objective and context of the research. Table 1.1 presents the definitions and the elements of competency/e offered by several notable authors on the subject.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boyatzis (1982)</td>
<td>“A job competency is an underlying characteristic of a person in that it may be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self-image or social role, or a body of knowledge which he or she user” (p. 21).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Woodruffe (1994) | - Competence – “areas of work or roles at which the person is competent” (p. 66).  
- Competency – “the dimensions of behaviour that lie behind competent performance” (p. 66).  
- “Competence(y) refers to one of the sets of behaviours that the person must display in order to perform the tasks and functions of a job with competence” (p. 65). |
| Mumford & Gold (2004) | “Management competences are descriptions of behaviours, attributes, skills needed to perform management work effectively and / or the outputs to be achieved from such work which can be assessed against performance criteria” (p. 51). |
| Albanese (1989)  | Competency is “…a personal characteristic that contributes to effective managerial performance” (p. 66).                                                                                                   |
| Spencer & Spencer (1993) | Competency as “an underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion-referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job, or situation” (p. 9). |

Source: Author's Construct
3.4 Multi-Disciplinary Nature of Competency Approach

The difference in the use and interpretations of competency as discussed above may be due to its multi-disciplinary nature. Competency is a language shared by psychology, management / HR, education and political disciplines (Burgoyne, 1993; Hoffmann, 1999). Burgoyne shows that the interests of stakeholders on the subject can be very different in terms of the subject’s orientation towards macro/micro, theoretical/practical and technical/practical dimensions. Burgoyne illustrates that psychologist’s concerns with the traits of a person that are related to effective performance and the methodologies to measure these characteristics (e.g. Rhee, 2008; Boyatzis, 1982), HR advocates pursue it as an organizational strategic planning intervention and to increase the legitimacy of their roles in organizations (e.g. Clardy, 2008; Rees and Doran, 2001), whilst some educationists are a bit cautious on the approach as they tend to perceive it as a political move to vocationalize education (e.g. Macfarlane and Lomas, 1994). Given the agenda differences, it is only logical that competency definitions that each author provides are in line with their respective disciplines. This can be seen in the definitions provided by Boyatzis (psychology), Woodruffe (HR) and Hager and Beckett (education). For the same reason, it is also understandable that blind adoption of the competency approach based on a single field’s interpretation (i.e. HRM competency model) on another field tends not to be well received by another field (i.e. education competency model).

The lack of consensus in the competency definition is widely acknowledged (Cave and McKeown, 1993). To some, this is seen as a problem. For instance, Jubb and Robotham (1997), notable critics of the approach, label the competency discourse as ‘confusing and confused’ and declare the approach a ‘myth’ (p.175) whose validity has not been adequately proven. Given the multi-faceted interpretations by its stakeholders, Hoffmann (1999) argues that the aim should not be in finding a single true definition that can satisfy everybody, but to select one which suits an intended purpose and context. It may not be difficult to implement Hoffmann’s suggestion if there is only one dominant stakeholder as in the case of ‘workplace learning’ which is the context of his article. However, finding one suitable competency definition can be very complex in educational settings like MBAs, where there exists multiple stakeholders each with differing interests. Stakeholders’ ideologies often influence opinions.
regarding ‘good’ managers and ‘relevant’ managerial competencies that need to be developed in MBAs.

3.5 Ideologies of the Competency Approach

The competency approach is conceptualized based on two main ideologies: social efficiency theory and developmental humanism (Garavan and McGuire, 2001; Hyland, 1994). The key and most common thrust of the competency approach is based on Taylor’s social efficiency theory which supports utilitarian objectives. When used in ML programmes, competencies are defined in relation to their relevance to managerial work and their usefulness to managerial and organizational efficiencies (Burgoyne, 1993). This principle is prevalent in competency models developed in management, HR and to a certain extent, psychological disciplines (e.g. Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Clardy, 2008; Boyatzis, 1982).

The most popular way of looking at the value of competencies is by associating it with effective performance. Some critics reject the approach on the basis that competencies do not necessarily translate into effective performance (Mangham, 1990). However, this opinion was made based on an incorrect understanding of the competency theory rather than on a proper analysis. Despite empirical evidence showing the positive relationships between the competency-effective performance variables, the relationship cannot be necessarily regarded as a direct, causal phenomenon. Boyatzis (1982) himself has been very careful in making such a claim. He stresses that competency itself does not and cannot cause effective performance. In his model of effective performance, he argues that effective performance can only occur if there is a good match among the critical elements: individual competencies, job demands and internal organizational environment. Woodruffe (1993) agreed, stating that having the right competencies is a large part of the recipe to being a good manager. These opinions clearly suggest that (rather than completely rejecting the role of competency to effective performance or worrying about whether it is a causal relationship) competencies are undeniably very important factors in contributing to one’s effective performance. However, as will be discussed later, the errors made by some competency approaches in treating the two variables as necessarily associated has formed one of the major criticisms of the approach.
Approaching competency from the social efficiency perspective may seem logical and unproblematic in the context of workplace learning as profit maximization tends to be the most important, if not the only, principle that governs business decisions in most organizations. However, applying a similar ideology in an educational context is less acceptable particularly in PUs. The reason is that compared to the common utilitarian objective of workplace learning, the purpose of an education is broader and more comprehensive, concerning not only the economic but also the social and spiritual aspects of a learner’s development. Attempts to apply competency in educational contexts solely on the efficiency perspective have therefore been strongly opposed by certain academics.

The less common perspective of the competency approach is developmental humanism, which pursues educational objectives. Much of the literature claims that competency is not only concerned with economic objectives but can also be compatible with educational missions. Its advocates (like Hager and Beckett, 1995; Albanese, 1989; Hyland, 1996) argue that the approach can develop whole individuals and can thus be appropriately applied in formal education. Speaking from the context of workplace learning, Finch-Lees et al (2005) also defended the approach stating that it could actually liberate and empower individuals, which is therefore in line with the concerns of critical theorists.

If the utilitarian and developmental humanism ideologies could be successfully integrated in competency approaches in educational settings, the result could be an education that is relevant to both industrial (economic) and social (educational) needs. Such integration is exactly what is expected of MBAs, having to simultaneously serve its utilitarian-educational purposes and its industry-academic parents. The practice of the competency approach in educational contexts or more commonly known as competency-based management education (CBME) is elaborated later in the chapter. Before competency can be welcomed into ME, its widespread problems however need to be appropriately addressed.
3.6 Criticisms on Competency Approach

In addition to complaints about its ambiguity and highly-confusing terminology as discussed earlier, the competency approach has also been severely criticized on other grounds.

The main criticism is on its over-simplification of the complex nature of managerial roles. The approach claims to standardize managerial jobs through its idea of ‘the’ ideal model of effective managerial behaviours. This perspective concurs with scientific management theory which has become increasingly irrelevant in today’s world (Raelin, 1995). Furthermore, the competency approach is also attacked for ignoring the importance of ethics (Burgoyne, 1989) and group dynamics (Antonacopoulou and FitzGerald, 1996) which are involved in managerial work. The manner in which the approach tries to capture all the mysteries of managerial work into sets of ‘to do’ and ‘to have’ lists has been considered an insult to managerial communities (Antonacopoulou and FitzGerald, 1996).

Secondly, the approach is also lamented for assuming that competencies and effective performance is necessarily direct, observable and testable relationships. This weakness is particularly prevalent in the British MCI competence framework which is concerned with the measurement of managerial performance outputs to predetermined standards with the purpose of accrediting the performance according to a five-tier competence level. It ignores the fact that effective managerial performance most of the time involves intangible and hard-to-measure elements. The system has also been criticized for failing to recognize the various ways managers learn and become competent (Burgoyne, 1989). In other words, adoption of the MCI framework across Britain suggests there is only one way for managers to become competent, and that is through the MCI accreditation. Similarly, the system is also being lamented for disregarding the significance of the managerial learning process (Antonacopoulou and FitzGerald, 1996).

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8 See Antonacopoulou and FitzGerald (1996) and Burgoyne (1989) for comprehensive debates on the criticisms.
The third complaint falls on the retrospective orientation of many competency models, thought to be incompatible with a fast-changing business world. This orientation is evident in the use of functional analysis technique commonly employed in competency studies. Caldwell (2003) argues that identification of relevant competencies is ‘impossible’ and not ‘useful’ in this volatile environment. Antonacopoulou and FitzGerald’s comment that “instead of growing dynamic, flexible and adaptable managers, capable of facing the challenges of tomorrow, the risk seems to be that the competency framework is, in an evolving society, cultivating dinosaurs struggling to develop the skills of the past” (p.34). Macfarlane and Lomas (1994) declared the MCI competence approach as characterized by conformity, control, being present and inward-looking which they argued is in total disharmony with the concept of learning organization that requires managers to empower, reflect, debate and concentrate on future needs.

Fourthly, the idea of the generic competency framework, as practised in the MCI approach, has been said to ignore the importance of work context in influencing managerial behaviours (McKenna, 2004, Burgoyne, 1989). The generic models wrongly assume that managerial works are standardized and that the required competencies are similar across organizations and countries. A manager considered ‘competent’ in one organization, industry or in a particular country will not necessarily perform well in other contexts. This theory has been repeatedly recorded in the literature (e.g. Hofstede, 2001; Erondu, 2002). Even within the same organization, interpretation and application of certain competencies varies amongst managers (Antonacopoulou and FitzGerald, 1996; Hayes et al, 2000). Ironically, notable American competency theorists like Boyatzis and McClelland had never disregarded the significance of context in their competency models. As previously mentioned, Boyatzis had been very careful in suggesting the universality or generic characteristics of his proposed competency framework. This highlights that perhaps the criticisms with competency approach were targeted more towards the UK-based, MCI approach than towards the American behavioural approach.

Grzedo (2005) argues that generic competency models are acceptable for education given its broader purpose compared to organic competency frameworks which are more relevant for organizational strategic use. McKenna (2004) however was not entirely convinced and expressed caution in blind acceptance of textbook-based
generic competency frameworks in ME teaching. He argued that the textbook frameworks should serve only as general guidelines. BSs should recognize and remind students about the importance of certain contexts in influencing their inclinations and predispositions as managers.

Doubts about the feasibility of generic competency frameworks are further justified due to the significant influence of national, cultural and economical settings in managerial practices. Literature has shown that competencies that proved to be contributors for effective performance in one country were ineffective in other countries of different cultural and economic backgrounds (Cheng et al, 2002; Erondu, 2002). Appreciation of national context is particularly necessary in ME, especially in PUs because they need to ensure their graduates can perform according to local customs and their schools can contribute in supplying workforce suitable for the country’s human capital needs.

The generic framework is not totally unacceptable. To be fair, the aim of the MCI framework is to act as a common denominator for all types of organizations in the UK for the purpose of systematizing the country’s efforts in MED (Woodruffe, 1993). It is undeniable that context plays a large part in determining managerially effective behaviours. However, the commonalities of managerial work cannot be entirely dismissed. For instance, a study by Hales and Mustapha (2000) found that managerial work activities are relatively similar across jobs and organizational structure. The generic description of managerial work by some leading management theorists has been discussed at the beginning of the chapter. And these theorists agree that managing people is the key aspect of all managerial works, which therefore suggests some applicability and acceptability of generic competency frameworks.

3.7 Analysing the Causes and Addressing the Criticisms

Wrong epistemology has been pointed out as the root cause of the widespread criticisms on the competency approach (Burgoyne, 1989; Garavan and McGuire, 2001; Sandberg, 2000). As an approach which emanates from the psychology discipline, competency shares many of the discipline’s positivistic and rationalistic assumptions on human behaviours. Sandberg (2000) argues that competency
researchers who employ a rational approach tend to predefine what constitutes competence based on their literature readings rather than capturing the ‘actual’ competencies from the perspectives of employees. He adds that researchers often form preconceived ideas of how an ideal competency framework should be like even before they commence their fieldwork. Sandberg argued that competency researchers who used positivism in their studies made a mistake by “invoke[ing] a dualistic ontology, assuming that person and world are distinct entities, and an objectivist epistemology, assuming the existence of an objective reality independent of and beyond the human mind” (p. 11).

The most obvious influence of positivism on the approach is in its use of functional analysis method and measurement of managerial performance. The functional analysis method which is widely used in MCI frameworks is implemented by breaking down management functions into a series of disintegrated tasks. The process is then followed by identification of standards for each task. This practice violates the holism/reductionism principle (Hager and Beckett, 1995) and results in a series of ‘can do’ lists involved in managerial work. The problem with the approach is that even if managers were able to perform and achieve the standards listed, they would not be necessarily considered competent managers (ibid.).

Positivism can also be seen in the measurement of managerial performance. Their performance is measured based on how well they perform each individual task rather than analyzing their performance as a whole in a particular work context (Robotham and Jubb, 1996). As mentioned earlier, assumptions regarding performance as observable and measurable elements concur with positivist tradition which only accepts observables as facts. The competency approach thus tends to emphasize tangible outcomes as opposed to the learning process which is soft and self-perceptual. This perspective clearly undervalues concepts such as self-reflection which is significant to one’s learning.

The above arguments suggest that researching and developing managerial competency frameworks based on positivistic lenses are inappropriate as the paradigm tends to oversimplify the complex nature of managerial work, which in reality involves a lot of unobservable, immeasurable and subjective activities. The use of positivism in competency studies has allegedly resulted in erroneous descriptions and prescriptions.
of managerial jobs. Therefore, an alternative epistemology, one which is in better harmony with the qualitative nature of managerial work may be required to produce more valid competency findings.

There are two ways in which the above problems may be addressed. The first is by the adoption of interpretivism epistemology (like postmodernism and phenomenology), believed to be the more appropriate epistemology for competency studies (Garavan and McGuire, 2001). For instance, postmodernism suits the chaos, complexity, unpredictability and uncontrollable nature of today’s business environment. The phenomenology ensures that the competency framework is contextually-specific, and appropriately values the learning journey that managers experience. Phenomenology is believed to be able to solve many of the flaws in competency models because it treats a worker and his/her work as inextricably related (Sandberg, 2000). It allows room for competency adjustment depending on contextual factors and gives each organization its competitive advantage by cultivating unique competencies on its managers. Interpretivism has been used in previous studies (e.g. Antonacopoulou and Fitzgerald, 1996) to appreciate that there are various interpretations of managerial competencies, and in reality what competencies one uses on a job is not necessarily effective or applicable to another. Anthropology, narrative and storytelling (McKenna, 2004) and managerial portfolio (Burgoyne, 1989) are some of the recommended methods in competency research to capture the qualitative aspects of managerial work and competence.

Secondly, competency frameworks should be holistic. It has been argued that competency frameworks should integrate both the functional (standard approach) and individual (behavioural approach) aspects of being managers. Lee (1996) argued that a wider view of competence which integrates ‘DO’ (occupational focus) and ‘BE’ competencies (attributes) should be adopted in ME. She further posited that ME should “take the form of multidisciplinary flexible pathways of development and lifelong learning that benefit all stakeholders” (p.109) and stressed that a competent manager “is one who can create a business environment in which people can flourish spiritually and emotionally” (p.108).

There have been attempts to observe the functional and individual requirements in competency frameworks. For instance, Antonacopoulou and Fitzgerald (1996)
introduced a Greek concept ‘*arete*’ which describes that being competent is a continuous journey which should never and will never end. A manager can never be *fully* competent and that competence should not be regarded as a destination. ‘Arete’ promotes the importance of holistic and continuous learning of managers as individuals and rejects the occupational adequacy connotation which is prevalent in the MCI approach. Similar attempts have been made by Young (2002) and Cheetham and Chivers (1998).

Most of these frameworks however were formulated for workplace learning which, as previously discussed may be arguably less problematic to implement due to the unifying philosophy and aim of most organizations, which is often based on shareholders’ profit interests. Given the difference in ideological background which informs ME, these frameworks may therefore not be very suitable to be applied in MBA competency frameworks for reasons elaborated earlier. A discussion on the use of competency in ME settings is presented below.

### 3.8 Competency Approach in ME

The significance of managerial competency development in ME is widely acknowledged (eg. Albanese, 1990; Brown, 1993; Mintzberg, 1973; Latham et al, 2004). It is generally agreed that knowledge about management must be accompanied by knowledge about managing. Albanese posits that “…the skill orientation is the appropriate focus” in the ME curriculum and argues that “theories, models, background reading, and open-ended discussions can and must be a major part of a professional school’s degree programme, but their role is to support a skill-orientation, not to be the primary orientation themselves” (p.25). Lack of emphasis on competency in ME curriculum (Porter and McKibbin, 1988; Shipper, 1999; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002) has been blamed for substandard graduates irrelevant to industrial needs (Leavitt, 1991; Mintzberg, 2001). Managerial competency development has been suggested as one way that BSs can bridge theory and practice (Mintzberg, 1973).

The application of the competency approach in ME is known as the competency-based ME (CBME). Compared to the UK, the significance and presence of CBME in BSs in the US are more evident due to the role of AACSB. In contrast, CBME in the
UK which is based on the MCI framework tends be applied at certificate and
undergraduate levels in colleges or polytechnics (Macfarlane and Lomas, 1994). For
postgraduate programme like MBAs commonly offered at university level, CBME
tends to make a lesser impact. Universities often introduce their own competency
structures that include wider philosophical issues related to business ethics and
environmental issues (Macfarlane and Lomas, 1994). Several case studies (e.g.
McMillen et al, 1994; Camuffo and Gerli, 2004) had allegedly claimed ‘successful’
implementation of CBME.

However, the implementation of CBME especially in its early days, was not entirely
welcomed by educationists and was a relatively controversial decision (Burgoyne,
1993). Macfarlane and Lomas (1994) declared that the approach (i.e. MCI framework)
“wrest(s) education from the academic tradition” (p.29) and stated that CBME is in
disharmony with the underlying philosophies of education and is inappropriate for the
education of managers. Their opinions quoted below represent much of other
educationists’ sentiments towards CBME.

“Creating a curriculum which seeks to define the universal is stifling. It promotes a
conformist rather than a critical learning culture. By assigning a passive role to the learner,
the competence-based approach rules out challenges to existing paradigms or accepted notions
of good practice in business. A “relevant” curriculum removes the intellectual autonomy of
the individual to sift information and theory in order to derive an interpretation of usefulness
to a myriad different “realities”. A competence-led approach makes intellectual decisions for
managers rather than allowing these individuals to determine the “usefulness” of material. It
represents a desire to control learning at the expense of spontaneity. Endemic “group think”
is an intellectual dead-end quite apart from the dangers it poses for decision making within
business organizations. Debate rather than conformity is a vital part of any strategic
decision.” (Macfarlane and Lomas, 1994:30).

Two main reasons might explain the rejection (Albanese, 1990). The first reason takes
the form of market theory perspective where ‘if ain’t broke don’t fix it’ as long as
there is positive demand on ME graduates by the industry. This argument however
may no longer hold water given the common complaints by industries regarding the
lack of competencies in university graduates. Albanese calls the second reason a
‘philosophical argument’. Not surprisingly, some education purists oppose CBME due
to its vocational and instrumental emphasis which they claim is inconsistent with the
traditional purpose of education. CBME is also resisted because its perceived
preference for pragmatic learning is seen as a waste of intellectual resources. Brown
(1993) agrees with the findings suggesting that the resistance towards CBME is partly due to the perceived difference in status between education and training.

It cannot be dismissed that there might be a genuine concern among MErs that the adoption of CBME might turn ME programmes into a platform just to satisfy vocational objectives. There are real concerns that by implementing CBME, faculties will not be able to perform their academic duties as ‘educators’ who are supposed to be responsible for the holistic development of individuals and for the protection of the wider public interest.

But is CBME necessarily contradictory to education? Albanese (1990) does not think so and claims that the vocational orientation of CBME does go hand in hand with educational mission. He argues that “in CBME, competency-building is the core objective of the educational effort, and it is not hostile to learning theories or concepts” (p.26) and further mentions Whetten and Cameron’s model (1989) as the best CBME approach as it harmonizes the theoretical, cognitive and competency building aspects in ME curriculums. Hager and Beckett (1995) agreed that “employment of competency standards in an educationally sound way is possible” provided that the competency framework is developed by fulfilling three essential criteria. First, personal attributes must be integrated with moderately defined key tasks. Second, competency standards must be both holistic and atomistic in certain areas to appreciate that tasks are interrelated and that competencies are situational. And third, the framework must be developed by considering cultural and contextual influences and appropriately accommodating the different needs and epistemologies of various stakeholders.

Out of the three, organization is the most obvious beneficiary of CBME given the more prevalent instrumentalist orientation of the approach. Some studies claimed a positive impact by CBME on managerial and organizational performances of graduates (eg. Shipper, 1999; McMahon, 1992). For students, the popular way to show the benefits of CBME was by looking at their career competency development (Baruch and Leeming, 2001; Sturges et al, 2003; Mihail and Elefterie, 2006; Rhee, 2008). And for BSs, development of ethical competency of students was an overdue response to the demands for more responsible teaching (Grey, 2002; Khurana, 2007). Inclusion of ethical competency in CBME frameworks should help ensure that
graduates always think about the consequences of their managerial actions in the interests of various stakeholders.

3.9 Competency Types and Frameworks

Competencies have been organized in various categories and levels (e.g. Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Raelin and Gooledge, 1995; Boyatzis, 1982). A type of competency which is of interest in this research is meta competency. Although the idea of universal competencies is highly criticized (McKenna, 2004), it is however agreed that there are certain competencies that are relevant to all managers, that may serve as their ML frameworks (Burgoyne, 1990; Hayes et al, 2000; Buckley and Monks, 2008). They are called meta competencies and refer to the overarching competencies which give managers the versatility to deal with different kinds of problems by utilizing their micro competencies (Burgoyne, 1988; Cave and McKeown, 1993; Fleming, 1991). Their significant roles in successful managerial performance have been acknowledged (Buckley and Monks, 2008; Chapman, 2001). Given their significance, meta competencies have been considered the more appropriate frameworks to guide MED efforts (Burgoyne, 1989; Brown, 1994 & 1993, Williams, 1996). For instance, Brown (1994) argued that meta competency (in which he refers to the US approach) tends to be more positively received by academicians because it embraces the properties of high-level, intellectual, and knowledge-based abilities which they believed could be taught to only certain groups of ‘real’ managers. Lists of managerial meta competencies, for instance provided by Burgoyne (1988) Cave and McKeown (1993) tended to contain more abstract, broader and higher order compared to the micro types of competencies.

3.9.1 Competency Frameworks For Workplace Setting

Several managerial competency frameworks are presented in Table1.2.

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9 Also called higher order cerebral capacities, meta abilities, higher level cognitive functioning, US-competency approach or personal competencies.
### Table 1.2:
Managerial Competency Frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Competency Frameworks</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Source: Author’s Construct

There are several notable observations that can be made. With the exception of meta competency frameworks, there are high similarities in the framework contents.
Despite the differences in terminology, some of the competencies actually refer to the same things (e.g. conflict-resolution skills & managing conflict). This suggests that there may be certain sets of competencies that are significant to managerial jobs. Second, the inclusion of social competencies by all authors proves that a manager’s essential responsibility involves people management, i.e. to get work done with and through others (Salaman, 1995). Thirdly, except for Cheetham and Chivers’ model, there was no ethical competency in the others. Some of the frameworks were products of empirical research on managers considered effective by their superiors or peers. The effectiveness criterion was based on the success of managers in achieving organizational objectives. Competencies regarded as contributors / necessary for effective performance are therefore those that can help managers achieve this aim. That probably explains why the frameworks seem to be one-sided in that they concentrate only on the interests of organizations as stakeholders. The frameworks seemed to have missed our ethical competencies as part of the fulfilment of managerial social responsibilities. The limited attention paid on ethics in managerial competency frameworks has also been noted by Burgoyne (1989) and Cheetham and Chivers (1996). How well managers achieve organizational objectives and maximize profits is what mainly concerns the definition of performance effectiveness in the frameworks. As a result, competency models generally prioritize competencies that are perceived to have a direct relevance to the attainment of organizational objectives.

3.9.2 Competency Framework For Educational Setting

The following Table 1.3 presents the learning goals and competencies expected of MBA graduates / BSs according to key accrediting bodies. Several observations can be made. Generally the learning expectations and competencies practised in ME exhibit the characteristics of a holistic framework, which emphasizes both cognitive knowledge and practical skills, combines occupational and personal competencies, addresses vocational and educational needs, and recognizes the needs of different stakeholders. Furthermore, in some aspects, competency expectations display the properties of meta competencies as they are quite broad and general, and focus on the
Table 1.3:
Learning Goals and Competencies of General MBAs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Learning Goals &amp; Competencies of General MBAs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AACS B</td>
<td>1. Ethical and legal responsibilities and society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Financial theories, analysis, reporting, and markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Creation of value through the integrated production and distribution of goods, services, and information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Group and individual dynamics in organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Statistical data analysis and management science as they support decision-making processes throughout an organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Domestic and global economic environments of organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Other management-specific knowledge and abilities as identified by the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Capacity to lead in organizational situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Capacity to apply knowledge in new and unfamiliar circumstances through a conceptual understanding of relevant disciplines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Capacity to manage in unpredictable environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMBA</td>
<td>1. Content (covering core business functions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Appropriate exposure of international aspect of business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Appropriate attention to ethical and social issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Interpersonal skills of management practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUIS</td>
<td>1. General education intellectual skills:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• analyze, synthesize and critically assess complex material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• formulate and defend independent judgments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• conceptualise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• communicate effectively in writing and orally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• demonstrate an awareness of the wider context of the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• apply general concepts to practical situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• development of a structured personal cultures and values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Key management skills:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• (e.g. team work, interpersonal skills, presentation skills, project management, leadership skills, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Construct

holistic development of the thinking abilities of students. The current trends in the theory and practice of ME are also being observed in the frameworks. Serious attention is also placed on the aspects of social responsibility, ethics and values in practising business and management. Among the frameworks, the AACS B model appears to be the most detailed and up-to-date with the current challenges and problems in ME compared to the other two frameworks.
3.10 Conclusion and Summary of Literatures

To repeat, the research aimed to explore the views of three main ME/MBA stakeholders (i.e. faculties, industries and students) on the adequacy of public university MBA (PU MBA) provisions in Malaysia. Specifically, the research was interested in gaining their perspectives regarding expectations of the roles of MBAs, BSs, MErs; relevant MBAs; the kinds of managers and managerial competencies they thought should be developed in MBA education; and their concerns towards the social responsibility of managers and their education. The research intended to analyze and judge the ‘adequacy’ of MBAs in relation to the dual utilitarian-educational models that govern BSs/MBAs on how the stakeholders define the associated subjective concepts roles of MBA/BS/MErs; relevant program; managerial roles and competencies which all contain juxtaposition of utilitarian-educational inclination.

The literature analysis revealed that contrary to its reputation, the MBA is quite a problematic degree. Its relevance has been seriously questioned by its stakeholders. Industries complained that MBA curriculums were detached from the ‘real’ business world, while academics condemned its vocational orientation and the business-like attitudes of BSs. Furthermore, over-powerful students, as a result of media rankings and over-commercialization of the program, have placed MBAs/BSs in a larger crisis of having to fulfil the interests of its multiple stakeholders. The analysis discloses that much of these criticisms are as a result of the dual utilitarian-educational model that governs BSs and therefore its MBAs. On the one hand, MBAs are expected to pursue utilitarian objectives and function as training grounds for potential managers to feed labour market needs. To effectively meet these objectives, some argued that MBAs (and whole business school operations) should be implemented according to professional models that place significant importance on industry needs. At the same time, MBAs are expected to pursue educational objectives that cater to the holistic development of students, teach unbiased knowledge not restricted to any particular powerful group with an interest, and educate students to be ethical, responsible and critical individuals for the benefit of the wider society. To fulfil these obligations, it has been debated that MBAs should follow an academic model which typically governs other academic studies and departments in universities. Of relevance is
literature that shows MBAs to be unlike other academic studies. It is a programme of two worlds. It is management education (ME) and management development (MD). As ME, MBA is informed by liberal education theories in which the basic principle concerns the whole (external and internal) developmental aspects of humankind. As a MD, MBAs are informed by human resource development perspectives that are predominantly concerned with the strategic needs of organizations. Even from the beginning of its establishment, MBAs have maintained a relatively close relationship with the industry / labour market. In some ways MBAs could therefore be perceived as a ‘vocational’ programme originating from an applied discipline. Thus as a programme that is informed by two rather conflicting models, functions and theoretical backgrounds, there is a high possibility that satisfying both demands can be very problematic, and the widespread complaints about MBAs from its various stakeholders as mentioned earlier confirms the difficulty.

The two models/functions/theories do and must overlap. MBAs, particularly as offered by PUs, can be argued as not being implemented based only on one model but rather, must satisfy both utilitarian and educational objectives. However, in which direction it should incline is still a debate among scholars in the field. Some argue that a MBA is a professional programme and that business schools were originally established for utilitarian purposes thus it is only right that the programme be governed by the professional model. Other scholars opposed, stating that ME and business schools must perform their educational duties and act like other academic departments in universities. Without trying to sound as if these scholars totally disregarded the importance of a good mixture of both models in the MBA, detailed analysis of their opinions interestingly revealed that their views about which MBA model is the most preferred or considered the more superior are actually quite different. Furthermore, the issue of which direction MBAs should be heading is not solely influenced by the views of academics as the MBA providers but also heavily influenced by the programme’s two other important stakeholders, i.e. the students and industry. Altogether, this scenario highlights the presence of various stakeholders with a multiplicity of opinions, agendas and interests in the MBA. And as a programme that is significantly informed by these stakeholders, their perceptions of the particular ways in which MBAs should be conducted are critical in improving the role of MBAs as an education as well as training platform for managers.
Literature also reveals that the popular attempt to effectively bridge educational and developmental concerns in ME/MBAs focuses mostly on its pedagogy. Very little research has been done to understand how the elements can be integrated at the needs identification stage, specifically at the formulation of MBA managerial competency frameworks. As highlighted earlier, one of the major complaints about MBAs is its lack of attention to managerial competency development. This knowledge led the researcher to further investigate whether the competency approach could potentially become the bridging mechanism to better harmonize the education-development requirements in MBAs. Interestingly, the literature uncovered that the competency approach is also informed by the two similar streams and many managerial competency frameworks also suffer a one-sided utilitarian orientation by emphasizing performance-related competencies for organizations’ profit-seeking objectives but less on managerial responsibilities to other stakeholders. Although competency is a highly-contested subject especially in its application in educational settings, the literature shows that in the past 15 years or so, there have been claims that the approach could also serve educational concerns and develop liberal and critical individuals. These views demonstrate that emphasis on managerial competency development in MBAs could be effective in satisfying the requirements of both models. However, for the approach to be deemed valid in an educational setting it was argued that certain criteria must fulfilled when developing the competency framework, which includes employing interpretivism epistemology in competency-related studies; adopting broader and more holistic definitions of competencies; integrating both the functional and ethical aspects of being managers, and considering the different needs of ME stakeholders. Arguably, these suggestions could potentially provide the answers to the problems faced by MBAs, which is that it is expected to have a utilitarian / educational balance and to address the needs of its multiple stakeholders.

Scrutiny of the existing knowledge and research relevant to MBAs/ME and competency subjects reveal several limitations. As elaborated in Chapter 1, there is firstly a lack of effort in meeting the dual purpose at competency level. Secondly, existing studies tend to be biased towards utilitarian needs in their perceptions of what constitutes an effective MBA. Thirdly, there has not been 'real' comparative analysis
among stakeholders’ views. Fourthly, there is a dearth of empirical research to actually discover what MErs / BSs feel about their dual-role expectations. And finally, there is definitely limited knowledge about ME/MBA practices in Malaysia in general, let alone specifically about the dual functions expected of MBAs. And as described in Chapter 1, the debates and concerns above regarding a utilitarian-educationally balanced MBA that fits perfectly with Malaysia’s aspirations for economical and spiritual holistic nation development. Malaysia’s aim of creating a society with strong material wealth and morality is commensurate with the call for technically and ethically competent managers. This concern calls into question the adequacy of Malaysian PU BSs in preparing well-rounded competent managers not only in line with the country’s requirements but with the louder calls from the discipline itself for more responsible ME.

Therefore, knowledge learned from the literature analysis and the scenario in Malaysia has raised the following themes. First, it has been argued that MBAs must equally satisfy its educational and professional objectives, simultaneously serving as education as well as training for managers. Second, the difficulty in balancing conflicting demands and ideologies of utilitarian-educational objectives arguably contributes in part to the ineffectiveness of the MBA as a managerial learning method. Third, the competency approach has been demonstrated as a potentially good mechanism to harmonize the two models and requirements. Fourth, it is argued that the decisions concerning the objectives of MBA, particularly on managerial competencies, are heavily influenced by the views of its most important stakeholders, i.e. management educators, as the MBA providers, industry, and students. Fifth, given the significance of their roles in influencing the MBA agenda, their perceptions must therefore be gathered, appreciated and acknowledged in the MBA programme. And finally, it has been argued that the current scenario in Malaysia presents a very interesting and useful case to study these issues. Furthermore, given its multi-faceted background, focusing on the case of Malaysia is believed to be able to fill the theoretical gaps at both international and national levels. This knowledge has been merged with the research aims to produce the following theoretical framework (Figure 1.3) to guide the research.
The next chapter explains the methodology employed to address the research questions.
CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH
4.1 Introduction

The research aimed to explore the perspectives of three main MBA stakeholders (i.e. BSs and its MErs, industries and students) on the adequacy of public university MBA (PU MBA) provision in Malaysia. The reviews of literatures in the previous chapters raised several issues and questions. This resulted in the decision to investigate, using primary data, a specific set of research questions. These questions were broken down (Mason, 2002) to create research objectives to ensure that the research questions were fully addressed in the methodology plan. These research questions and objectives are shown in Table 1.4.

### Table 1.4
Research Questions and Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Research Objectives: To Investigate the Research Questions with Specific Reference to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. What is the current practice of MBA education provided by Public University Business Schools (PUBSs) in Malaysia? | 1.1 Background of MBA In PUs  
1.2 Popularity And Value Of MBA  
1.3 Teaching Staff  
1.4 Entry Criteria  
1.5 Profiles of Students  
1.6 BSs Association, Accreditation, Ranking and Alumni |
| 2. What and how do the stakeholders perceive the roles of MBA? | 2.1 Perceived objectives / purposes / functions of MBA. |
| 3. What and how do the stakeholders perceive the roles of its providers (i.e BSs, MErs, and/or university in general)? | 3.1 Perceived roles / responsibilities of BSs.  
3.2 Perceived roles / responsibilities of MErs.  
3.3 Also possibly, perceived roles / responsibilities of universities.  
3.4 Beneficiary(ies)/stakeholder(ies) of MBA perceived as the most important. |
| 4. How do the stakeholders define ‘relevant’ MBA? | 4.1 Perceived criteria of relevant/good MBA / education.  
4.2 Beneficiary(ies)/stakeholder(ies) of MBA perceived as the most important. |
| 5. What and why do the stakeholders look for in a manager and the associated competencies that the stakeholders think ought to be inculcated in MBA? Why? | 5.1 Descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of ‘ideal/competent/effective’ managers.  
5.2 Managerial competencies perceived important.  
5.3 Beneficiary(ies) / stakeholders(ies) perceived most important. |
| 6. To what extent are the stakeholders concerned about the social responsibility aspect in managers and MBA? | 6.1 Perceived importance of the social responsibility of managers.  
6.2 Perceived importance of the socially-balanced MBA.  
6.3 Suggestions to create a balanced MBA. |

Source: Author’s Construct
The chapter is organized in the following sections: the philosophical position of the research; sampling procedures; data collection methods and instruments; fieldwork details; data analysis procedures; and finally, the methodology summary. An overview of the methodology is presented in Table 1.5.

### Table 1.5

Overview of Research Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH STANCE</th>
<th>MBA Providers</th>
<th>Companies</th>
<th>MBA Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAMPLES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSs</td>
<td>17 MErs from 3 selected PU MBA providers i.e BS1, BS2 and BS3. The samples were comprised of MBA policy makers and other general lecturers.</td>
<td>5 companies that had involved in MBA collaborations with PUs or had experience in sending managers to ME programmes. Represented by their HR / recruitment managers.</td>
<td>Final year students from the 3 selected BSs. 6 students were interviewed. 3 were given e-mail surveys. 1 focus group discussion. And 81 background surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTM, UTBM, UM, USM, UUM, UKM, IUM, UPM, UMIS, &amp; UNIMAS.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>METHODS</strong></td>
<td>Secondary document.</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews, focus group, background surveys, e-mail surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DATA ANALYSIS</strong></td>
<td>Mostly content analysis using NVivo software and manual analysis.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Construct

### 4.2 Philosophical Stance

The research adopted interpretivism, which involved primarily qualitative data collection methods. The selection was purely a result of the literature reviews. Similar studies related to CBME subject (e.g. Rubin and Dierdorff, 2006; Neelankavil, 1994; Brotheridge and Long, 2007; Camuffo and Gerli, 2004; Truong Quang and Metzger, 2007) tend to employed the positivist approach which has been strongly declared as inappropriate to understand the complex nature of managerial practice and competencies (Garavan and McGuire, 2001; Burgoyne, 1989; Sandberg, 2000) and could actually result in erroneous descriptions and prescriptions of managerial jobs. As a result of their chosen methodology, the existing studies lacked qualitative details in their findings explanations. For instance, they (e.g. Rubin and Dierdorff, 2007; Brotheridge and Long, 2006) reported the misalignment of the ME curriculum in terms of what industry wanted from ME graduates and what was actually offered by BSs but they did not explain why the mismatch happened. Previous studies on ME stakeholders have pointed out that they are often in disagreement about what
constitutes ‘relevance’. Nevertheless, these studies failed to explore in depth how the stakeholders viewed ‘relevance’. As argued before, determining the reasons behind their perceptions is crucial to create MBAs which are satisfactory to their needs. Similarly, existing studies (e.g. Louw et al, 2001; Carmichael and Stacey, 2007; Williams, 1996) despite gathering data from several stakeholders about competencies in MBA, they did not explain nor discuss the underlying reasons for each stakeholder’s perceptions.

Given the weaknesses of positivism in competency studies, there is a need to adopt a more appropriate, alternative epistemology which can effectively uncover the underlying reasons for the stakeholders’ views. The need to employ non-positivist methodologies in research is further supported by calls from Tung (2006) who highlights the serious imbalance between quantitative and qualitative methodologies in leading management journals. To boot, the alleged problem of MBAs has also been associated with overemphasis on the scientific, positivist paradigm which governs the teaching and research of BS (Mintzberg, 2004).

Secondly, the decision to adopt interpretivism was based on the criticisms on competency subject. As mentioned earlier, analysis of the literature demonstrated that the competency approach is a highly contested subject. Positivism was blamed as the root cause of widespread criticism on the competency approach (Burgoyne, 1989; Garavan and McGuire, 2001; Sandberg, 2000). The paradigm rationalistic assumptions on human behaviours results researchers to have preconceived ideas about competent performance than capturing what constitute ‘competence’ from employees’ perspectives (Sandberg, 2000). Its positivistic assumptions, of which only observable and measurable performance should be counted and accepted as facts, result the emphasis on tangible outcomes and undervalues self-reflection which is significant in one’s learning (Robotham and Jubb, 1996). In short, researching and developing managerial competency frameworks based on positivistic lenses have been claimed to be inappropriate as the paradigm tends to oversimplify the complex nature of managerial work, which in reality involves a lot of unobservable, immeasurable and subjective activities. The use of positivism in competency studies has allegedly resulted in erroneous descriptions and prescriptions of managerial jobs. Interpretivism has been suggested as the more appropriate epistemology for competency studies as it
is more harmonious with the qualitative nature of managerial work (Garavan and McGuire, 2001; Sandberg, 2000; McKenna, 2004; Burgoyne, 1989). Interpretivism is appropriate because it is believed to suit the chaos, complexity, unpredictability and uncontrollable nature of today's business environment; it ensures that competency framework is contextually specific and appropriately values the learning journey that managers experience; it treats a worker and his/her work as inextricably related rather than separate; and it is more effective and meaningful to capture in detail the qualitative aspects of managerial work and competence. The characteristics of interpretivism were believed to be able to solve many criticisms levelled against the competency approach. Interpretivism has been used in previous studies (e.g. Antonacopoulou and Fitzgerald, 1996) to appreciate that there are various interpretations on managerial competencies and in reality, what competencies one uses on a job is not necessarily effective or applicable on another. Furthermore, employing the interpretivist research approach is also in tandem with suggestions by some authors (Albanese, 1990; Finch-Lees et al, 2005; Hager and Beckett, 1995) to make the competency approach valid for the ME setting. In short, the literature has suggested interpretivism as the better epistemology to approach competency studies, which is able to produce more rigorous and valid theories on managerial competency.

Based on this, the research employed interpretivism as the philosophical stance and adopted qualitative data collection methods i.e. interviews, document analysis, and focus group discussion. Furthermore, research questions which aimed to explain what, why and how the stakeholders gave meanings to the research issues call for qualitative methods which enable generation of rich and detailed data. Again as mentioned, the interest to explore the meanings was motivated by the limitations of existing research (as previously mentioned) which seem to fail to provide qualitative reasons in their studies.

The research is essentially qualitative. Although the research yielded 81 survey data from MBA students, it did not use the quantitative SPSS technique for several reasons. Firstly, the purpose of the survey was mainly to aid qualitative methods, i.e. to choose potential samples for interviews and focus group discussion. The research however did use some of these statistics to generally describe MBA student demographics in Malaysia. Secondly, the items in the surveys consisted mainly of very
basic background information (see Appendix A) which the researcher felt could easily be analyzed using a basic Excel application compared to the more complicated, specialist SPSS.

4.3 Sampling

The research was conducted in Malaysia and involved four groups of samples, i.e. all PU BSs (to achieve research question 1); and the three important MBA stakeholders, i.e. MErs; MBA students and industries (to achieve research questions 2 to 6). The MErs and students were derived from three selected BSs. The summary of the samples are shown in Table 1.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Focus</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sampling Groups / Stakeholders</strong></td>
<td>MBA Providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Samples</strong></td>
<td>All 10 PU MBA providers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Samples Selection Criteria</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sampling procedures</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantity</strong></td>
<td>10 providers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sampling Frames</strong></td>
<td>Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author's Construct

4.3.1 Malaysia as the Country of Focus

The decision to conduct research in Malaysia was made based on strategic (Mason, 2002) and applied reasons. As explained earlier, the current scenario and challenges regarding the country's development needs and scenario in its PUs presented the
perfect backdrop for the research. Also as previously mentioned, the research on Malaysia is theoretically and practically useful at international and local levels in several ways.

First, the existing knowledge on Malaysia’s MBA practices, particularly involving PUs, is very limited. From a broader perspective, basic information like MBA curriculums, educators, students, alumni and potential employers of the country’s MBA market have rarely been studied in a rigorous and collective manner. Even if there were such studies, their focus is limited to only a few selected universities (eg. Tay, 2001) or aspects (eg. Zabid and Ling, 2003); they were based on joint MBA programmes between local private providers and foreign universities (eg. Sturdy and Gabriel, 2000); and probably the findings of these studies have not been widely published and acknowledged by the international academic community. Given the relatively young age of Malaysia’s MBA, it is understandable that its MBA is less known and established at local and international levels. Studying the Malaysian MBA practices would thus be very theoretically enriching, to see how its stakeholders view the adequacy of MBA as an MED platform.

It is acknowledged that cultures influence management practices (Hofstede, 2001), and in Malaysia the cultural effects on the management values and practices of each race has been noted by Abdullah (1996) and Noordin, et al (2002). The persistence of religious and cultural differences in Malaysia has precluded any single cultural paradigm from gaining predominance (Mellahi and Wood, 2004). Thus, managing in Malaysia’s environment can be a challenge because managers need to understand each group’s differing points of view.

From an economic perspective, a study on Malaysia would provide information on how a country which is at the developing stage educates and develops its managers for its economic development. As mentioned earlier, the economic performance of a country influences its approach to doing business (Hoskisson et al, 2000; Budhwar and Debrah, 2001) and developing countries have different business environments and structures from developed ones (Srinivas, 1995; Loveridge, 2006). Furthermore, as compared to their counterparts, developing nations are in greater need of effective management and competent managerial talent (Drucker, 1985) which is very critical.
for their economic and social development (Bakshi, 1991; McIntyre and Alon, 2005; Kiggundu, 1989). Unfortunately, these aspects tend to be quite unsatisfactory in developing countries, which contribute to slower economic growth (Kiggundu, 1989; Zeffanne and Rugimbana, 1995; Mansfield and Alam, 1985).

A study on Malaysia is thought to be theoretically beneficial to learn about a developing country’s ME and development approaches and to analyze the extent to which they are related to the country’s unique development needs. Although there have been growing numbers of research reporting ME practices in developing countries (eg. Liu, 2006; Liang, 2005; Lee et al, 1996) many of these studies tend to focus on countries which are at a transitional economic stage (like China and the ex-Soviet European countries) and which tend to have distinct histories of economic practices different from developing countries. Developing countries require different economic orientations and priorities and thus may require different management/managerial needs and talents to achieve their unique economic developments. In the case of Malaysia, its economic practices trigger its need for managerial talent, which in turn would affect the relevant education and development needed.

In addition to the above factors, Malaysia’s current HCD needs and strategies renders its case relevant to the research questions. Malaysia is fully committed to developing its people and it realizes that HCD is crucial for the country to achieve the status of a developed nation by the year 2020. As an Asian country rich in cultural traditions with a relatively conservative religious outlook, Malaysia emphasizes holistic HCD which encompasses both economic and spiritual development. Its PUs are one of the most important catalysts to implement this agenda. Arguably the most righteous role of PUs is as the government’s machinery to serve the public, but also as ‘ivory towers’ charged with the duty of developing students to excel both in career and character. As mentioned in the first chapter, the two demands however have not been satisfactorily fulfilled by Malaysian universities. Criticisms on the supposed failures of PUs to produce graduates ‘relevant’ to industry’s needs are common. There is thus a major concern in the country as to how PUs can equally satisfy educational and vocational demands. It is precisely this concern that partly triggered Malaysia’s Ministry of Higher Education to launch the recent National Higher Education
Strategic Plan and the National Higher Education Action Plan (August, 2007) whereby the broad aims were to tackle the deficiencies in Malaysia’s education and make its public universities globally competitive. One of the main objectives of the Plans was to make the university curriculums more responsive to both industry and educational demands.

The situation that Malaysia faces encompasses similar concerns and objectives as the research questions which in this case are concerned with the provision of a balanced MBA in order to produce managers not only effective as economic agents but also as ethical individuals. In the case of Malaysia, the approach of public university MBA providers should be in line with the country’s aspirations in that the MBA they offer should be balanced both educationally (or spiritually) and vocationally (or economically).

In addition to the strategic reasons described above, the decision to study Malaysia was also done for practical reason. The researcher is from Malaysia and works as an academic staff in one of the public universities. Thus, conducting the research in Malaysia seems to be the most practical and sensible decision. Convenient sampling is acceptable as long as a chosen sample possesses the characteristics required in a research (Mason, 2002). And as demonstrated in previous paragraphs, Malaysia encapsulates all the unique and necessary elements relevant to the research issues.

4.3.2 Public University Business Schools (PUBSs)

The second sample group was Malaysian public universities that offered MBA programmes. There were 20 PUs in Malaysia. 10 offered MBAs and all were covered in the secondary document analysis in answer to the first research question i.e. to describe the current practice of MBAs in Malaysian PUs.

1. Universiti Malaya (UM)
2. Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
3. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)
4. Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)
5. Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)
6. International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM),
7. Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM),
8. Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)
9. Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS)
10. Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)

4.3.3 BSs and Management Educators (MErs)

The main sample group in the research was three BSs and their MErs. The following presents the justifications.

4.3.3.1 Three Selected BSs

Out of the 10 PUs, the research decided to concentrate on those located in the Kuala Lumpur and Selangor as these areas have the most vibrant economic, development and educational activities in Malaysia. Out of the 10 universities, 6 are located in these two locations.

Given the qualitative nature and sampling size (i.e. three stakeholders) of the research, only three BSs were strategically and purposively chosen (Mason, 2002) based on their meaningfulness to the research questions. The three providers were:

- **BS1, PU1**

BS1 was originally chosen to see if the university’s engineering orientation would be reflected in MBA and MErs’ responses on research issues. However as it turned out the case presented some features that were not only different from the other two schools but were also found to have had considerable influence in explaining the school’s academic-utilitarian inclination, which is the main focus of the research.
• **BS2, PU2**

BS2 was initially chosen because of the uniqueness of PU2. Though PU2 has been in existence for awhile, as a university it is relatively new having previously been an ‘institute’. It is the only university in Malaysia exclusively reserved for ‘bumiputeras’ (sons of the soil). Furthermore, PU2’s vocation-oriented ethos was also relevant to the research, which was interested in studying the academic-utilitarian balance in MBAs. It was hoped that a study of PU2 might demonstrate whether its vocational orientation would affect its MBA as well as discover the views its management educators might have regarding the research issues.

After conducting the research, the selection of BS2, PU2 turned out to be a very good decision. It happened to be the PU to introduce a foreign, twinning MBA in Malaysia (Ohio MBA) that had an important role in developing notable corporate figures in Malaysia. At the same time, PU2 business education also enjoyed a favourable reputation amongst students as well as employers. Many of the school’s characteristics also differed from the other two schools which made it ideal for cross-comparative purposes.

• **BS3, PU3**

PU3 was selected to replace the original choice of Universiti Malaya (UM) whose cooperation was unsuccessfully sought. The idea to study PU3 came up from the interviews conducted on the other two schools. Some respondents had mentioned PU3, describing the university and its programmes as traditional and academically-inclined. This characteristic was felt to be ideal for the research given its interest in the competing academic-utilitarian orientations of MBA providers.

As it turned out, findings from PU3 revealed more pleasant surprises. PU3 had a very significant pioneering role in shaping the MBA landscape in Malaysia. It was the first university to offer BBA, MBA and DBA programmes in Malaysia. And being the first, its graduates and (ex)staff tended to influence
ME in other PUs. BS3 was also one of the two schools which were awarded by the Malaysian government to be groomed as the country’s ‘top business school’. Aside from that, several characteristics of BS3 which were again different from the other two schools presented a perfect case for cross-case comparisons.

Further explanations about the significant differences between the three schools and their importance to the research are presented in Chapter 6.

Although the research only covered 3 universities, it was felt that the findings from these three schools could to a large extent reflect a general description of Malaysian MBA practices. This was because the research covered two universities (i.e. PU3 and PU2) that were found to have played very important roles in shaping the history of Malaysian MBAs. It was also found that their backgrounds and cross-transference of ideas as well as teaching resources among the universities were in fact highly similar. PU3’s graduates especially, being the first university to offer business studies, tended to lead the eventual setting up of ME programmes in other universities. Furthermore, the scarcity of MBA lecturers in Malaysia meant the good ones tended to be highly sought after, which explained the mobility of several of the respondents who actually had experiences in various universities. These overlapping backgrounds serve to explain why there seems to be a high degree of similarity in Malaysian MBAs, which further suggests the high generalization of findings, and perhaps reflects the overall observations on Malaysian MBAs.

4.3.3.2 Management Educators (MErs)

Access to the selected schools was gained by approaching the persons in-charge of the MBA through e-mails in which the researcher introduced herself and the research purpose and then requested their cooperation. Permission was secured through them to interview other lecturers\(^{10}\) as well as obtain other information relevant to the research.

\(^{10}\) This was important as almost every lecturer interviewed in the research asked whether the researcher had obtained permission from the school to conduct the research.
MErs interviewed for the research were drawn from all three schools. The main condition for sample selection was their level of experience in MBA teaching to ensure that their understanding of the programme was sufficient to yield quality opinions. Initially the research planned to interview at least 24 management educators (8 from each of the three schools). However it was found that after interviewing only about 5 or 6 from each school, the data had reached 'theory-saturation point' (Mason, 2002) whereby interviews started to generate similar accounts. A total of 17 MErs were therefore interviewed. Not only was the size believed to have yielded adequate data for the sample group, having more interviews was simply impractical considering the size of the research that had to include other stakeholders as well. The following describes the selection of MEr samples.

- **MErs In BS1**

The list of MBA lecturers was obtained from the school’s office. However it was not comprehensive and contained only those who were teaching for that particular semester. There were possibly 4 or 5 lecturers who were not in the list. A request for a comprehensive list was not only entertained but also felt unnecessary. This was because there were not many lectures in BS1 to begin with due to its small capacity. Most of its lecturers were not permanent staff but hired on contract basis from external sources, and tracing them would have been difficult. However, the lecturers listed probably had the most significant roles and teaching involvement in BS1.

The list contained 8 names of which, full-time with BS1 (2 persons); adjunct / contract professors or lecturers (4 persons); and part-time with BS1 but full time PU1 staff (2 persons). All 8 lecturers were approached through e-mails. Six replied and were eventually interviewed including the school’s director plus the only female lecturer in the list.

- **MErs in BS2**

The list of MBA lecturers provided by the school contained the names, disciplines and telephone numbers of 24 MBA lecturers. Each lecturer’s background (i.e.
academic, research and publications) was researched in the school’s website. Given the difficulty of finding out the background of each lecturer in detail (the duration of their MBA teaching, seniority, etc.) the research was only able to decide based on their educational background, discipline, and gender. Based on the website, most of the respondents were graduates from the US and held MBAs. In line with qualitative sampling suggestions to target samples that are contradictory rather than similar (Mason 2002; Denzin, 1989) in order to create the possibility of discovering ‘new’ theories or less familiar perspectives on the research topic, the samples chosen from BS2 consisted of those from varied backgrounds (eg. origin of educational background, MBA and non-MBA graduates).

Potential lecturers were contacted either by telephone or email to seek permission for interviews. Only one or two lecturers were approached and interviewed at a time. This was to enable the researcher to reflect and assess the data to better plan subsequent sampling selections and questioning strategies.

Six BS2 lecturers were interviewed including the deputy dean who was also the MBA coordinator. As above, the size was adequate after the sixth interview as the data gathered from the lecturers seemed to have reached ‘theory-saturation point’ (Mason, 2002) and had become quite repetitive.

- **MErs in BS3**

The list provided by the school contained the names of 17 lecturers and their taught subjects. Further information such as staff academic background and contact details were looked up on the school’s website. As above, the researcher chose the samples based on their backgrounds (similar to Mason’s (2002) ‘quota list’) and tried to include people of different gender, qualification background, origin and discipline to ensure the data would appreciate views of different perspectives.

From 17 potential samples, 7 were contacted through e-mails, telephone or in person to seek permission for interviews. However, only 5 replied and agreed to
be interviewed. The research stopped at 5 as it was again felt that the data had reached 'theory-saturation point' (Mason, 2002) where the views seemed quite repetitive. The five respondents included the Head of the MBA programme.

Altogether 17 MErs from the three chosen schools were interviewed, of which 6 were from BS1, 5 from BS2 and 6 from BS3. Background details of the MErs are elaborated in Appendix B. The following is the summary of their backgrounds.

- 11 respondents were males and the rest females.
- 11 respondents were between 40 – 49 years old while the rest were older.
- 15 respondents had doctorates of which 14 were PhD holders and 1 had a DBA.
- 11 had MBAs whereas the rest held other masters degrees like MSc, MA or MM.
- Out of the 11 MBA holders, 9 obtained theirs in the US.
- Almost all respondents had received at least one of their degrees from foreign universities mainly from the US and UK.
- All respondents had been in academia for about 4 to 30 years.
- 7 of the respondents mentioned experience in teaching / being involved in other local and/or foreign MBA programmes.
- All respondents mentioned having some industry working experience. However, only a handful (around 4) had experience in notable capacities and positions.

4.3.4 Companies

The third sampling group was companies, considered the prospective employers of MBA graduates. Their perspectives are important to represent the industry's views and expectations of the programme. Data was gathered by interviewing a single representative of each company, a widely acknowledged research practice (Mason, 2002).
There were some difficulties finding the right samples for this group. The original intent of finding companies that had direct MBA collaboration experience\textsuperscript{11} with PU MBA providers and representatives who knew the whole process was not fully achieved. This was because the role of MBAs (at least those provided by PUs) was not very significant to Malaysian employers. As demonstrated later, pursuing an MBA was more an individual than company-led initiative. Any known collaborations between university-industry tended to be more on professional, short-term MD programmes rather than formal MBAs. Furthermore, collaborations on MBA-like MD programmes tended to be done with foreign rather than local universities. Similarly, the plan to identify well-informed representatives who knew about the research issues was also met with some difficulty. Even when companies satisfied some of the selection criteria, the relevant persons were no longer there and had been replaced by new people with lesser knowledge of the research issues.

Given the difficulties above, the sampling selection had to be re-strategized. Prior to that, interview questions were first amended to make them more general. Instead of specifically asking the participants to talk about their companies’ MBA collaboration experience, the questions were amended to ask the participants about the companies’ HRD / MD policies and practices. Further justifications of the questions are explained under the ‘methods and instruments’ section. The scope of sampling criteria was then widened to accept those who knew about their companies’ MD policies and practices and their managerial expectations.

The samples were identified through suggestions from MErs’ who participated in the interviews (especially respondents from BSI) as well as through personal initiative. Of the 5 companies interviewed, 3 came from recommendations while the rest came from direct contact. Obtaining cooperation from the three recommended companies was easier as the specific persons were already identified from the start. However for the other 2 companies, several phone calls and emails to various units and persons had to be done before the researcher was able to identify the right individuals. As a note, these 2 companies had already been approached (and had agreed to cooperate) even before the researcher started the PhD programme. However, as the research

\textsuperscript{11} In the sense that they had actually sent their staff for MBAs and had been involved in some curriculum discussions with the respective schools.
topic had changed, the original persons whose cooperation had been obtained were no longer relevant. Nevertheless, previous blanket ‘approval’ letters from these companies were accepted to gain their cooperation.

The 5 samples were considered adequate as the research involved viewpoints from other stakeholders this inhibiting the inclusion of more samples. The 5 companies represented different types of industries i.e. energy providers, telecommunications, construction, banking and healthcare. This is somewhat in line with the qualitative research suggestion which recommends contradictory rather than similar cases. The chosen representatives held top positions in their respective company human resource-related departments. Having human resource (or its associated units) managers to represent the companies’ views is not an uncommon practice and has been used in other similar studies (e.g. Neelankavil, 1994). The background details of the companies and representatives interviewed are elaborated in Appendix C.

4.3.5 MBA Students

The third group of samples and MBA stakeholder studied in the research were students. The students were derived from the same three schools for practical reasons. To maximize the reliability of data, only final-year MBA students were chosen as samples to ensure adequate knowledge about the programme in order to give critical opinions.

To gain the sampling frame, surveys asking about students’ personal backgrounds were first administered. The forms were distributed during their core subject classes to ensure highest participation rates. Four classes were involved in the survey, i.e. two final-year classes (i.e. full time MBA and EMBA students) in BS2 and one class respectively in BS1 and BS3. The return rates were 100%. The surveys produced a sampling frame of 64 final year students in which 14 were from BS3; 7 from BS1\(^\text{12}\), and 43 from BS2 (18 in FT MBA and 24 in EMBA). Complete survey results are shown in Appendix D.

\(^{12}\) The small number of students in BS1 was because the class which was supposed for final-year students were also filled with junior students. Out of 25 questionnaires returned (return rate 81%) only 7 were final year students.
Focus group discussion was conducted on full time MBA students in BS2. Out of 18 students, 12 were identified to participate in the focus group. They were chosen based on their demographic differences in working experience, financial information, reasons for joining the MBA, career plans after the MBA, and educational background. Out of practicality, priority was given to students who wrote their phone numbers in the survey forms. However, out of the 12 contacted, only 6 attended the discussion, a number which is considered acceptable (Berg, 2001). The following are the breakdowns of the participants. Details of the background is in Appendix E.

- 5 were females
- 4 had no working experience (fresh graduates)
- 2 had minimal experience (3 years and 1.5 years) at junior executive / clerical.
- 4 had degrees in business-related disciplines.
- 3 had graduated from the same university i.e. PU2.
- 5 had self-financed their studies, 1 was sponsored by the university.
- 5 were in the age range of 20 – 29 years old.
- They were all Malaysians.

Six students were interviewed in the research, 4 of which came from BS2 (i.e. EMBA students)\textsuperscript{13} and 2 from BS1. The former were selected from the population of 24 final year EMBA students in BS2. The latter were chosen out of the 7 BS1 students identified from the surveys. The samples were chosen based on their background information obtained from the surveys such as working experience, employers, age, previous universities and career plans after the MBA. In line with the principle of qualitative sampling, the selection included students with different rather than similar characteristics. And like before, only those with phone numbers were prioritized in the selection. Five students interviewed were in their final semester. The other student from BS1 was in his second semester. He was chosen only because he claimed to be a final-year student in his survey form. Despite not fulfilling the main sampling criteria (i.e. final year students), his interview data was accepted in the research because he seemed to know enough to comment about the MBA and the research issues. Details of the interviewees are elaborated in Appendix F.

\textsuperscript{13} Students from BS2 were further included as samples to make up for the inability to interview students from BS3.
Three students were involved in the e-mail questionnaires and they were all from BS3. This method was administered only because of the difficulty of gaining interview participation from BS3 students. Few students wrote their contact details on the survey forms making it extremely difficult to trace and approach them to participate. The researcher had to use a snowballing technique by contacting students who left their details and asked them about their friends’ contacts. Even then, only a few telephone numbers were obtained. Unfortunately after contacting the students, the researcher was still not able to secure their participation as they had either left the university or were unwilling to participate. There were only 3 students who had agreed to participate. Since they had already left the university and resumed work, the interview method was quite impractical. The email questionnaire was thus used instead and emailed to 3 willing students. All three responded but gave incomplete data. Details of the interviewees are shown in Appendix F.

4.4 Methods And Instruments

As mentioned earlier, five methods were employed to gather data for the research.

Table 1.7

Data Collection Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHODS</th>
<th>SAMPLES</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Structured Interviews</td>
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<td>Company Representatives</td>
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<td>Students</td>
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<td>Focus Group</td>
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<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Analysis</td>
<td>PU MBA Providers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Construct

4.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The semi-structured interview was the main method for gathering data from MErs, company representatives and students. Semi-structured interviews refer to the technique where interviews are guided by prepared general questions while at the same time remaining flexible with questions and questioning strategies to follow the
flow of actual interviews (Berg, 2000). The method was adopted for its suitability to
the research objectives which aimed to explore and understand the what, how and why
of the stakeholders’ perceptions towards the research issues.

Interview questions were developed by referring to Mason (2002). First, double
barrel research questions were broken down to create research objectives as shown in
Table 1.4 Possible questions which could address each of the research objectives were
then designed. After listing all the essential questions, several standardized questions
particularly for the introductory and closing parts of the interviews were included.
Finally, the questions lists were examined to ensure they had adequately covered all
aspects of the research objectives. The interview questions to MErs and companies
are presented respectively in Appendix G and H. Interview questions to students
centred round the four discussion topics similar to the ones applied in the focus
group discussion, which are explained later.

The interview questions were developed by following several principles suggested by
of questions to sample groups. Mason for instance states that an interview is a
reconstruction (not excavation) of knowledge thus must be conducted in the relevant
context so that situated knowledge can be produced by respondents. Based on this
principle, questions posed to each sample group were made to suit their background
context whenever appropriate, and were based on situational questions which
required them to relate their real experiences. For instance, to gauge the MErs’ views
on important managerial competencies, the researcher asked them to describe the
criteria they used in assessing their students’ assignments.

The prepared questions served only as general guidelines for the interviews. During
the actual interviews the researcher had to amend the questions and questioning
strategies according to the interviews’ dynamics. For instance, a question to gauge the
attitude of the participants towards ethics was introduced only after conducting
several interviews because the researcher felt that the data seemed a bit too consistent,
predictable and one-sided. Although this may have been good as it showed the data
consensus, there was however a concern about the validity of the data. Therefore to
verify the stance of the participants, ethical questions were included to know the
extent to which they had considered the interests of other parties (i.e. social obligation) in their teaching.

The questions also aimed to clarify and build up the stories reported by previous participants. For instance, in the first interview in BS2 the participant brought up a lot of issues regarding the difference between the MBA and EMBA programmes. Subsequent interviews’ questions thus tended to be based on these issues so that the researcher could get a more complete understanding and story about the school. Similar cases occurred in BS1 and BS2.

To gather well-rounded data, the interview questions were developed in four types (Berg, 2000) i.e. essential, extra, throw-away and probing questions. Essential questions which directly addressed the research issues had mostly been decided prior to the interviews. The researcher also asked extra questions (serving a similar function as the essential questions) to check the reliability of the respondents’ answers. Throw-away questions were asked especially at the beginning of the interviews to establish interviewer-interviewee rapport. And finally, a lot of probing questions were asked to elicit more complete stories from the respondents. At the same time, the researcher also asked ‘member checks’ (Creswell, 1998) questions to verify the accuracy of the researcher’s interpretations to the respondents’ actual meanings.

To enhance the situated-ness of the questions, they were asked in a combination of English and Malay languages. The use of the Malay language created a more informal atmosphere which was critical to encourage respondents to share their views towards the research subject. Furthermore, the researcher and most of the interviewees spoke the same language, hence the accuracy in understanding and interpreting the questions between the two parties was enhanced (Berg, 2000).

4.4.2 Focus Group

Data for the research was also gathered through focus group discussion. The research had originally planned to conduct focus groups on students from each of the schools but managed to conduct only one focus group due to its impracticality.
Focus group is a group discussion whereby a moderator (i.e. the researcher) tries to draw out information related to the topics of research interest from the group members (Berg, 2000). The method was chosen for its suitability to the qualitative nature of the research objectives, which would allow the researcher to explore and understand the opinions of the students towards the research issues. Furthermore, it was felt that as classmates the established rapport among the students was ideal for focus group (Berg, 2000) as the students would be able to discuss the research issues comfortably thus providing the researcher with quality data. In addition, the method was supposed to be economical as it provided data from large numbers of student. A ‘moderator’s guide’ (Berg, 2000) was developed for the focus group which listed the topics and strategies adopted in the focus group, which involved the discussion of four main issues below:

- What factors did you consider when selecting the programme, school and university?
- What have you gained so far from the programme? How useful are these gains to you?
- What do you like / are satisfied with and dislike / are dissatisfied with about your study experience? (eg. subjects, lecturers, faculty, university, etc.)
- What are your suggestions to improve the programme? / What changes do you want to see?

4.4.3 Email Questionnaires

As mentioned, email questionnaires were only employed in the research due to the difficulty of obtaining interview / focus group participation from MBA students in BS3. The questionnaire was developed based on the same questions as the interview and focus group except that it was very brief and contained only eight open-ended questions such as asking the students about their reasons for pursuing their study, choice of MBA provider, expectations of the programme, benefits they had gained and overall satisfaction with the programme. The use of this method in the research was not very significant as the questionnaire managed to be sent to only three students.
4.4.4 Background Surveys

The surveys were administered to final-year MBA students in the three schools to obtain sampling frames about the students for sampling selection purposes. The surveys asked students for their personal information, past education, working experience, reasons for pursuing their study, career plans after the MBA, and contact details (optional). A sample of the questionnaire is shown in Appendix A.

4.4.5 Document Analysis

Document or text-based analysis was employed to achieve the first objective of the research i.e. to determine the current practice of MBA education provided by PUBS in Malaysia. The data sources were MBA prospectuses and websites from the respective providers. The type of information required in the first objective is very basic and readily available in the two documents.

Examples of the type of information targeted in the document analysis are: backgrounds of universities (niche area, reputation, location, etc.); backgrounds of schools / faculties (year of formation, accreditation, graduates produced, etc.); history of MBA conception (when, where, how, etc.); MBA curriculum (objectives, duration, subjects, structure, teaching and assessment methods, etc.); entry criteria; student demographic characteristics; and alumni.

4.5 Fieldwork Details

4.5.1 Data Collection Period

Data for the research was collected from October 2008 until September 2009.
Table 1.8: 
Research Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAMPLES</th>
<th>METHODS</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MErs in:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• BS1</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>December 2008 – March 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• BS2</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>January 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• BS3</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>February – March 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBA Students in:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• BS2</td>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>April 2009 (EMBA students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>April 2009 (FT students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>July 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• BS3</td>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>May – July 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• BS1</td>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>July 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>July 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companies</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>July – September 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Construct

4.5.2 Interview Sessions

The interviews were requested and arranged through emails, telephone or in person. Most were conducted in offices of the participants while the rest in cafes or their homes. The following describes the approaches undertaken during the fieldwork.

An interview protocol (Appendix I) was prepared and followed in each interview. The protocol ensured that the interviews were systematically conducted by listing the procedures to be undertaken at the beginning, middle, end and immediately after each interview. Every interview began with the researcher introducing herself and briefing the participant about the research objectives, purpose of the interview, data usage, and confidentiality measures. Permission from respondents was then sought to audio-record the interviews to which all respondents agreed.

As mentioned earlier, the researcher came in with a prepared set of questions to be used as loose guidelines. These questions were written in brief, point form for quick and discreet reference when needed during the interviews. There were many instances
during the interviews where questions had to be adjusted according to the dynamics of the interview. For instance, the main issues raised by MErs from each school were different. Questions posed to them were thus designed based on their actual concerns (i.e. situational questions) but without losing their relevance to the research objectives. In another example, one of the questions posed to the MErs was about their attitude towards ethics. This question was not in the original list and was only included after realizing that the data gained from the first several interviews was worryingly one-sided. The researcher realized the need to include such questions to verify the utilitarian-educational inclined opinions of the participants to avoid deriving an erroneous conclusion.

The examples above demonstrate that the interviews were treated as an 'iterative process' (Mason, 2002) where the adequacy and completeness of the data in relation to the research objectives was constantly being reassessed throughout the data collection period. During the interviews, the researcher was open to the possibility of pursuing and exploring new, interesting data not under the original research scope. One of the strategies used to perform the data assessment and reflection was through the ‘interview checklist form’ (Appendix J) prepared by the researcher. The function of the form is described later.

‘Repeat questions’ were frequently used during the interviews. Not only was this technique useful for checking the accuracy of a respondent’s stance on an issue, it also allowed the researcher time to plan subsequent questioning strategies and to mentally assess the adequacy of data against the research objectives.

The MErs’ interview sessions ended by recording the participants’ demographic details on a prepared form (Appendix K) thanking them for their participation and giving them a participation souvenir.

Notes were also manually scribbled during the interviews to record information which could not be captured in the tapes, for instance documents shown by the participants and observation of the participants’ mood.

Most interviews lasted 1-1 ½ hours with a few exceeding 2 hours.
4.5.3 Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion with the full time MBA students was conducted about two months before they graduated. It was arranged with the help of the student leader. The discussion lasted about 1 ½ hours.

The discussion was held in a classroom. The participants and the researcher / moderator sat in a circle so that everybody could see each other. The discussion started with the researcher introducing herself, describing the research purpose and discussion procedures. The approval of the participants for the discussion to be recorded on video was then obtained to which everybody agreed. A research assistant was employed to help with the recording.

As mentioned, the discussion was divided into 4-part questions: how the students chose the programme and its provider; their expectations of the programme / provider; programme gains and programme satisfaction. The discussions were conducted through a variety of approaches such as using a white board to record each participant’s ideas followed by open discussion. Overall, the participants were very cooperative in contributing their opinions. Two of the participants were relatively quiet but were frequently pulled into the discussion in which they did well. The discussion atmosphere was quite informal. There were ample opportunities for direct conversations on the research issues with the researcher and among the students. Rapport was good as the participants were classmates and the researcher had already met them several times before the discussion. The survey questionnaires which the students had earlier filled were also referred to when needed to encourage any specific participant to give ideas.

To make the discussion more interesting, the researcher held lucky draws in between the sessions where the participants had the chance to ‘win’ some souvenirs. To thank the participants, they were treated with lunch at the end of the discussion.

4.5.4 Surveys

The questionnaires were distributed to the students during their core subject classes
identified from the offices of the schools. These classes were purposely selected in the belief that they would contain the most number of final-year students thus ensuring a high return rate of questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed with the assistance of the respective lecturers. The researcher distributed the forms at the start of the classes and immediately collected them after the classes finished.

4.6 Data Analysis

The research data was predominantly analyzed based on interpretative analysis approach which means that the research participants’ interview texts were regarded as a reflection of their social actions and seen as a ‘collection of symbols’ which express their meanings (Berg, 2001:239). Along this line, the data was analyzed using content analysis technique which involves systematic analysis of the transcripts against a set of meaningful categories to identify the patterns and meanings of the participants’ messages. Data gathered from the interviews, focus group and e-mail methods were analyzed using a combination of manual and software (i.e. NVIVO) analyses. Survey questionnaires were analyzed in Excel using basic quantitative functions like percentages and frequencies.

4.6.1 Secondary Document Data - Content Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyze data gained on the websites and MBA prospectuses of the 10 Malaysian PUs in order to answer research question 1 regarding the current practice of Malaysia’s PU MBA practices.

Websites of the 10 Malaysian PUs that offered MBAs were researched from the 10th – 19th November 2008. Where necessary, MBA programme prospectuses were also analyzed to make up for the missing information on the web. The prospectuses were obtained in January 2009 from an education fair (an annual event) which involved all higher education providers in Malaysia. In the case of contradictory information displayed in multiple websites, the research referred to the most recent sites. Online information was also prioritized, considered more recent than paper-based information.
The data analyzed were backgrounds of the 10 universities; backgrounds of their MBA providers (i.e. faculties / schools); histories of their MBA provisions; MBA curriculums and structures; and student admission criteria.

Basic content analysis was performed mainly on straightforward data which could be identified simply by highlighting them from the documents. Some (like entry criteria) also underwent further detailed analysis whereby the practices of different providers were critically compared and supported with data gained from the interviews conducted on the three schools. Miles and Huberman (1994) was referred to in the analysis process.

4.6.2 Interviews, Focus Group and Email Data

Data from the above sources were analyzed using a combination of manual and software (NVIVO) analyses.

4.6.2.1 Transcribing Procedures

The recorded interviews and focus group were transcribed into verbatim texts. Care was taken to ensure each interview was transcribed immediately and before starting the next interviews. However there were some occasions where this rule could not be adhered due to congested interview schedules.

Transcribing was done using Express Scribe software. It was very effective as it allowed various playback speeds (as low as 25% of actual speed), quick keyboard control functions, and direct typing of texts on the same window. The researcher’s formal typing training significantly helped to speed up transcribing and avoid word slippage. The recordings were played at least twice, first at lower speed for typing and then to check the accuracies of the write-up and to record respondents’ non-verbal cues like pauses, laughs, and emphasis.

After producing each transcription, the text was quickly scanned in relation to its adequacy to the research objectives. This was recorded on a one-page interview checklist form (Appendix J) (similar to a ‘contact summary sheet’ Miles and Huberman, 1994). The checklist contained two parts. Part I listed the checklist of
research objectives and was used to ensure and assess the adequacy of each interview’s data to achieve the stated objectives. Part II which was only introduced after a few interviews, served to record any peculiarities or special incidences observed during the interviews (like respondents’ moods, questioning strategies), ‘new’ discoveries (areas that surfaced which were not under the scope of original objectives), and areas to be emphasized or pursued in subsequent interviews. Information recorded in the form helped the researcher to gain more complete and quality data and avoid any ineffective questioning strategies. This procedure is in line with qualitative research in which fieldwork strategies should always be flexible and guided by the dynamics of the fieldwork.

4.6.2.2 Coding and Analysis Procedures

Berg (2001) listed seven major elements (known as ‘unit of analysis’) which may be coded in the content analysis. The research used a combination of them and analyzed the transcripts based on words, themes/phrases, characters, item, and concepts. For illustration, the words ‘customer’, ‘strategy’ and ‘Harvard’ were frequently spotted in the transcripts thus incorporated as data codes. In another instance, the research noticed that the power of BSI’s Director was substantial in the school and was thus given him a character code. In addition, the analysis also involved coding the characteristics of each business school from which the participants were derived. As shown in later chapters, the backgrounds of each school relate in many aspects to the ways the MEd participants viewed the research issues.

Miles and Huberman (1994) coding practice\textsuperscript{14} was referred to in the coding process. The coding was first done manually\textsuperscript{15} and then continued in NVIVO software. Some of the data codes were already identified based on literature reviews prior to the data collection and served as preliminary, general guidelines in setting the research targets and boundaries. Based on actual data, more codes were then added to the existing coding frame. The manual coding provided the researcher a very long list of codes

\textsuperscript{14} Giving each unit of analysis the “single most appropriate (“better”, more encompassing code” among those related to a given research question” (p. 65).

\textsuperscript{15} Each interview transcript was printed and manually coded by writing possible codes at its margins. Manual coding was first performed as the researcher did not have access to the NVIVO software during that time.
which were then re-arranged into a more sensible coding frame. The coding frame and all transcripts were then transferred into NVIVO for more refined and rigorous analysis. The codes had undergone various reviews (i.e. addition, deletion, name amendment, re-coding under different names, re-arrangement) throughout the analysis process before a final coding frame was produced.

The coding was performed at descriptive, interpretative and a little at inferential levels (Miles and Hubermann, 1994). First, descriptive codes (like pedagogy practice) were assigned to broad portions of the transcripts. Then, the descriptive codes were individually reviewed and given the relevant sub-codes. For instance, from the descriptive code ‘pedagogy practice’, sub-codes of ‘teaching materials’ and ‘student assessment’, etc were identified. The data coded at the sub-codes were then further given inferential codes. For instance the sub-code ‘teaching materials’ was further coded as ‘selection factors’. Inferential coding was done only on a few selected data, for instance the link between students’ characteristics with lecturers’ pedagogic approaches.

The coded NVIVO data was then printed. The main points from each participant’s data were summarized in tables according to the codes. The tables enabled the researcher to compare; identify patterns, relationships and possible debates and questions; and conclude the findings of each code. The information recorded in the tables served as the main reference in the writing of findings chapters.

The built in tutorial in NVIVO software and Bazeley (2007) were the main references in the software analysis process. NVIVO was used mainly for its rigor and practical strengths. It allowed easy and fast data reference and retrieval. It enabled the researcher to make notes at specific data portions which were useful for later writing of the findings. It enabled comparative analysis of each respondent’s opinions. Furthermore, it allowed the researcher to accurately see the textual context of coded word or phrases which was very useful when choosing and inserting specific quotations into the findings chapters. To ensure that the analysis was not fragmented (a problem claimed by software analysis critics), the researcher made sure that the data pieces at each code were brought and analyzed together to produce a comprehensive conclusion.
The analysis was then continued by manual approach whereby data codes were tabled in word documents to identify their patterns and derive the conclusions directly in relation to the research objectives.

4.7 Summary

As discussed above, the methodology was designed to address the research questions presented at the beginning of the chapter. As summarized in the table below, the methodology involved the collection of both primary and secondary data. In terms of primary data, 28 interviews were conducted, 81 surveys and 3 e-mail questionnaires were administered, and a focus group discussion involving 6 participants was carried out. The analysis on secondary documents involved the websites and MBA prospectuses of all 10 PU BSs in Malaysia.

| Table 1.9 |
| Summary of Data Collection |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAMPLES</th>
<th>METHODS</th>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PU MBA Providers</td>
<td>Secondary document</td>
<td>All 10</td>
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<td>MÉrs in:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• BS1</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• BS2</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• BS3</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBA Students in:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• BS2</td>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• BS3</td>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Email Questionnaires</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td>Surveys</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companies</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Construct

The research findings are presented in the following chapters.
CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS: GENERAL PRACTICES OF MBA PROVISION
5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings to answer the first objective of the research, i.e. to describe the current practice of MBA provision by 10 Malaysian public universities (PUs). The findings here are based on the secondary document analysis of the websites and MBA prospectuses of all PU BSs in Malaysia that offer MBA programs (i.e. 10 in total) and the primary data gained through interviews on the three chosen BSs. The chapter presents information about the background of MBAs in public universities, MBA entry criteria, student profiles, programme types and curriculums, accreditation practices, media and alumni power, foreign influences, and the main problems impeding the progress of MBA in Malaysia. A summary of the findings is tabled in Appendix L.

5.2 Backgrounds of PUs and Establishment of ME/MBA

Malaysia has 20 PUs, 20 private universities, 5 foreign universities with local campuses, and 20 private university colleges. In 2007, PUs produced 85 thousand graduates. Efforts to internationalize higher education institutions and turn Malaysia into an education hub have increased international student enrollment in its public and private institutions from 40k in 2005 to 80k in 2009 with the biggest students originating from Iran, Indonesia, China and Libya\textsuperscript{16}.

The establishments of PUs in Malaysia are often linked to support the policies of the Malaysian government. Each PU was often developed to specialize in a certain niche. The PUs in Malaysia are categorized by the MOHE into 3 categories i.e. research university (4 PUs), comprehensive university (4 PUs) and focused university (12 PUs) depending on their academic and research orientations. Some PUs obtained their speciality through their location. It is not uncommon for the Malaysian government to set up universities in underdeveloped states with the objectives of developing the areas, reaching out to untapped markets, and also possibly, for political reasons. Although more autonomy has been given to PUs, the MOHE still holds large control over the universities’ actions and development. To illustrate, two PU BSs were

\textsuperscript{16} Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE).
recently chosen by the MOHE to be groomed as ‘Malaysia’s top BSs’ and were given grants to enhance their progress and education and research effectiveness.

The MBA programme can be considered a relatively new phenomenon in Malaysia. Among the PUs, the programme was only introduced in the country about 30 years ago, which is about 80 years later than the US. This corresponds to the infancy of Malaysian higher education whereby the first PU was only established in the late 1940s. Correspondingly, the provision of ME at the PU level only started in 1966 with the formation of the first business-related faculty.

In its early days, the MBA was allegedly quite unpopular among the Malaysian public who at the time tended to be quite suspicious about any American-originated degrees including MBAs. Instead, British education was perceived more favourably and this attitude corresponded with the then government policy of sponsoring many of its top students to be educated in Britain. Therefore, when the government decided to explore education systems of other countries and allegedly sent lower-academically performing students to the US, it further worsened the public’s opinion of American universities.

American and British universities were significantly involved in the early establishment of ME and MBAs in Malaysia. For instance, BS2 and BS1 both started their MBAs as twinning programmes with American and British universities. BS2 which first collaborated with the Ohio University, US and then with the Cardiff University, UK. Similarly in BS1, its MBA Techno-Entrepreneurship was first jointly offered with the Cranfield University. Even after terminating the partnerships, the two schools still maintained most of the foundation set by the foreign universities.

The existence of ME/MBA providers in Malaysia, especially at the beginning, tended to be alongside the economics and/or accountancy disciplines. The merging of disciplines under one faculty during the early stages of ME was a normal phenomenon in any country including the US. In Malaysia, the sharing of disciplines may have been due to the lack of academic expertise to enable each discipline to stand independently. Furthermore, Malaysia’s economic and human resource needs may not yet require graduates with highly-concentrated disciplines but those with a more
general education that ensures their job versatility. The research findings showed that the universities tended to release themselves from other disciplines and adopt only the word ‘business’ in their name when they expanded their programmes to MBA and/or other postgraduate studies. As discussed in the next chapter, the change of name is noted in all the three chosen case studies.

5.3 Popularity and Value of MBA

The supply and demand of MBAs in Malaysia has been increasing. 10 PUs currently offer MBA since its beginning three decades ago. The greater growth can be seen in private local and foreign MBAs (mainly the UK, US and Australia). There are no formal statistics on the private providers. A list in the MOHE website listed 10 private providers but in reality there may be over 60 providers offering MBA programmes. A flip through daily newspapers shows that foreign MBAs, offered in collaboration with local and private institutions are mushrooming. MBA is so popular that it has often been described as the first programme to be offered by any newly-established universities due to its revenue-generating potential. Its popularity can also be seen in the three case schools’ programmes where the representatives claimed they always had ample applications.

Contrary to its reputation as a ‘cash cow’ in many US or UK universities, the monetary significance of MBAs in Malaysia particularly in the three researched universities seemed to be quite limited due to its small capacity and low programme fees compared to foreign MBAs. Nevertheless, findings from the cases showed that there were already squabbles regarding the control / ownership of MBAs in the schools, which appeared to be about the financial value of MBAs.

From the demand side however, the findings suggest that there seems to be less excitement from MBA graduates. MBAs seem to be regarded like any other Masters. The companies covered in this research did not really feel the significance of MBAs in their companies nor perceive the salary-career impact of MBAs, a reputation enjoyed by the programme in the US. It was found that when it came to promotions, MBAs were only considered a bonus and simply opened up better job opportunities to graduates. Instead, the main criterion for promotion was performance. Furthermore,
the value of MBAs was judged by the ability of graduates to transfer their programme learning to organization. Notably also, the research suggested that when it came to MD, companies preferred to engage in proliferated types of MBAs which were seen as more practical and customized to their needs. Similarly, from the perspective of students, their decision to study was more for the pursuit of an advanced / masters degree rather than specifically a MBA. In certain cases, a MBA was only chosen due to their own perception (also shown to be influenced by the reputation of MBAs in the US) that the degree would be beneficial for their career advancement rather based on statistics or personal industry observations. They believed that having a MBA would open up doors but would not necessarily have an impact on financial or promotional opportunities. Having said that, the findings show that a completely different premium seems to be associated with foreign MBAs, or education in general. The value of a MBA may increase if it is gained from reputable foreign universities as compared to local universities’ MBAs.

5.3 Teaching Staff

A quick scan through the staff listings displayed on the websites of the 10 PUs showed that a large number of Malaysian management educators had received overseas educations particularly from the US and Britain. And out of the 17 lecturers interviewed in the research, 9 of them had American MBAs. 14 out of 17 lecturers had received an American education for at least one of their degrees. The high number of academicians educated in the two countries was a result of government policies. This demonstrated that foreign influence came largely from the educational background of the teaching staff.

The findings show that their educational backgrounds had widespread influence in the lecturers’ MBA approaches which can be seen in their curriculum development, teaching methods, teaching materials, student assessments, accreditation practices, and the recruitment of foreign expertise. Of all these, the adoption of the Harvard case study approach in the programme teaching was the most heavily discussed, and some respondents expressed preference for this method on the basis of Harvard's reputation in the ME field. As later shown throughout the findings chapters, the perceptions and practices of the research respondents were all, to a certain degree,
influenced by the practices of American management, MBA theories and practices.

Although there are 10 PUs that offer MBAs in Malaysia, the findings show that their practices may not be that different. Findings from the three schools showed that the same individuals played significant roles in shaping the MBA in Malaysia. MBAs in other Malaysian PUs tended to be started or influenced by the people from the same circle or origin. For instance, the key person heading the programme in BS1 was involved in the setting up of Malaysia's first own MBA in BS3. Furthermore, many of Malaysia's first business graduates tended to come from BS3, being Malaysia's pioneer public university. The development of subsequent BSs in the country were also shown to be heavily linked to and influenced by BS3. Due to the similarities in academic background, the approaches implemented in other universities also allegedly tended to emulate to the ones practised in BS3. The relative overlapping of the staff's academic experience and background was indeed obvious as at least 6 respondents were found to be involved in teaching MBA in several other public, and to some extent, private universities. The fact that the overlapping of academic experience and high staff movement among the universities in Malaysia was noted in a research involving a relatively small group of individuals demonstrated just how common this trend was within Malaysia’s MBA providers.

The research found that the industrial experience of staff was a very pressing issue in Malaysia. As shown later, industry experience was perceived as a very critical requirement for teaching MBA effectively. Yet, the schools reported that this requirement was the most difficult to satisfy. The findings showed that out of the 17 people interviewed, only 5 seemed to have experience that could be considered substantial to adequately impact the ME teaching. The others not only had less experience (i.e under 3 years) but the experience also seemed to have less to do with managerial responsibilities in corporate contexts which is more relevant to MBA. ‘Good’ lecturers were always highly sought after, which explains their constant movement and high involvement in the MBAs of various schools. Complaints were also received from students regarding the lack of industrial experience among lecturers, a fact also noted by companies. Student satisfaction was also found to be related to industrial experience of lecturers and they tended to associate their learning effectiveness to the
lecturers’ backgrounds. Meanwhile, companies felt that lack of industrial experience of lecturers resulted in theoretical teaching which was disconnected from practice. Universities often turn to industry practitioners for solutions either as part time or full time staff. However this approach too has its pros and cons\(^\text{17}\). Nevertheless, attracting them is not easy as they are said to be often put off by unattractive public service compensation scheme that does not match what they receive in industry. Given this drawback, the research discovered a practice where practitioners were enticed into academia through non-financial perks like cars and even professorships. Furthermore, given the difficulty of finding good and willing practitioners, it was found that schools had to depend on their personal contacts / friends for help.

### 5.5 MBA Programme

The length of MBA study in Malaysia generally takes about 12 to 18 months to complete if full-time. Students need to complete between 44 - 51 credit hours of study. The curriculum follows typical business functions where subjects are mainly divided into core, elective / optional and soft skill courses. Four providers (UM, UPM, UKM and UUM) were shown to have included ‘ethics’ as a core subject in their curriculum. It however existed as part of business law or corporate governance components. Most programmes required students to conduct a dissertation project while others gave option to students to skip the course in lieu of certain electives. Website information showed that English was used as the main language in MBAs. Some providers were specific in stating that English was used in class instructions as well as in student assignments.

Two types of mainstream MBAs are offered in Malaysian PUs, i.e. general MBAs and MBAs with concentration. There has been a trend for the universities to amend their

\(^{17}\) This practice was shown to have pros and cons. Retired practitioners who had served enough time in the industry sometimes tended to be less financially-driven, genuinely passionate to share their experience and knowledge with students, and seemed to be intrinsically satisfied with the development of their students. However, some lecturers felt that practitioners-turned-academics lacked the commitment and ability to teach. Furthermore, highly qualified industrial people could become quite obsessed with their past glory and fixated on their principles of doing business.
general programme to concentration MBA\textsuperscript{18}. MBA with concentration is typically a general MBA but allows students to take 3 or 4 elective subjects under the same concentration discipline according to their personal and career interests. The most popular concentration in Malaysia is Finance and Accounting (including Taxation and Venture Capital Management), followed by other disciplines like International Business, Organizational Management (including HRM), and Marketing. The findings showed that the most concentrations were offered by UM. The findings also revealed that the terms ‘concentration / specialized / minor’ tended to be used interchangeably by the providers in their programme titles.

Similarly, the terms ‘executive’, or ‘corporate’ to describe MBAs in Malaysia were, in some cases, only semantics with no significant difference in the curriculum, pedagogy or student characteristics. The differences between typical MBA programmes and EMBA programmes varied according to the schools\textsuperscript{19}. Some schools interviewed recognized that their usage of ‘executive’ was ‘not right’ or ‘not used the right way’ and hoped to implement it in the right way\textsuperscript{20}.

The decision of programme title (eg. the general-to-concentration switch, or ‘executive’ term) was found to be predominantly marketing-driven to make it appealing to potential ‘customers’. This was shown in the case of the three chosen schools. The emphasis on programme ‘rebranding’ is crucial in Malaysia as the market is relatively small. Despite the increasing popularity of the MBA, the number of students who enrol in local MBAs is still quite small. For PUs, the competition is tough because they have to also compete with private and foreign MBAs. And one of

\textsuperscript{18}Findings from the three cases revealed that many of the MErs interviewed were unhappy with the switch believing that the MBA should maintain its ‘original’ form as was initially developed in the US, i.e. general MBA. There were concerns that specialization would result functionally narrow-minded graduates.

\textsuperscript{19}For instance, the only differences of MBA and EMBA offered by BS2 were the class structure (full time or part time) and entry criteria (with or without experience) other than that the two programmes findings from both lecturer and student respondents reported that the curriculum for these two programmes were relatively similar. Similar in BS3, the curriculums for MBA and EMBA programmes were similar, only that the latter was conducted for part time students.

\textsuperscript{20}Findings from the case schools suggest that the inability to implement the EMBA appropriately might be due to the difficulty of finding students who fit the experience criterion and the difficulty of establishing meaningful university-industry collaborations needed for successful EMBAs.
the ways adopted to remain competitive and innovative is through programme rebranding.

Based on the available information, to enrol in a MBA in a Malaysian PU could cost between RM8,000 to RM26,000 depending on the school and mode of programme. These amounts are extremely low compared to high-end foreign MBAs, for example, the Manchester Business School MBAs conducted in Malaysia which reportedly cost as high as RM80,000. Perhaps, another interesting practice (or strategy in order to compete) in Malaysia is the flexibility of paying course fees offered by some providers to students. The students are allowed to pay the fees by instalments and some are even allowed deductions from the students’ Employees’ Provident Fund (EPF) accounts.

5.6 Entry Criteria

In general, all MBA providers in Malaysian PUs require MBA candidates to satisfy three conditions. First is a bachelor or an equivalent degree from a university recognized by the Malaysian qualification accreditation body. Some schools (eg. UTM and UiTM) specify an honours degree. The academic result of the degree is generally considered important by all schools. For instance, UPM, UNIMAS and UiTM specifically mentioned that candidates need to achieve certain grade points. Others (eg. UKM) simply stated that the results should be of an ‘acceptable’ standard.

Practically all providers stated that they would accept degrees from any disciplines. The issue regarding the discipline of a student’s academic background was notably raised in the research. Although the admission criteria of the schools were silent on this issue, several lecturers reported that they preferred teaching candidates from non-business educational backgrounds as compared to those with business undergraduate degrees who they said would consider the lessons repetitive. True to this, feedback from the student respondents shown in Chapter 8 confirmed that those

21They felt that technical or non-business background people were the original target group when the MBA was first established in the US, and that the management knowledge gained in a MBA was supposed to ‘complement’ (rather than refresh) their existing technical knowledge. They also felt that non-business background students tended to be more interested in learning.
from non-business backgrounds seemed to value and be more appreciative of new management knowledge they were exposed to during the programme. Furthermore despite the neutrality of the schools regarding entry criteria, the research findings showed that the background education discipline of the students did have an impact on the curriculum decisions of the schools.

The second common entry criterion for a MBA is working experience. Five providers (UM, UKM, UIA, UTM and UMS) alleged that 1 to 3 years of experience was compulsory to enrol in their programmes. Requirements for longer experience was shown to be applicable for certain types of MBAs like UiTM’s EMBA (allegedly requiring 5 years of experience in a specific capacity) and IBS’ MBA Healthcare Management (requiring at least three to five years of experience). Some providers used a more flexible term stating that candidates with experience would have an ‘advantage’ (eg. UiTM) or ‘priority’ (eg. USM). The findings also show that in certain schools, work experience was treated as a substitute for academic grades. Several providers (UNIMAS, UPM and UUM) stated that candidates with experience could use it to make up for their lower academic results. Most providers tended to be unprescriptive with the types of experience except for UIA which specified that the experience had to be management/executive/supervisory-related, and UiTM which mentioned that EMBA candidates had to have professional/management/technical-related experience. Both UTM and UKM also stated that the experience required had to be a post-qualification experience. The research findings revealed that the practice of using academic grades as a substitute for experience was not only formally stated but also discreetly implemented. Although certain schools (UTM and UKM), claimed on paper that they required working experience, they were found in practice to also accept fresh graduates. Findings on the three case studies suggest that the flexibility with regard to the requirement of candidate experience was in a way seen as a strategy for the survival of their schools in competition with other providers. Notably, the working experience requirement of MBAs was also a highly debated issue in the research.

Other than the two conditions, the schools also stipulated that candidates meet the condition of English language proficiency. Five of the providers (UM, UPM, UKM, UIA and UTM) specifically stated that the candidates had to fulfil certain standards
through TOEFL or IELTS exams, or those by their own internal bodies. USM, UNIMAS and UTM only applied this requirement on international students. The schools are generally silent on the standard / test results that the candidates have to achieve except for UKM which allegedly required a TOEFL score of minimum 550 / 213 or IELTS band 6.0. Criterion set by the UMS was more subjective whereby they stated that candidates needed a ‘good command’ of English. Two of the providers (UUM and UiTM) did not state the language criteria. It is also not uncommon that a candidate’s English proficiency is tested during a selection interview as observed in the case studies. The emphasis on English shows its significance in the Malaysian industry. Thus good English proficiency is emphasized by the schools as their programme involves a lot of presentations, discussions and interactions in the language. Some lecturers interviewed in the research also viewed the use of English in the programme as one of the strengths of their MBAs.

The importance of Bahasa Melayu (BM) is also being recognized as most providers set the ‘fulfilment of BM requirement’ as one of the conditions for conferring MBA degrees. Even international candidates are not excluded in this ruling.

Unlike the practice of most US BSs, the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) is not common in Malaysia and only one provider (i.e. UPM) mentions it as part of entry into their programme. Even then, it is not a compulsory requirement but rather a substitute for unsatisfactory academic results. With a satisfactory GMAT score, candidates would still need to satisfy certain work experience conditions which further suggests the insignificance of the test in Malaysian ME.

All providers were silent on age requirement for enrolling in a MBA programme. Based on the admission requirements of the providers, the MBA candidates in Malaysia could be as young as 20 or 22 years old, (assuming that the person went through an uninterrupted education and had zero working experience). This figure is based on the length of compulsory Malaysian primary and secondary education (11 years) and tertiary education (5 or 3 years). Further information about the age profiles of MBA students is shown below.
5.7 Profiles of MBA Students

The following are the profiles of MBA students. The findings are based on surveys consisting of 81 MBA students in the three schools and the interviews data.

- Nationality - Majority of the students (76.5%) are Malaysians. The rest are foreigners mainly from Middle Eastern countries. Out of the three schools, BS1 had the most foreign students, more than locals.

- Age – The biggest age group in the Malaysian MBA classes are those between 30 to 39 years old (46.9%).

- Gender – Majority (64%) of the students are females, which corresponds with the general student profile in Malaysian higher education. Out of the three schools, only BS1 had more males than females in their classrooms.

- Financial Information – Majority (60.5%) of the MBA students paid for their own education. 19.8% were sponsored by the Malaysian government, in which the majority of them undertook MBAs in BS3. These students were typically government officers who were given scholarship and fully paid study leave. Out of the 81 students, only 5 students were sponsored by their existing employers. The employers of 3 out of 5 students were GLCs. These findings suggest that perhaps only large companies could afford such programme or/and recognized the values of HCD.

- Work Experience – 86.4% students had some work experience. The average work experience among students in BS3, BS2 (full time), BS2 (part time) and BS1 were 9, 4, 13, and 9 years respectively. The limited experience of the BS2 full-time group was due to the school not stating any compulsory experience requirement. The majority of those with work experience in BS3 came from the public sector, which was totally the opposite of BS2 EMBA’s classroom where the whole classroom was filled with students working in the local private sector. Most of the students (9) in BS2 EMBA were attached to GLCs, whereas in BS1, the work experience profile was more varied due to the large presence of foreigners in the programme. Based on their positions, the majority of students with work experience (except those in BS2’s full time MBA) seemed to have held or undertaken some managerial responsibilities.
Quite a lot of them, particularly in BS3, claimed they had assumed high ranking positions like chief director, manager, project director, etc.

- Education background – Majority of the students had degrees in business and management-related areas. Notable numbers of students who undertook either type of MBA programme in BS2 had previously gained bachelor degrees or diplomas from the same university.

5.8 BS Association, Accreditation, Ranking and Alumni

BS association, international accreditation, media ranking and alumni are some of the usual features characterizing the most top BSs in the world. However, in Malaysia these features are fairly uncommon.

There is no formal body that specifically governs BS programmes and conducts. As mentioned, governing is at the university level by the Ministry of Higher Education. Local accreditation is gained from the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education. However, the findings showed that international accreditation by more common bodies like AACSB and AMBA were very rare. Reports showed that out of the 10, only one BS had received accreditation from AMBA. Six schools have become members of AACSB, four to AAPBS and two to EFMD. Despite the low statistics, international accreditation is generally considered of great importance. The findings showed that the PUs declared their quality, for instance, by claiming in websites / prospectuses that their MBA had previously been listed as one of the top in the region, had programme audits by foreign academicians and continuous appointment of foreign adjunct professors. Displaying this information was often used as a way for the schools to establish their credentials particularly for marketing purposes. The PUBS were also less involved in the ranking game. Locally, there is no specific ranking on BSs or programmes. Similarly, the strength of alumni is not considerable. Alumni are established more at the university than at school / programme level.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter presents the findings which can be used to characterize ME/MBA provisions by BSs in Malaysia. Several features that arose from these findings are
discussed in the discussion chapter. To provide some perspective on the findings, these features will be discussed in the discussion chapter by comparing them to US and UK practices.

The next chapter will present findings on the backgrounds of the three chosen BSs (from which the MEr samples were derived) and the perceptions of their MErrs.
CHAPTER 6
FINDINGS - BACKGROUNDS OF SCHOOLS AND PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATORS
6.1 Introduction

The research was conducted with the aim of exploring the views of three main ME/MBA stakeholders (i.e. faculties, industries and students) on the adequacy of public university MBA (PU MBA) provisions in Malaysia. This chapter presents the findings from the first group of stakeholders, i.e. BSs and MErs. This chapter describes some background information about the three chosen BSs from which the MEr samples were derived and their perceptions towards issues related to the research questions 2 to 6, i.e. roles of an MBA; roles as MBA providers; definition of relevance; the kinds of managers and competencies which MBAs should develop; and concerns towards the social responsibility issue. Profiles of the MErs are presented in Appendix B.

6.2 Part I – The Three Schools

6.2.1 Backgrounds Of Schools

As described in the methodology chapter, the three schools provided a lot more surprises than the research expected. They were initially chosen because of the uniqueness of their respective universities’ backgrounds which, based on knowledge from the literature, could be related to the research questions. The cases represented schools of different ages. BS3 was the oldest ME provider, PU1 was the youngest and although BS2’s history pre-dated BS3’s, it was only recognized as a university much later than the other two schools. Both BS3 and BS2 had significant roles in shaping the Malaysian ME landscape. BS3, being the first to offer an MBA, had produced graduates who eventually influenced the ME/MBA practices of other PUs. BS2, through its popular Ohio MBA had also marked an important point in the country’s ME history\textsuperscript{22}. The schools also differed in size, with BS2 being the biggest provider due to PU2’s sprawling nation-wide campuses, to BS1 being the smallest with only a few full-time academic staff and limited student intake. Both BS1 and BS2 first

\textsuperscript{22} The Ohio MBA was a mirrored program as offered in the US. The influence of Ohio MBA (either offered in Malaysia or the US) was relatively significant. A noticeable number of lecturers in PU2 graduated with Ohio MBA. And other lecturers in other PUs and Malaysia’s corporate figures were also allegedly had the degree.
developed their MBAs with the assistance of foreign universities. BS3 developed their own MBA, however their approach where lecturers supposedly combined their experiences of US university MBAs to derive PU3’s MBA suggests the possible influence of foreign MBA ideas in Malaysian MBA practice. In addition, the composition of lecturers in terms of academic-industrial experience is also different. MErs in BS1 appeared to have the most industrial exposure, followed by BS2 and BS3.

The most important feature of the schools was that they represented different degrees of governing structure. BS1 can be considered the most independent entity as it was practically no longer attached to its previous academic faculty. Furthermore, BS1 was established to function like a business. Though BS3 was an academic entity, its newly-awarded regulation gave it the freedom to engage in more business-like profit-generating activities. Although BS3 is an independent entity, it still maintains a relationship with its previous faculty through the supply of teaching resources. However, evidence showing that they actively pursuing practitioners to become lecturers may be taken to suggest its connection with the academic faculty may not last long. With regard to BS2, although they are still administratively and financial attached to the faculty, there are already in talks to make it independent. It may be safe to say that both BS2 and BS3 are gradually becoming completely independent like BS1. Notably all three schools mentioned that they needed to get out from their faculties in order to ‘progress’. As shown in the next chapter, the progress they meant appears to result in their closer proximity to the industry, meeting their utilitarian needs and in a way, distancing them from their academic purpose. Also discussed later, the findings suggest that their haste to achieve total independence could be attributed to the background of their people.

The following are descriptions of the three schools. As will be later demonstrated in the discussion chapter, their characteristics may have had a significant influence on the academic-utilitarian orientation of their schools and MErs’ perspectives towards the research issues. The findings below are derived from three sources, i.e. mainly the interviews on the schools’ MBA spoke persons, their MErs and surveys on their MBA students, and their websites and MBA prospectuses.
6.2.1.1 BS1, PU1

PU1 has two campuses in Skudai, Johor (main campus) and Kuala Lumpur (branch campus). The university’s main focus and strength had always been in engineering or other science-based related studies. Being an engineering-oriented university, the idea of MBA was reportedly less welcomed by the university’s top management. To gain their confidence, the MBA had to be allegedly tailored towards the university’s core discipline, i.e. engineering / engineers. This stance was translated into BS1’s MBA objectives and curriculum and as shown later, became one of its programme strengths.

BS1 was formed in 1997. Its administration was initially located in Skudai but transferred to Kuala Lumpur in 1998 allegedly due to management, financial and market reasons. Its first MBA was initially offered together with a UK university but the collaboration was terminated after just over a year because BS1’s low student enrolment made it unable to support its UK partner’s high teaching fees\(^23\). The collaboration apparently left BS1 with huge debt.

Despite being in a PU, BS1’s operation was different from a typical academic department. BS1 was established as one of PU1’s centers of excellence (CoE), whose role was to assist the university in achieving self-sufficiency and financial independence from the government. In line with this purpose, BS1’s website stated that the School was ‘to be operated as a private sector organisation’ which was indeed reflected in its practices as shown later. As a CoE, BS1 reports directly to the senate and is advised by the vice chancellor. Internally, the school is governed by the board of directors and is headed by a Director. According to its website, the School’s director was supported by three deputy directors in charge of three ‘strategic units’. However, in reality these units were not evident in the research. Instead, major decisions and responsibilities were performed mostly by the Director.

BS1 was originally formed as an extension of a faculty of management who was the owner, administrator and supplier of its teaching resources. However, under the faculty, BS1 and the MBA were alleged to have been improperly managed. When BS1

\(^{23}\) Only 13 students were reportedly enrolled.
was brought to KL, the Director likened its condition to a ‘sick baby’, claiming that he had to re-build BS1 almost from scratch.

The findings suggest that since its move to KL, BS1’s relationship with the faculty seemed to grow distant. BS1 became a rather independent entity with its own administrative and teaching staff. Although, the faculty still provided the teaching resources, the numbers however were very small. BS1 hires its lecturers mainly from other universities, industry, and other academic departments in PU1. Not only were there less administrative and teaching-supply connections with the faculty, the relationship between the two was apparently strained when the issue about MBA ownership was raised once the programme started to become successful.

The management of BS1 seemed to be more like a one-man show where many important decisions concerning the school / programmes were decided by its Director, often in an ad hoc manner. This scenario seems quite obvious given the non-existence of the three deputy directors. Of note was that the director had been holding the school’s directorship position for over 11 years. The director had considerable corporate and academic experience including being directly involved in the setting-up of Malaysia’s first PU MBA. As shown in the next chapter, the director’s power was significant and the roles that BS1 and its MErs played tend to be heavily influenced by his beliefs.

BS1 is extremely small compared to the other cases. Although the website claimed that the School was made up of a Director and seven ‘faculty members’, the number of permanent staff was a far cry from that. During the data collection period, only one of the faculty members was known to be permanent, whereas most of BS1’s teaching staff was on contract basis. The staff tended to be those who were quite old with

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24 Some examples are: transferring the school / programme from Johor to KL; stopping the collaboration with the UK university, offering other MBAs; hiring (subject to the Vice Chancellor’s approval) and terminating lecturers; amending student selection criteria; modifying teaching methodology; and refining and changing the emphasis of the programme curriculum.

25 From the start he was hired purposely for his previous MBA-development experience in another PU. He was practically given ultimate freedom and power to manage BS1 and was allegedly made answerable only to the Vice Chancellor. His power in the School was evident in the many important decisions he had made and been involved with.
substantial experience in the industry (practitioners-turned-academicians) and some were very senior in the academic arena. Only two lecturers were considered juniors in their early 40s. This was considered young in BS1 and as one respondent mentioned she felt quite intimidated performing in a pool with several very senior people. There was also a noticeable presence of retirees in the School (those who had retired from the industrial or academic professions). Getting *good* people in was stated to be a problem. Although BS1 scouted its people from external sources, it was mentioned that they were continuously trying to get *qualified* academicians from the management faculty to join BS1 but this was not easy as the faculty and the university level were sometimes not willing to *release* their staff.

The findings imply that BS1 seems to be a privileged place. Not everybody can be accepted into the circle. There were quite strict criteria for teaching MBA i.e. a doctorate degree and a certain number of years of industrial experience. Furthermore, it was not uncommon to see lecturers who had previously assumed high-ranking management positions in PU1 entering BS1 after serving their contracts. Rather than going back to their respective faculties to become ‘ordinary’ lecturers, they seemed to prefer entering a different department to ‘escape’ their previous roles. The freedom in BS1 seemed to suit these people. There was evidence that a new subject was created just to match the expertise of such people. At least two of the staff in BS1 were found to fit somewhat into this description, and given the small size of the School this number is considerable.

BS1 offered 3 types of specialized MBAs. MBA Techno-Entrepreneurship is its first (initially offered with the Cranfield University) which was developed based on PU1’s technological niche and aspirations. MBA Strategic Management was offered in 2000 followed by MBA Venture Capital Management. All programmes included Technology Management and Innovation as the core course. During the data collection period, BS1 is the only provider that offers MBA Techno-Entrepreneurship and MBA Venture Capital Management. It is/was also the first to offer MBA Strategic Management in Malaysia.

Based on the survey of BS1’s MBA students, 60% were international students mainly from Iran while the rest were Malaysians. Their average age was 32 years old. The
majority were males and they self-financed their study. Most students graduated from foreign universities partly due to the large presence of international students. Apart from one student, all students had work experience averaging 8.6 years. Out of this group, 8 Malaysians were working in the local private sector and 3 in the public sector. Their job titles suggested that many of them had been involved in some managerial responsibilities.

6.2.1.2 BS2, PU2

PU2 is the largest university in Malaysia with campuses in every Malaysian state thus making it the biggest producer of university graduates in Malaysia. The role of PU2 has always been utilitarian. The fundamental objective of its formation was to train and educate bumiputeras\(^{26}\) to provide them a level playing field to compete with other races in commercial activities. The university’s origin can be traced to the establishment of Dewan RIDA (Rural Industrial Development Authority) in the 1950s, an education body responsible for conducting commerce-related courses for bumiputeras to enable them to participate in rural and urban industrial activities. It was later renamed MARA College in 1965, signifying its extended role in training bumiputeras for professional and semi-professional jobs in order to give them better grounds to compete with non-bumiputeras in the private sectors. The name was again changed in 1967 to Institute Teknologi MARA whereby ITM took greater responsibility in restructuring the economic imbalance between bumiputeras and non-bumiputeras in Malaysia, and this role was closely linked to the efforts to achieve the country’s New Economic Policy (NEP 1970). In 1996 the ITM Act was passed in the Malaysian Parliament allowing the institution to confer its own degrees, masters and doctoral programmes. This elevated ITM to university status and it was eventually renamed PU2 in 1999.

PU2 tends to enjoy a general reputation for providing quality ME courses. The presence of a number of corporate figures who were PU2 graduates was often seen as testimony of its quality. Furthermore, the perception was common that PU2

\(^{26}\) Malaysia’s indigenous people, i.e. Malays and some local tribes people in West Malaysia.
graduates (compared to other PUs) tended to be favoured by Malaysian industries supposedly for their higher English proficiency and extroverted personalities.

The MBA in PU2 is offered by the BS2 of a faculty of business. The law governing the University, known as the PU2 Act 2000 (amended from ITM Act 1976) specified that it could only enrol bumiputera students, a provision that invited mixed reactions from the lecturers. It was seen as inhibiting rather than helping PU2’s and its students’ development. The proposition for the University to slightly open the door to non-bumiputeras was very controversial and often became a political debate. Notably, some lecturers (who were themselves bumiputeras\textsuperscript{27}) seemed hesitant to criticize the pro-bumiputera policy for fear of appearing ungrateful to the system that had helped them achieve socio-economic standing.

BS2 is administratively and financially linked to a faculty which governs all postgraduate and undergraduate ME programmes. However, there is a plan to move BS2 completely away from the faculty to free it from the University’s bumiputera ruling which was viewed as a stumbling block to its growth. Some of the MErs in BS2 felt that the homogeneity of its classrooms run counter to the increasing need to be global. Presently, only certain types of international students are allowed into PU2\textsuperscript{28} and even then the number is very small (i.e. only 8% of international students in the survey of full-time MBA classes). The restriction was perceived had caused the school to fall behind other universities and had adverse effect on the learning of its students. The idea to pull BS2 out to become an independent entity was therefore considered crucial for BS2’s progress. There were MErs in the faculty who disagreed with the plan but it seemed that their reason of objection was justified more on self-interest than anything else. There was a worry about losing revenue from MBAs, which had been the faculty’s main source of funding.

Unlike BS1, the management in BS2 followed typical operation of an academic department with appointed academic positions (like deans, deputy deans, subject resource persons, etc.) and formally set up committees to make decisions. For instance, curriculums were developed by the respective subject committees comprised

\textsuperscript{27} Approximately 99% of the lecturers in PU2 are bumiputeras.

\textsuperscript{28} Only those from Middle Eastern Muslim countries were based on government-to-government agreements.
of appointed lecturers (known as resource persons) with organized feedback from industries.

There were about 57 lecturers involved in teaching MBA programmes in PU2. The majority had doctorates and those without had the ‘associate professor’ title to indicate their seniority. Interviews with the deputy dean of BS2 confirmed that these were the two basic criteria involved in the teaching. A look at the websites of BS2 / faculty showed that majority of the academicians had received education from the US and notably had American MBAs. In terms of industrial experience, findings suggested there were combinations of academicians with minimal experience (like 1 or 2 years post-degree experience) and a handful with more substantial experience (practitioners-turned-academicians). The industrial experience of lecturers seemed to be emphasized in BS2 which corresponds with its vocational orientation of the university. Staff lacking in this were encouraged to get involved in industrial consultations or join industrial internships to gain practical knowledge.

BS2 started the MBA programme in 1986 in collaboration with the Ohio University. It also offered another twinning MBA with Cardiff University in 1995 to students as an alternative to the American MBA. BS2 only launched its own full time MBA in 1998 to replace the foreign MBAs. Built over the Ohio curriculum foundation, BS2 however made a major change to the full time MBA by accepting students without work experience, a decision shown later caused much dissatisfaction amongst its lecturers. However, it continued the Ohio MBA formula by offering its own EMBA, a part time programme targeted towards working individuals. Unlike the full-time MBA, EMBA required compulsory working experience. BS2 also offered another programme called ‘evening MBA’ which was conducted on weekday evenings to give another alternative to the working population. All three programmes were

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29 Based on the ‘Directory of Expertise for EMBA / MBA programme’ for its main campus.
30 It was coordinated and taught mainly by Ohio with minimal teaching contributions by a handful of PU2 lecturers.
31 PU2’s relationship with Ohio University went back much earlier when the two jointly offered twinning bachelor business degrees in 1975.
32 The foreign programmes were reported to have become increasingly irrelevant to Malaysia’s industry needs and practices. For instance, the Ohio programme being a mirror programme only taught general business theories and was not at all tailored to the needs and working environments of its local students.
general MBAs. However, students in EMBA were allowed to choose certain disciplined-based electives although this ‘concentration’ did not appear in their programme title. BS2 however mentioned about a plan to offer concentration MBAs in the future. BS2 MBAs were very popular. There were reportedly about 300 MBA students in 5 EMBA classes, 2 full time MBA classes and 1 evening MBA class. This figure was based on its main campus and had not had considered MBA students in many of its nationwide branches.

Due to the different entry criteria and programme structures, the demography of MBA students varied depending on the types of MBAs. Based on the surveys administered on the students, only half the students in the full time class had working experience whereas others entered the MBA straight after their undergraduate degrees. Of those with work experience, the average number of years of experience was 3.6 years, mainly in private companies at the supervisory, clerical or other lower level positions. Meanwhile, students in EMBA classes all had working experience in private companies and the majority held managerial-related positions with an average of 13 years of working experience. The average age of the two groups also differed significantly whereby students in full-time MBAs were younger (20-29 years) and those in EMBA were 30-39 years old. In line with the university bumiputera policy, almost all MBA students were bumiputeras where Malays made up the majority. Out of both groups surveyed, only 3 students were foreigners. Females made up a large majority in both groups. A large majority of EMBA students paid for their own education whereas while employer-sponsored ones were from GLCs. Full-time MBAs were mainly self-funded or by scholarship from the Malaysian government or local public universities. Another notable finding about the profile of PU2 MBA students was their inclination towards academic careers (rather than corporate managerial careers). This observation was specifically mentioned by the lecturers and further confirmed by the student findings. This phenomenon was particularly evident among fresh graduates in full time MBA programmes. It was found that the university/faculty itself might have played a part in encouraging to this practice. The research showed that there were cases where PU2 absorbed their own top graduates as part of their academic team. Some students were also sponsored by the University to undertake the MBA under a ‘scheme for young academics’ that somewhat guaranteed their academic jobs upon graduation.
6.2.1.3 BS3, PU3

PU3 is the third PU in Malaysia but the first to use Bahasa Melayu, the national language, as the medium of instruction. The role and establishment of PU3 are closely related to the history of Malaysia and the Malay race. PU3 was formed in 1970 to serve the tertiary educational needs of Malays who were left behind and missing-out on educational opportunities due to their language barrier. At the same time, PU3 was instrumental in preserving the Bahasa Melayu which faced the risk of being phased out by the domination of the English language in Malaysia’s education. PU3 claims that its progress over the years has proven that Bahasa Melayu is a legitimate and successful language for knowledge, scholarship and cultural advancements.

Despite being the third PU, PU3 is the pioneer in ME among Malaysia’s PUs. It was the first PU to offer BBA, MBA and DBA programmes in 1972, 1980 and 1989 respectively. Being the first PU to offer a MBA, PU3 had been described holding a ‘monopolistic position’ and became as the reference point to other universities:

‘other (local) universities started MBA programme ... they tend to emulate what PU3 did in terms of content, in terms of structure of the course’
(MEr13, 47, substantial academic experiences in local PUBS’s, BS3).

The initial establishment of business and management education in PU3 (or rather in the country) resembled to the early days of ME in the US. PU3 was initially set up alongside the more established economics disciplines. It only gained its identity and became known as the Faculty of Business Management in 1979. However after over two decades, the two disciplines merged back into what is now known as the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB). The MBA programmes (and other postgraduate programmes) in PU3 were offered / put under the FEB until 2004.

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33 During that time most Malays were educated in Malay schools and the available universities all use English as the medium of instruction.
34 A result of British colonization.
35 With the exception of EMBA which was put under Pusat Kembangan Pendidikan (Centre of Educational Extension). PKP is an entity of PU3 managed by a PU3-owned commercial company named PU3 Holdings Sdn Bhd. PU3 Holdings is PU3’s commercial platform responsible for commercializing PU3’s products and services, which include training programmes and consultancy services. PKP is responsible for the promotion and management of PU3’s academic programmes especially to the working population.
In April 2004, FEB formed the BS3 and transferred the management of all its postgraduate programmes to BS3. In October 2007, the PU3’s Board of Management officially approved and awarded BS3 autonomy to stand on its own. In December 2008, the Ministry of Higher Education awarded BS3 with the status of Malaysia’s ‘top business school’\textsuperscript{36} which carried a hefty grant for the school’s development\textsuperscript{37}.

Two main reasons were quoted for BS3’s separation from FEB. The first reason was to give BS3 more autonomy and freedom to grow. It was reported that being part of the faculty had inhibited the development of its postgraduate education as it was tied to the faculty rules and regulations. The deputy director of BS3 illustrated that previously they were not able to attract good industry practitioners to teach their programme as the government compensation scheme applicable on the faculty was too low to attract the practitioners. Now, as a separate entity BS3 operates under different governing statutes which has given them the freedom and autonomy to decide on the payment of guest lecturers\textsuperscript{38}. Secondly, the BS3-FEB separation was reportedly in line with the MOHE grand plan to make PUs more financially independent. After moving out of FEB and hence its faculty-associated academic regulations, BS3 was given the freedom to generate and manage its own funds and profits. The return of EMBA programmes from the care of PKP to BS3 proved that BS3 was now a profit-generating entity.

Bringing BS3 out from FEB was a controversial move. FEB was quite a traditional faculty where maintaining old traditions, upholding past professors’ legacies and conforming to seniors defined its culture. The status and superior position of FEB as the first MED programme provider in Malaysia appeared to have made it contented and over-complacent. The idea of separating its postgraduate department was thus considered a change of tradition and a challenge to the approaches set by its previous

\textsuperscript{36} Two schools were ‘awarded’ by the MOHE. The other school was the Graduate School of Management, Universiti Putra Malaysia.

\textsuperscript{37} The award had invited mixed reactions from BS3’s lecturers who questioned the validity and transparency of the Government approach. They debated over whether it was rightful for the government to judge a BS instead of other parties like industries and students as commonly practised in other countries.

\textsuperscript{38} After gaining autonomy, BS3 decided to offer 300 ringgit (per hour) for Professors, 200 for Associate Professors, and 150 for normal lecturers, which was a vast difference to the previous rate of 100 ringgit.
professors. At the same time, the separation idea was for some seen as a threat, upsetting the existing power structure in the Faculty. As later discussed, the formation of BS3 also involved the selection of some staff from FEB to join the new school. And since BS3 was geared to be a high-performing school with different standards and remuneration scheme, those who were chosen in were considered of higher status. Concern about difference of status and privileges among the academicians created added resistance to the separation move.

The move to set up an independent BS entity was largely influenced by the practice of BSs in other countries\(^\text{39}\). They learned that in order to be a ‘good’ business school, they had to be autonomous and financially independent. The Harvard Business School MBA model were frequently mentioned by all PU3 respondents suggesting that BS3 were very keen to emulate Harvard’s best practices. As shown later, this idolization is evident in their other practices and views. The change of governance and separation from FEB were shown to have had some effect in influencing BS3’s principles on its role as a BS, in its programmes and its expectations on its lecturers.

Up to December 2009, BS3 had 31 academic members known as ‘full members’ or ‘associate members’\(^\text{40}\). It was reported that the original idea in the conception of BS3 was for it to be filled with newly-recruited talented real business practitioners. Nevertheless due to the difficulty of finding suitable candidates, BS3 had to absorb some of the existing academics from FEB. All of BS3’s lecturers had doctorates, which was a prerequisite to teach in a graduate school. The findings showed that unlike the other two schools, the academic qualification and academic performance (research and publications) of the lecturers seemed to be more emphasized than their industrial experience. Staff in BS3 had certain KPI they had to achieve and this included publications in cited journals. Seen from the respondents’ backgrounds, their industrial experience seemed less substantial both in length and capacity compared to BS1. Furthermore unlike the case of BS2 where the lecturers were being made to be

\(^{39}\) They conducted visits to other schools around Asia and the UK to learn about their governance and ‘good practices’ as preparation to set up BS3 as Malaysia’s ‘top business school’.

\(^{40}\) The former means the lecturers were solely BS3 staff. The latter were academics that were essentially attached with FEB but were ‘chosen’ to simultaneously be part of the BS3 community.
personally responsible in enhancing their industrial exposure\textsuperscript{41}, BS3 tended to seek outside help (i.e. practitioners) to provide students with the practical exposure rather than encouraging the staff to learn the industrial ropes themselves.

PU3 originally offered general MBA programmes but had now changed to concentration MBAs. The MBA came in two structures. The regular MBA was full-time, conducted in PU3’s main campus in Bangi. The EMBA was meant for working people studying on a part-time basis with classes on weekday evenings in Kuala Lumpur. The two programmes were similar in curriculum, teaching materials, and entry criteria. In terms of curriculum, one major item which differentiated its programmes from the other two cases was that PU3 had a course in Business Law and Ethics, a core subject which had to be taken by all students.

Based on the surveys and interview data, MBA students in BS3 can be described as having the following characteristics. The students were mostly in the age range of 30 to 39 years old except for fresh graduates who were relatively young. The average age was 32.5 years. The majority of them were females. One striking characteristic about PU3’s MBA (stated by both the lecturers as well as the survey results) was that the students were made up of mostly government employees. The survey showed that 64% of the students were from government ministries/institutions. There was a large presence of this group especially in the full-time MBA due to the scholarships and fully-paid study leaves given to government servants. Nearly all students had significant years of work experience with an average of 9.2 years. Overall, many students had assumed fairly decent positions and those attached to the public sector held relatively high-ranking managerial positions such as chief director, assistant director and manager.

\textsuperscript{41} There seemed to be more emphasis on lecturer industrial experience and more encouragement for staff who lack working experience to perform industrial internships and undertake industrial consultation assignments.
6.2.2 Operation and Management of BSs

The operation and management of the three schools was analyzed to determine the extent to which they projected the dual academic and/or corporate models that governed their operations as BSs.

The findings showed that the schools seemed to operate in a professional, business-like manner. This conclusion was made by analyzing the schools’ decisions and practices which the findings suggest seem to be predominantly guided based on strategic (rather than theoretical) reasons. Given similarities in the findings of BS1 and BS3, these are discussed first followed by the findings from BS2.

The most obvious evidence was seen in the programme offerings of the schools whereby decisions tended to be primarily made or justified based on the school’s strategic position and competitiveness. In BS1 (where the strategic orientation was the clearest), the emphasis to be ‘different from all MBAs (in Malaysia)’ was evident in the following quotation. The widespread use of business terms like ‘Blue Ocean Strategy’, ‘business strategy’, ‘compete’, ‘differentiation’ and ‘choice’ strongly signified its strategic orientation.

> This Blue Ocean Strategy ... you have to create your own Blue Ocean. So that you don’t have to compete. ... But then if you look at business strategy, you have to compete anyway because they all doing the same thing almost right. But then (the theory) says try to differentiate yourself. So I have to work on differentiation, very strongly. ... I have to be different from all MBAs (in Malaysia). ... (I want to offer programmes which) ... other people haven’t offered. So I don’t want to do (MBA) Finance. I don’t want to do (MBA) Marketing. I don’t want to do MBA Management. ... ... So it is really Blue Ocean in that sense because when I reached Blue Ocean uh I’ve done that. I differentiate.
> (MEs02, 64, Director of BS1, substantial academic and industrial experience)

A similar emphasis was also noted in BS3. The deputy director observed that all MBAs in Malaysia ‘shared the same position in the market’. To differentiate itself, BS3 thus needed to ‘re-strategize in positioning (their) product to be a premium product’. One of the approaches to making their MBA different or ‘more innovative’ was ‘to target ... upper market’. The use of terms like ‘premium product’, ‘market’ and ‘re-strategize’ carry business connotations. The decision to introduce ‘leadership’ into the programme also seems justified more as a strategic reason and less as a theoretical reason.
(BS3) want to re-strategize in positioning our product to be a premium product. Premium means a different quality, have added value compared to other MBA. ... try to re-strategize our MBA to be more innovative. ... for example we try to inject leadership in the programme.

... Why leadership?
Because as you may see from all MBAs, maybe in Malaysia, all of them maybe has shared the same position in the market. Meaning people would see there's no difference in the MBA from PU3, from PU2, from BS1. So we are going to target ... upper market for example, those who can change, can lead (emphasis) the organization.

(MErl2, Head of MBA, BS3)

BS1 and BS3's programme decisions also tended to be heavily dictated by market demand and supply. For instance, BS3's justification for switching from general to concentration MBA was 'because (they) can see the demand' 42.

Why did you switch from general to concentration MBA?
Because I can see the demand, ....... (and) I think that concentration has added value because the general, you can incorporate all those in the core courses. The core courses deal with the general knowledge that the MBA should have. So only a few, like 5 courses, that the students want to concentrate. So that it will suit their position in the organization.

(MErl2, Head of MBA, BS3)

Similar sentiment was also shared by other lecturers. Concentration was considered a 'marketing' strategy which 'BS3 and other BSs) are concerned about (how to fulfil the customer needs, their preferences' to give them 'a bundle of benefits, a bundle of satisfaction'. And to make MBA appealing, the school designed their curriculum based on what one 'would like (i.e. was wanted) at the market and the students'.

What do you think about the MBA general and concentration switch?
For my understanding MBA is a general degree. Regardless of how many electives you take or how many majors, ... So to take or few more courses in one field is perhaps to help the students to know more about the field that they are interested. But the worldwide recognition is a general degree. So what most of the BSs try to do is how we can structure it so that the people with different interest that they will gain their own benefit and satisfaction, that's what marketing is about isn't it? So we (BSs) are concerned about the customer needs, their preferences, what extra benefits can they get. So we say it's a bundle of benefits, a bundle of satisfaction.

Just fulfil the students' needs, you mean?
It's part of it is you look at your customer, you look at the market ... In a market also people prefer for example if you want to go in banking line probably MBA with more study in the finance related, investment courses to help you in your career development further and

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42 As shown later, their decisions were also influenced by other foreign BSs' practices, i.e. a criterion to become the top business school was having concentration in the MBA.
Rigorous marketing was a very important aspect in the schools’ management practice. For instance, in BS1 this is in agreement with its management principle which believes in ‘get(ting) the number of students’ and spending on advertising. Elsewhere, the director had attributed poor marketing to its previous lack of success. To boot, marketing was one of the main responsibilities of the director. Promotional trips especially to other Middle Eastern countries were considered important and quite common.

You know you have to survive. You have to bring in money. I have to pay the debts. So what do I do? The principle very simple. I get the number of students. Get numbers (emphasis). I believe in numbers. So I work hard...we market, we go out see people. Some people said that they've never heard of PU1 / BS1 ... And then we advertise. (Previously) nobody advertise. You ask the university... everything was not advertised. How much did (the university) spend? 300 thousands? Ha! (shocked) 300 thousands on advertisement? ... It doesn’t make sense. ... if you don’t talk to people, you don’t tell people, nobody will know.

(MEIR02, 64, director of BS1, substantial academic and industrial experience)

Similar marketing emphasis was also seen in BS3’s programme management. For instance, they worked hard on school/programme ‘branding’ which involved creating a programme ‘tagline’ that was part of the changes in its transition to becoming the ‘top business school in Malaysia’.

(our MBA) have the substance. But branding is also important. ... There are some (BSs) which have tagline. That’s why now we also have a tagline for MBA which is ‘Create the Value and Control your Career’. It’s like when you have the value you can control your career, you can choose your employer. Not only the employer can choose you but you can choose the employer. That’s the tagline. ... So meaning that is the quality MBA students being produced. This (programme) is for those who want that. (So) That makes (the programme) different.

(MEIR12, Head of MBA, BS3)

Evidence suggests that students were sometimes viewed as ‘customers’. While there was only one notable example in BS3, this perception is more apparent in BS1. Compared to other schools, BS1 seemed to perceive students as paying customers.
There are 2 types of students we found out. First, student who don’t care, I just want an MBA. Another one, very important because they come in they pay. So they want something they can take back. ...

(ME02, 64, director of BS1, substantial academic and industrial experience)

This belief seems to have resulted in BS1’s emphasis on customer and service orientation. This is seen, for instance, in expectations on its staff as below.

So I told my (staff) you all must go and eat (the provided meals) first before (the students) eat. (They asked) Why Prof? If the food is bad, has poison, you will be first to die (laugh).

(ME02, 64, director of BS1, substantial academic and industrial experience)

Its customer service emphasis was also evident in its speed of tending to students’ complaints as below.

Our teaching staff is very experienced, they don’t spend time loitering around, they come to class late, I fire them. You know. I caught lecturer came in 2 hours late, student waited for her. That’s her first and last.

(ME02, 64, director of BS1, substantial academic and industrial experience)

BS1’s customer orientation was also projected in its lecturers’ views. One respondent considered BS1, as a result of its background, unlike typical public universities which ‘lack the customer service’. Similar to the school’s perspective, the respondent also seemed to link students with the money they spent on the school.

When you go to public university, except corporatized public university because BS1 doesn’t belong to university per se. It operate differently. ..... Public institution academician lack one (emphasis) big thing ... They lack the customer service part. That is the most (emphasis) lacking. A graduate school must not behave like be teaching undergraduate. ...

A graduate school must be detached from undergraduate school. And the lecturer also you cannot see the undergraduate one to teach the postgraduate one. You cannot.

Why?

They are 2 different breed of people. Undergraduate I (i.e. the students) go there I (they) don’t know anything. You teach me ok, you one-way traffic. And (they) don’t pay! (emphasis) My (their) father pay. My parents pay. Postgrad one I pay! (emphasis) Hey don’t treat me like the small kid anymore. That is where most public university make mistake.

(ME05, 55, substantial corporate experience, BS1)

BS1’s emphasis on customer satisfaction is also reflected in their lecturers’ roles. This aspect seems to be more prevalent and intense in BS1’s lecturers compared with the
lecturers in other schools. For instance, a lecturer felt that BS1 was different to other universities and informed that she had to be *on toe with what the demands of (her) students... because (she) want... (her) evaluation... to be very good... (so that she can be)... saleable all the time*. As a note, this kind of pressure or expectation to satisfy the students was not evident, at least in the same intensity, in the interviews of lecturers in the other two schools.

Teaching MBA especially this place (BS1), you have to be attentive... Some people thought that being a teacher (is easy because) you just wait for the salary... to me I like I have to be on toe with what the demands of my students. Because I want to be... when I get my evaluation (from students) it has to be very good... I want to be saleable all the time.

(MEs01, BS1)

Managing BS1 was likened to managing a business. The quotation below specifically illustrates this and the same message was also widespread throughout the director’s interview.

... Then we (BS1) have cash about 3 millions at one time. It’s just that I couldn’t keep the money. It would be good if it was my own business.

(MEs02, 64, director of BS1, substantial academic and industrial experience)

In fact, the university seemed to also regard BS1 as a business.

(The university board) said you (BS1) teach business but you don’t know how to do business (referring to BS1’ previous debt problem).

(MEs02, 64, director of BS1, substantial academic and industrial experience)

The business-like approach of BS1 was also noted by another respondent who attributed it to the director saying he ‘is a marketing guy’ and likened BS1’s management approach as ‘commercial academic’ similar to a private ME provider.

... For them (BS1) I think they know their niche. I think (the director) is a marketing guy. He was in the corporate life before. He mix academic and corporate. He know what he’s doing. Because to be bloody frank... the way he manage BS1 is just the way the way MIM (private training professional body). --- We call it... commercial academic. ---- You are delivering academic good but have the commercial method in doing this.

(MEs05, 55, substantial corporate experience, BS1)
With regard to BS3, although findings suggesting their business orientation were less obvious compared to BS1, there was evidence that they may eventually move towards the similar commercial direction. One of the reasons for BS3's independence as described before was indeed its desire to make itself more financially self-sufficient. As shown below, some of BS3’s practices already resembled that of a business entity by having ‘key performance indicators’, ‘business plans’ and ‘financial projection’, tools normally associated with profit-oriented companies. This suggests BS3 was already geared towards being a profit-generating entity.

... are there any other factors that caused the school to go separate? Maybe the key one is... now we have our own KPI. Now we are producing our business plan together with the financial projection for the future which the Ministry (of Higher Education) wants us to be a bit independent in 15 years, financially. (MEr12, Head of MBA, BS3)

True to that, BS3 ‘now... can manage (their) own fund... can receive money’ judged by the university’s decision to return its EMBA from the university’s commercial company\(^4\) to BS3.

... part time MBA (Executive MBA) was managed by Pusat Kembangan Pendidikan. Now... because BS3 (had) separated from the Faculty, now we can manage our own fund. We can receive money and all that. So all those were brought back to the BS3. (MEr12, Head of MBA, BS3)

The findings of BS2 were quite different. Unlike BS1 and BS3, there were no concerns raised by BS2 both at the school and lecturer levels about issues such as programme differentiation, strategies, marketing, and customer service orientation which were central in BS1 and BS3’s findings. For instance, while other schools were busy repackaging their programmes by offering concentration MBAs to increase their marketability, BS2 remained with the general MBA. During data collection, talk was only starting about a possible switch. Unlike BS1 and BS3, the major themes raised by BS2’s respondents instead focused more on

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\(^4\) Pusat Kembangan Pendidikan (Centre of Educational Extension) is an entity under PU3’s commercial company that is responsible for managing and promoting PU3’s academic programmes particularly to the working population. Previously the EMBA programme was not allowed to be managed by the Faculty (i.e. BS3) due to its restriction to handle commercial programmes.
their concerns about the university’s bumiputera policy and dissatisfaction with their full-time MBA (due to lack of working experience among its students).

Several factors might explain BS2’s lack of concern about strategic-related issues. Firstly, they may already be comfortable with their school's / programmes’ popularity. BS2’s student intake per semester often allowed them to create several classes compared to one or two classes in BS1 or BS3. As shown below, BS2’s deputy director stated that their MBA ‘have been (received) extremely well’.

So far God willing, our programmes have been very well, extremely well actually because every semester we have always full loads of students especially for executive Masters programmes.

(ME107, Deputy Director of BS2)

As shown later their popularity and strong image are also evident from student findings as some of their students admitted they came to BS2 feeling the school had a good reputation in business education. BS2’s popularity is impressive given its lesser emphasis on programme marketing44. In this comfortable position, BS2 probably feels less pressed to work on differentiation strategy, programme redesign, etc. unlike the other two schools.

The absence of strategic concerns in BS2 may also be related to PU2’s restriction on students which may have prevented BS2 to ‘think big’ on strategic direction until such time the policy is revised.

... the (PU2) Act says that we cannot take those people who are not bumiputera. So if you look of the direction of the MBA programme today there is a need for us to go global. You like it or not global implications are there. So if you are going to be about the same pace with all the other universities, PU2 has to take in international students which we have already. But our intake of international students at the graduate level is still very minimal because we are still being limited by our Act... --- ... we have a lot of requests from other countries, we have a lot of requests from companies to conduct the MBA programme for them. But we cannot because the university policy does not allow us. For example we cannot go into companies where our the students may not be bumiputera. We can only conduct courses for Malaysia, Malaysian-based companies, courses for those companies whose participants or students are going to be majority (emphasis) bumiputeras. We do allow like one or two (non-bumiputera participants). So that is limiting, inhibiting us especially. ... if you

44 Observations on its website and fieldwork show that BS2 seemed to spend less effort on marketing. For instance, their websites and programme brochures were not as glossy, attractive, informative and updated as compared to the other two schools.
want to go forward, if PU2 says it's gonna be world class, it cannot be world class if there's a lot of barriers. I mean how can you say world class and yet you say this university is only for certain group of people. ... we look at current situation if you say you want to be at par with the other universities, you want to be global, you want to be world class, you want to be internationally-recognized, so you have to open up the door a little bit. ... how can you say that you are global and yet you are not allowing people from other countries to look at your programme and sit in your programme?

(MEr07, Deputy Director, BS2)

The above findings suggest that perhaps without restrictions, BS2’s operations may not be that different from the other two schools. During the data collection, there was already talk of BS2 breaking away from the Faculty (thus its associated University’s Act) to enable the school to grow. Even without this freedom, BS2’s perceptions of other issues, presented later in the chapter, had already suggested their utilitarian inclination, which was similar to the other two schools.

As a conclusion, the findings suggest that the schools seem to resemble the operation of a profit-oriented business (rather than a typical academic faculty). Strategic-related issues were very central in the schools’ agendas. Their decisions on the types of and changes to their MBA programmes tended to closely follow market (student and industry) needs, with programme changes mainly justified based on marketability and school competitiveness (rather than theoretical justification) seem to suggest that they were constantly trying to sell their programmes to the public. Comparatively, the strategic orientation seems to be most evident in BS1, followed by BS3. Although similar finding were absent in BS2, there was evidence to show that BS2 would follow the same direction if given the freedom. They seemed to project themselves more like business entities / commercial education providers. As shown next, the views of the schools are also translated in the perceptions of their MErrs.

Table 1.10 summarizes the characteristics of the three schools.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance of Case – anticipated strengths</th>
<th>BS1, PU1</th>
<th>BS2, PU2</th>
<th>BS3, PU3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Originally chosen to see if the university's scientific orientation would be reflected in MBA and MEs responses on research issues. | • Originally chosen because it is a 'new' university (an ex-institute) and to see if its vocational inclination would influence its views.  
• The only university in Malaysia which is open to only certain racial groups. | • BS3 was chosen to replace another university whose cooperation could not be secured. |
| Significance of Case – discovered strengths | • Its establishment, governance structure, management approach, and demography of key staff had a very considerable influence in explaining the school’s academic-utilitarian inclination. | • The first public university to introduce the foreign collaborative MBA program (with an American university) in Malaysia in 1986.  
• The collaborative MBA was allegedly very popular and had a fair influence in developing a notable number of Malaysian corporate figures. | • Pioneer of ME in Malaysia.  
• The first PU to offer BBA, MBA and DBA programs.  
• Its graduates and ex-staff tend to influence ME in other PUs.  
• One of the two PUs awarded ‘Malaysia’s top business school’. |
| Background of University | • Engineering and science-oriented university.  
• Education programs including MBA were ‘expected’ to be tailored with the university’s core discipline. | • Its purpose of establishment is utilitarian-oriented – to train and educate bumiputeras in business areas to give them a level playing field to compete with other races in economic activities.  
• It is permitted to enrol only bumiputra students.  
• Recognized as a university in 1999. | • Its establishment is related to nationalist purpose - to develop the Malays and the Malay language. |

Source: Author's Construct
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background of School / Faculty</th>
<th>BS1, PU1</th>
<th>BS2, PU2</th>
<th>BS3, PU3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only offers MBA programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formed in 1997.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BS1 was established as Center of Excellence, meaning that it is a profit-generating entity and to be operated like a business.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS1 was originally part of a management faculty but became independent in 1998.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school is governed by board of directors, headed by a director, reported to the Senate, and advised by the Vice Chancellor.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The school is headed by a director. Three deputy directors who were supposedly part of IBS’ management were not filled.</td>
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<tr>
<td>All major decisions seemed to be dictated/heavily influenced by the Director in a rather ad-hoc manner.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School size</th>
<th>BS1, PU1</th>
<th>BS2, PU2</th>
<th>BS3, PU3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very small School.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The actual staff size was a lot smaller than stated in its website. The teaching staff were mostly on contract and recruited from external sources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student enrolment per semester was 60.</td>
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<tr>
<td>As in 2009 had produced close to 500 graduates within a period of 10 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very big school with branches/classes in every Malaysian state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>300 MBA students were reportedly enrolled at the university main campus, i.e. 5 EMBA classes, 2 full time MBA classes and 1 evening MBA class</td>
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<tr>
<td>57 lecturers were listed as involved in EMBA/MBA teaching.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Up to December 2009, BS3 had 31 academic members, largely drawn from the faculty.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Construct
Table 1.10 (cont.)
Backgrounds of the Three Selected BSs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>BS1, PU1</th>
<th>BS2, PU2</th>
<th>BS3, PU3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Offered specialized MBAs:</td>
<td>• Offers general MBAs:</td>
<td>• Offers MBA with concentration:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o MBA Techno-Entrepreneurship (the only one in Malaysia)</td>
<td>o Full time MBA (full time classes)</td>
<td>o Applied Finance and Investment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o MBA Strategic Management (the first in Malaysia)</td>
<td>o Evening MBA (weekday evening classes, target working people)</td>
<td>o Islamic Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o MBA Venture Capital Management</td>
<td>o Executive MBA (weekend classes, target working people)</td>
<td>o Islamic Banking and Finance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Its first program, MBA Techno-Entrepreneurship, began in 1997 and was initially offered with Cranfield University.</td>
<td>• Full time MBA and Evening and EMBA had different entry criteria. Working experience is compulsory for students to enrol in the latter two.</td>
<td>o Organizational and Human Resource Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All programs include a core course, Technology Management and Innovation, to reflect its university niche.</td>
<td>• BS2 MBA started as a collaboration with Ohio University in 1986.</td>
<td>o Marketing and Taxation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• All are weekend programs.</td>
<td>• BS2 launched its own full-time MBA in 1998.</td>
<td>• The curriculum for MBA and EMBA programs is similar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is a plan to offer concentration MBA.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• The programs come in two structures:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics subject</td>
<td>• No</td>
<td>• No</td>
<td>• Yes – Business Law and Ethics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Language of Instruction</td>
<td>• English</td>
<td>• English</td>
<td>• English is the predominant language in class. However, English or Malay may be used in assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Fees</td>
<td>RM20,000 (for locals) RM25,000 (for internationals)</td>
<td>RM8,831 – 11,291 (full time MBA) RM10,181 – 13,000 (part time MBA) International fees - NA</td>
<td>RM22,400 (locals) RM26,880 (internationals)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Construct
6.3 Part II – Perceptions of MErs

6.3.1 Roles of MBA

The data was examined to determine the perceptions of MErs towards the roles of MBAs, i.e. the extent to which it served the theoretical and practical aspects in order to perform as managers. As explained in the literature, a balanced of both aspects reflects the education and training purposes of MBA.

The findings show that most MErs in the three schools seemed to have a clear concept of MBA in terms of its objectives, target students, teaching focus and graduates’ target careers. They stated that MBA is ‘for those who want to career progression in the industry’ or ‘those who are going to practice’. MBA supposedly would make one a ‘well packaged’ and ‘better’ manager due to its comprehensiveness in providing knowledge about business functions to enable students to ‘get wider perspective of business’. As shown below, having MBA was considered a ‘ticket to a wider choice of career’ and a common qualification normally required ‘to be involved in any business activities... (or) large corporations’. Having an MBA was also considered as ‘a good start for those.. who are going to be in the managerial position’ and would make employers ‘more confident to hire’.

MBA ... ticket to a wider choice of career; compared to other programmes; ....if you have MBA ... it's like ... for you to be involved in any business activities and the like. Or for you to be involved in large corporations and the like. It is a common understanding that you have to have an MBA. ...-... normally it’s easier for companies to make decision .... I think they will be more confident to hire the MBA student (compared to other graduates). ... because MBA will normally provide you with ....an overview of....the business aspects. You will learn accounting, finance, and all ... With MBA meaning considered it's a good start for those.. who are going to be in the managerial position. Because you will get wider perspective of business.

(MEr03, BS1)

Unfortunately, not all schools managed to satisfactorily translate the espoused MBA roles above into practice and the biggest hindrance seemed to be the unsuitability of students.

48 However one respondent alleged that the concept of MBA among BSs in Malaysia is still vague i.e. they lack any unified focus on their objectives and clear targets of the programme. As a result, he alleged that the quality of graduates produced by each school varied depending on the experience of lecturers.
In BS2, the roles of its full-time MBA and EMBA differed significantly. Unlike EMBA where its MED function was clearer, the former seemed to function less like a MED platform and more like any other advanced degree. This lack of success in realizing the MED role of the MBA was found to be due to the less suitable characteristics of its students particularly in the areas of working experience\(^{46}\) and career intentions. Of note was the issue of students’ work experience which was highly debated in BS2 compared with the other two schools. Those without experience were seen as having a ‘bachelor degree programme mentality rather than mentality of someone who is going to become an executive, ... decision makers in organization’. These students were described as tending to regard ‘the Master programme (as) just a continuation of their bachelor degree programme’. Furthermore, BS2’s lecturers reported (confirmed by students’ findings) a ‘trend right now (whereby) most students take up (MBA) because they want to go into academic line’. This suggests, in a way, that the programme was regarded more as an academically-oriented career stepping stone. As below, the respondent consequently felt that the mismatch in programme objectives and student characteristics affected their success in carrying out their espoused role of MBA, i.e. ‘to be good managers’.

MBA has been dubbed the education and development of managers. Do you think that the programme has successfully bridged both? To some extent, I won’t say fully yet. Like I said just now one of the reasons our students when they come in, their objectives of coming in to the MBA programme is not, does not tally with our objectives. Our objective is to train them to be good decision makers, to be good managers. They come in simply to get that Masters certification and then maybe go out and find a job in the academic field. So I still think yes the MBA programme has meant for the applied side but then again we have not reached that stage extensively yet.

(ME\(r\)07, Deputy Director of BS2)

The findings suggest that the MED role of MBA seems to be the clearest in BS1. In terms of students’ characteristics, they appeared to get students with the commonly preferred characteristics, as described in Chapter 5\(^{47}\). Secondly, the career aspirations of the students in BS1 seemed to fall into the scope of MBA in managerial careers just like the inspired programme objectives presented earlier. Their ME\(r\)s were also very

\(^{46}\) As explained earlier, BS2’s full time MBA experience was not compulsory for entry as opposed to its EMBA. Thus the characteristics of students in the former were typically those without or with less substantial working experience.

\(^{47}\) See Chapter 5 on ‘entry requirements’. Generally the stakeholders preferred for MBA students to have (relatively significant length, type of positions and companies) experience, and from non-business educational background.
specific in their expectations on MBA students like ‘to prepare (the students) to be global leaders... captain’ (MEr01, BS1) or ‘to make (students) become CEO’ (MEr05, BS1). Furthermore, the findings from the MErs and students in IBS did not mention nor show the presence of any use of the MBA as an academic platform in BS1. And as later shown, BS1’s MBA roles as MED were also the clearest in terms of how its lecturers conducted their classes.

The use of MBA for the advancement of academic career was one of the highly debated issues found in the findings. The respondents were divided on whether MBA was suitable or should be opened for people with academic career intentions. One respondent related the issue to the legitimacy of the role of an MBA. As outputs say a lot about a programme, having graduates entering academia instead of becoming practising managers definitely does not sit well with the espoused objectives and original conception of MBA. This scenario could be compared to literature reports in the US that many of its MBA graduates joined financial institutions rather than became practising managers. Furthermore, the high reference of respondents to the original MBA conception / practice in the US suggested their definition of the programme’s legitimacy as an MED platform. Thus if the graduates career does not indicate the programme objective, the respondents too might have difficulty justifying the roles as MErs.

6.3.2 Roles of BSs and Management Educators

This section presents findings on the perceptions of the schools and MErs towards their roles as MBA providers. The findings are discussed in relation to the extent in which they reflected their dual educational-vocational purposes. Findings showed that the schools and MErs perceived their roles as mainly to prepare students for their careers and for industry consumption.

All three schools considered career progress as an important factor in the schools’ tracer studies. A graduate’s career was also seen as an indicator of the schools’ success, i.e. a promotion after MBA was seen as ‘recognition’ of their MBA. BS3 reported that they placed more emphasis on a graduate’s ‘long term career progression’ and not merely on the before-and-after salary differences.
... like Times Higher Education, Financial Times ranking, they looked at salary before and salary after, look at financial value. But in Malaysia it’s difficult because we have sponsored students. So when they got MBA, (the employers) would still want to look at performance. Meaning yes you have the qualification but what can you bring to our organization. Proof, having proven that then only they would be given the incentive. ... (our current measure in tracer study is) salaries. But we didn’t identify how they climb their... how do they progress after a certain time (which) what I think very important. ... --- So meaning that it’s not only the salary difference is important but we are preparing them for career progression. It’s long term career progression. That’s more important, we thought. --- Meaning they are like learning people who can adapt themselves in new environment, who can be innovative enough to make changes to organization. So that students would climb ladders within the organization.

(MEir, Head of MBA of BS3)

Corresponding to the schools’ views, almost all MErs associated their roles in preparing students for career and financial success. The graduate career concern was found to be the most obvious in BS1 where its MErs tended to be more specific and comprehensive with their expectations about their students’ careers, from their position, timeframe, and even down to their car. For instance:

What do you like about teaching MBA?
To make sure that they become CEO. That’s always my objective. I always tell my student, my job is to train you to become CEO. If I see you 10 years time you are still driving Honda, Proton Saga don’t see me... ---
What about those who have graduated, are you happy with their progress?
I met some. I think they are doing quite ok. I’m hoping to see them but I only teaching them 3 years only, so I expect to see them in 4, 5 years time.
'OK’ in terms of?
In terms of what position they are going to hold.

(MEir05, substantial corporate experience, BS1)

Another BS1 respondent further stated that she would be ‘happy’ if her graduates became ‘better’ or more ‘successful’ compared to before they had MBA. Again, a graduate’s success was measured based on career progress.
What made me happy... when they come back to me and say I’m already at another place ... with another position... when they graduated they have to be somebody... Anwar before MBA must become Anwar... after MBA he must be Anwar better (emphasis) than before.

In terms of?

... We have this one student. This one is very (emphasis) young guy and he has not yet reached the age of 30 but he has become... CEO of one of these... GLC... someone like... the top... the highest top manager at that company. And then he is in Dubai. Like that... So you’ll be happy when you heard about this kind of graduates... So that’s an example... those who are good. When you see your students are successful.

(MEr91, BS1)

Another respondent gave a similar analogy referring to students as a ‘product’ which ‘need new repackaging’ through MBA. He believed that MBA graduates ‘must be able to carry (the) image (of) a brand new product with a new brand’ and use it ‘to shine in their workplace’.

To me if you have an MBA you must be a cut above the rest... they have to shine in their workplace. I always emphasize that they are just like a product. Why do they come to do an MBA? Like a product, they need new repackaging. So in other words when they come to do their MBA, it’s repackaging of themselves. They as a product. And when they leave this university, they must be able to carry that image, I’m now a new product, a brand new product with a new brand for example, and I should be able to sell (emphasis) myself, to sell (emphasis) my ideas, my ability and so on so forth.

(MEr06, BS1)

In contrast, while respondents in BS2 and BS3 also expressed concerns about their graduate careers, their expectations and descriptions tended to be less specific about managerial jobs. Instead, they were concerned more about the graduates’ ability to secure ‘good’ or ‘suitable’ jobs/positions without it being specifically a managerial-ranked position.

Some of the (students) who are PTD (i.e. sponsored government officers) they don’t have problem because they already got a job so they just waiting for posting, whatever. The young ones (i.e inexperienced students) depends if they are good, really good (academically), then they get (jobs). The academics (i.e. PU-sponsored, future lecturers) they don’t have problem because sometimes when they come here they already got a job, they are already tutors somewhere. But the ... fresh graduate I worry for them a lot... if they are fresh and not really good (academically) how to compete? ... I always wish them get a... job that is suitable, whatever they want to pursue.

(MEr14, BS3)
... I think I'm very happy when my students come back to me and say they've got a job, good job, good position. Which has been, I've seen that in a couple of situations, over the years I've seen that. That's I think is very gratifying.

(MEIr07, Deputy Director of MBA, BS2)

All respondents perceived that their main roles in MBA were to 'train' graduates who would serve organizational strategic needs. This role was made clear in their opinions about the MBA objectives presented earlier and will also be evident in their other perceptions throughout this chapter. For instance, the word 'train' was frequently used to describe their approaches in MBA teaching which showed the respondents had a clear understanding of their roles, to ensure their graduates were trained to meet the expectations of the industry. The following quotation can be used to show how MBA graduates were seen as successful when they could 'contribute to the company'. Again, career was seen as an indicator of graduate success.

What is your definition of successful MBA graduate?
... Someone who is able to implement what they have learned in class. Someone who are able to be strategic partner in their organization. Someone considered strategic partner by the organization. Someone who is considered by the organization potential leaders in the future, in the company. Someone who is creative and can contribute to the company. For many that will be the type of students that I will envision for the MBA students to be in the future.
So far have all these visions accomplished?
Some student when they went out there they will be promoted. Some of the students will be promoted to the managers, senior managers.

(MEIr10, BS2)

One respondent believed in the utilitarian objective, not only of BSs but universities in general. Quite vocally, he believed that universities must aim to produce 'somebody who is great in life'. Overall analysis of his interview suggests that he defined greatness in relation to the person's career. He further suggested that that schools / universities would only become 'famous' if they produced graduates who managed to have successful careers.

... school must understand, when you are teaching MBA, for that matter in all university or education institution, your objective as a school is to produce CEO, somebody who is great in life (i.e. career).
What do you want to achieve as MBA lecturer?
To see my student become CEO. ... Then only the school become famous (emphasis). If you produce hopeless student how can you become famous? You cannot become famous.

(MEIr05, substantial corporate experience, BS1)
Another respondent believed that universities are ‘expected’ to be utilitarian. He explained that although universities may not be ultimately responsible for a graduate’s job success, they ‘are supposed to equip’ the student appropriately to enable him / her to get a job or become a ‘better officer’ compared to before they had the MBA.

\[\text{I believe the function of university is, university should offer any programme under the sun. Not specifically for people to find jobs. If somebody wants to take medieval history for example, let him take, whether he gets a job that’s not a problem of the university. It’s a place where we give knowledge, where we plant knowledge. ... But it comes the trend now university is responsible for having people to find jobs, how to find jobs. With MBA we are supposed to equip them. Whether they get a job later on and so on so forth, that’s between them and the university or rather the industry or the organization (but) we are supposed to equip them. Those who are on leave, on full pay leave, whatever, we are supposed to strengthen them so that they go back to organization as better officer.}\]

\((ME108, BS2)\)

### 6.3.3 Definition Of Relevance

This section presents findings to show how the schools and MErs defined relevant knowledge to determine which stakeholder(s)’ needs they prioritized in their MBA. As discussed in the literature chapters, the fact that BSs/MBAs were governed by academic and professional models meant that the relevant knowledge should be both rigorous and pragmatic to serve societal and industrial interests. The findings suggest that the respondents seem to define relevance mainly in relation to the pragmatic needs of industry.

The most notable evidence for their pragmatic orientation was observed in the schools’ curriculum development, which was predominantly guided by industry needs. All three schools reported that industry representatives were the main party in their regular curriculum development/review exercises whereby they were invited to ‘give ... idea on how to strengthen the curriculum’, ‘to look into curriculum review’, or ‘to scrutinize the programme and suggest improvement to the programme’. Although academicians (i.e. internally and from other BSs) were involved in the committees, it seemed that industry had the final say. The exercises tended to result in the ‘curriculum ... made tailored to industry’s needs’. As shown below in BS3, in spite of feedback from several parties, its ‘industry’s advisors’ seemed to be the ones who gave the final approval. Interestingly, ideas from the faculty / academicians seemed to be gained only at the beginning and even then their ideas were directed to the industry where ‘they try to imagine what the industry need is’.

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... when we developed the MBA programme, we have a series of discussion within the faculty. Because the faculty, you know, have experience in the industry, they try to imagine what the industry need is. Then they suggest the skills to be incorporated into the programme. And then, not only that we also have a market survey of the programme. And then followed by a focus group by our advisors, industry’s advisors. .... The advisors will discuss about the programme. We present the MBA programme and then the board of advisors will scrutinize the programme and suggest improvement to the programme.

(ME12, Head of MBA in BS3)

Similarly in BS2, the significance of industry needs and involvement in its curriculum is also evident as below.

...even now things like curriculum, things like the structure of the MBA programme, we are very much influenced by what’s going on around us. Right now there’s a lot more requirement for us to incorporate the applied nature or rather subjects that are more relevant to the industry. So we use a lot of people from the industry to help us.

(ME07, Deputy Director MBA, BS2)

The respondents justified their emphasis on industrial relevance as the fulfilment of the expectation and needs of working students who came for practical management knowledge which ‘they can use’ or ‘they can apply immediately in their work’.

(in relation to her preceding comment) Why do you think the MBA programme has to be done in the applied nature?
(our students) do MBA at (managerial) level simply because they want to gain that management knowledge. So we have to provide them with one, theory of course is still relevant, but at the same time they want something that they can use. So we have to link that to the applied nature.

(ME07, Deputy Director MBA, BS2)

Why do you think it should be more practical?
(students) came to BS1 with the high expectations of learning something new. That they can implement into their position. (some students) focus are more to learn new thing that they can apply immediately in their work. So when they come if we give them one whole book to finish in one semester, they will not be impressed. Because they say I can read that without coming to class.

(ME04, BS1)

The perspective was also shared by other MErs. For instance, knowledge was considered relevant, thus should be taught in MBA, if it is ‘current’, ‘practical rather than theoretical’ and ‘being practised in the industry’.

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... you’ve got to be sensitive to what’s going on current event for example on something related to your subject. MBA we are supposed to be more practical rather than very theoretical in our approach.

(MEir08, BS2)

... 'we should spend less on topics which do not really meet what is being practiced in the industry. Some are a bit theoretical. For example like you have a topic on say inventory management, all these... old practices I think we should discard. ... We (teach) some old practices like the EOQ, we still teach but it is not something that companies use anymore.

(MEir11, BS2)

Another respondent reported that MBA should teach subjects that are directly relevant to organizational needs to prepare graduates ‘for the real (working) life’.

All MBA must (emphasis) always have 2 (emphasis) at the end of the day. That the subject must be compulsory. ...It should go very very in depth. One of them is strategic management. The other one is on development of entrepreneurship, ... The reason is simple. When you graduate as an MBA you either become a corporate slave or you become an entrepreneur. So you must be like that. ... And when (students) write their project paper, also must write on 2. One is on corporate strategy, ... because when you come to working life every year when you prepare your budget, what’s the thing you must do? Strategy. And you cannot run away from that. ... And you also must write a paper on how to start a business. That should be your final (emphasis) term paper. To prepare you for the real (emphasis) life.

(MEir05, substantial corporate experience, BS1)

The same respondent further suggested that subjects which had less connection with organizations’ strategic needs as ‘hopeless’ and ‘must not (be) learned’ in MBA. His opinion below also suggested that BSs should teach knowledge that was ‘applicable in real life’ and knowledge that taught ‘how (to) use (staff) to (do) what (a manager) wants’.

Don’t go teach those hopeless subject. You know what the hopeless subject in MBA that we must not learn?
Can you give examples?
Human behaviour: Don’t go study that Herzberg Theory, McGregor Theory, all the theory. Why not?
... study all this thing is only for appreciation (i.e. understanding) only. It’s not applicable in real life (emphasis). ... How to apply? But if you behave like that I know (i.e. the reasons)... I will appreciate your behaviour only. In real (emphasis) life (what’s important is) ability to read your body language. That is very important. How I use (emphasis) you to get what I want.

(MEir05, substantial corporate experience, BS1)
The findings showed that other than getting direct feedback from the industry, MErs’ definition of relevance was often influenced by their own industrial experience, which was especially true for those with substantial working experience.

*I think they have just introduced an elective called Negotiation Skill ... So that one is something new. We felt that it’s a good skill to learn. It’s not compulsory but good to know. Because at the ... because I remember when I was at the corporate sector negotiation skill is very very important.*

*(MEr06, BS1)*

*First when we developed the MBA programme, we have a series of discussion within the faculty. Because the faculty, you know, have experience in the industry, they try to imagine what the industry need is. Then they suggest the skills to be incorporated into the programme.*

*(MEr12, Head of MBA, BS3)*

The MErs’ opinions were found to be notably influenced by foreign, especially American, BS practices. For instance, several MErs reported that they often referred to foreign universities to see ‘what will the curriculum be’, or ‘how they come up with the assignment’, and heavily referenced Harvard Business School cases in their teaching. As shown later, the American MBA practices were also a big influence on the other views of MErs’ toward the research issues.

The findings further suggest that some respondents noted the contradictory characteristics of academic and industry relevance. Knowledge relevant to industry were those that were applicable, how-to techniques, competency-oriented, immediate and visible result-oriented, and contributed to the achievement of organizational objectives. Theoretical, research-oriented knowledge brought less immediate results and were seen as suitable for academic rather than industrial careers. Despite acknowledging the importance of balance in academic and industrial relevance in MBA, the MErs believed that *(academic) rigor ... should not overshadow (practical) relevance* and the reason provided was the objective of MBA, which was to prepare students for industrial careers and industry consumption.

*(practical) relevance is important... Rigour aspect is also important but it should not overshadow the relevance. In a sense that we are not preparing the student... in academic exercise to prepare them for another level academic... for instance expecting them to be lecturers and the like. Or expecting them to become trainers... rigour is related to theoretical foundation, we don’t want to focus too much on the theoretical foundation,“
framework, (until) we forget that industry might not be that interested in development of conceptual framework. Even if you want to develop conceptual framework, you should switch again to how relevance is this conceptual framework to industry's needs. So when we think like that, meaning our projects we will done in such a way which the industry will understand.

(ME09, BS1)

Another respondent also believed that MBAs should be balanced in theoretical and practical content. However, his opinion below seemed to suggest that he too believed an MBA should be inclined towards the latter by making it ‘more competency-oriented’ to ensure transferability of learning to the workplace. Elsewhere in the interview, he justified that MBA should be a practically-inclined programme as that was the reason for its existence, and he believed that going against its intended purpose would ‘defeat its purpose’ and would result in ‘legitimacy problem over the long term’.

If I am given the chance to redesign the MBA programme, I will try to balance the two things. ... there has to be academic content, there are certain things that is not really technique-based, ethics for instance it’s about concepts, ideas and even philosophies. ... But I think there is a need to make it more competency oriented. For instance instead of teaching people organization theory, ... (we should) give the students hands-on experience how to actually do it. The whole idea is when the students go back they are not only having these concepts but they are actually have the skills in terms of how to do some of these. ... So the whole idea is not about ideas and concepts. It’s more actually being able to carry a specific set of skills that can be transferred to workplace.

(ME01, 47, substantial academic experiences in local PUBSs, BS3).

Similar to the above findings, other respondents also suggested that MBA ‘should be a practical course’ or ‘supposed to be vocational orientation’ because it was first designed with that practical orientation in mind.

I think that the MBA course should be more (emphasis) pragmatic like that then you can see the impacts. Because if it is an academically inclined of course it will be successful in imparting new knowledge, if there is any, but in terms of ...effect which you can see immediately on them would be very minimal. MBA should be a practical course isn’t it?

(ME04, BS1)

We supposed to be vocational orientation, isn’t it? Supposed to be that. ... MBA is supposed to be vocational.

(ME09, BS2)

Comparatively, the findings showed that the pragmatic emphasis seemed to be the most obvious in BS1 where curriculum, teaching method and assignments were seen
to be more closely tailored with the needs of industry and practice. BS1’s pragmatic orientation was also noted by the following respondent.

... (BS1’ MBA) is tuned (emphasis) to be more pragmatic. More practical. ... Because (in another university) ... I think it’s ... traditionally tuned as academic subject. Than BS1. So to me BS1 is very practical. Very...the subject, the approach are very practical. They are very pragmatic.

Why is that so?
Because ... the teaching approach, the... liberal perspective of education. Like BS1 is the only institution which allow lecturers not to give exam. I don’t believe in final exam. Because my experience (in another university) they do the same project... but ... their project are ...less... practical than BS1’ students’ project.

Which one do you prefer?
Of course I prefer the BS1 approach. That’s is the real (emphasis) MBA for me.
(MEl04, BS1)

On the contrary, theoretical emphasis seemed to be most evident in BS3. Its respondents tended to mention more about the importance of learning theory. As shown below, the respondent explained how she expected ‘student to master... understand the subject’ and ‘want them to know the theory’. She associated (theoretical) understanding of the subject with enabling of students to retain and apply the learning in their work. Throughout her interview, she repeatedly emphasized how important it was for students to ‘read’ ‘to know more about the subject’.

I always expect the student to master the subject,... mean, you are really interested about the subject and you really want to know about the subject,... the student is to be matured and understand the subject and... able to... should I say...apply the subject in their work life for a long time. I think I’ve failed if the students once they take the exam and close the chapter of the book and they forget, ... I want the student to know the subject. ... I’ve tried my best to instil this in the student ... to create the learning process ... that it will retain in them as much... as possible. Whatever I want them to know the theory.
(MEr15, BS3)

The more theoretical inclinations of BS3 and BS2 could also be observed in their attitudes towards students with business vs. non-business education backgrounds. Unlike BS1, the absence of prior business knowledge among non-business background students was seen as a challenge for students enrolled in their programmes. Conversely, not a single respondent in BS1 raised such concerns. Instead, they viewed a student’s unfamiliarity as making the learning more interesting and motivating. These findings further demonstrated the different degree of theoretical-practical inclinations between MBAs of the different schools.
In conclusion, the above findings showed that respondents’ definitions of relevance (thus what should be taught in MBAs) meant relevance to industry. Some of the relevance vocabularies used to describe knowledge were ‘useful’, ‘applicable’, ‘work related’, ‘pragmatic’, ‘practical’, ‘applied’, ‘real application’, ‘can implement’, ‘can apply immediately in their work’, and ‘can see the impacts’. The findings showed that the schools / MERS considered industry the most important stakeholder whose needs had to be fulfilled by the MBA. The findings also showed that the respondents’ perceptions were to a certain extent influenced by the practice of foreign universities which they gained through the schools and lecturers’ personal references to these schools as well as through their foreign education. The findings also showed that academic relevance seemed to influence their perception less. Although they believed that balancing rigour and practice was important, they seemed to be more supportive towards the practical inclination of the MBA curriculum. In this respect, it may be concluded from the findings that the respondents seemed to have emphasized very much on the utilitarian relevance of their teaching to serve industry needs.

6.3.4 Managers And Competencies

This section looks at how the MERS defined the type of managers / graduates they believed their MBAs should develop. The findings were analyzed in relation to the extent to which their views reflected the functional and social aspects of managerial responsibilities. The findings showed that the respondents viewed managers more in strategic roles for the purpose of attaining organizational objectives. Correspondingly, competencies they mentioned tended to concentrate more on those that could contribute to the roles of managers for the effective serving of organizations.

The findings showed that the importance of competencies in MBA were acknowledged by all three schools and were specifically mentioned by BS1 and BS3, who regarded them as a way of making their programmes more relevant to industry needs.

What are the qualities you want your graduates to have?
..this is very very important. Especially for the last... 10 years or so. There have been a lot of discussion on higher education. Including MBA. And then there was a world-wide study on MBA especially that say you produce something that we don’t really know (want). ... most of them, they can’t even talk. They don’t know how to meet and to get around with
their friends. They cannot. They are like square peg in a round hole. ... Meaning (they) cannot fit yourself in (emphasis) a working society. Those are nothing but a soft skill. So when they go out, we hope or rather... we want them to be strong in the background, business background. (and also) they are able to fit themselves in the group. ... That’s why the structure in our MBA is based on soft skills such as Strategic Management, and all those other courses, hopefully they’ll be better once they come out from here and fit in the work place.

(ME0r02, 64, director of BS1, substantial academic and industrial experience)

I think if you look at the debates in the design of MBA programme, the concern is you know how relevant are these for what industry needs in terms of competencies. I know the AACSB has been struggling on these issues and I know there are 2 initiatives that was started under the AACSB. ... they tried to develop what do you call competency-based curriculum. So rather than not actually...going through the whole process, going through the academic course it should be centers around developing competencies.

(ME0r13, 47, substantial academic experiences in local PUBS, BS3).

When asked about their definition of managers or the types of graduates they believed MBAs should produce, all respondents answered by looking at the associated competencies. Their responses highlighted that good managers were those who were able to make ‘effective’ and ‘systematic’ decisions. Decision making was thus considered the most important managerial competency, with problem-solving regarded mainly the responsibility of managers.

... in working life it’s always to do with decision making. (if a boss cannot decide)...we will say he’s a useless boss. ... Indecisive. ... That’s why he cannot become CEO. Because CEO must be able to make decision.

(ME0r05, substantial corporate experience, BS1)

... (working students) are in the position to solve a lot of problems for the employees. So you should train them in solving problems.

(ME0r10, BS2)

at the MBA level we are preparing those managers... to be in managerial position. Whether we like it or not..., we have to throw them in that situation. ... When you become a manager you have to decide.

(ME0r03, BS1)

In terms of the characteristics of ‘good’ decisions, the respondents emphasized decision-making approaches, for instance ‘know (the company’s) strategic position in relation to the environment’, engaging in ‘holistic thinking’ by looking at problems from various perspectives, ‘making decisions based on facts and figures’, ‘not jump into conclusions’,
'not afraid to take risks', and 'being accountable for the decision'. Some respondents believed that 'there is no such thing as a wrong decision ... (or) right decision'. Instead, they emphasized speed of decision-making for companies to avoid losing money and the 'justification' behind the decision made.

There is no such thing as a wrong decision. There's no such thing as right decision. It's always quick decision and fast decision. Nobody know it's right or wrong. What is more important there must be a decision made. So that why work will go. Work will move. Without decision work cannot move. And we are paying people for nothing.  
(MEir05, substantial corporate experience, BS1)

...it's not whether you doing a right or wrong decision (but) how you justify your decision.  
(MEir03, BS1)

All respondents agreed that case study, the main method in the schools' teaching, was very effective in developing student decision-making skill.

The student must be trained (emphasis) to identify the problems. After that they must be trained (emphasis) to come up with the issues of the problems. This is called the strategic thinking. It's not to understand the case anymore. At the Masters level we are not supposed to understand the case. We are supposed (emphasis) to learn to make decision of the case (emphasis). This how case has been designed. It is a decision focus. At Masters level we only must learn how to do decision. ... Any MBA that are case focus they are always good.... all the top business school of the world is always case based. There is no compromise on that.  
(MEir05, substantial corporate experience, BS1)

I tell you, you can do wonders when you teach using case, you set group and then you let them present. You just listen. ... You leave the teaching to them. They teach themselves through their experience. You add the theory. When there is a problem in the case... sometimes there is a fall in sales... they don't know why. They will ask me why ... that's the theory. ... What they know is their experience. So we ask those in the case. Beautiful you know, use case. A lot of discussion, presentation and of course assignment.  
(MEir02, 64, director of BS1, substantial academic and industrial experience)

... somehow deep in my heart I want (my students) to be creative. I want them to be creative problem solver. That’s why we take the pain you know to use case. --- I had the chance to be creative ... through the case method. ... one thing about the case method ... sometimes it can be problematic because we don’t know what we learn. ... Because it is a processual thing, ... you just have to figure out yourself whether (something) is right or wrong. But how are you going to confirm that your assumption is actually right? ... But what I find is that my mind is free to accept new things (although I cannot verify that). So I had that opportunity (learning through case) before. So I like my students to have that opportunity also. To have (similar kind of) thinking. ... --- ... But we want their horizon to
be broader specifically. So I don’t have to ‘teach’ them, I always emphasize that in this class you always take control of your own learning.

(MEr14, BS3)

The findings showed noticeable emphasis on building communication competency of students. The aspects of communication they emphasized include confidence, talking based on evidence, thought organization, logical and in-depth arguments, and appropriate speech to top superiors and lower level subordinates. Evidence shows that MErs in BS3 and BS2 seemed to place more emphasis on building communication confidence of students. This concern was especially applicable to fresh graduates who some respondents described ‘are not able to communicate very well .. in English’, ‘passive’ and ‘shy’ in class.

In terms of competencies, what do you want your students to have? One I would say especially for fresh graduates is their confidence level. Many of our fresh graduates they are not able to communicate very well especially in English. All our courses are conducted in English. They must have that communication ability. They must be able to be eloquent in presenting their ideas. That is something that, for all the subjects we train our students to do that. Because you’ve got class presentations for all, for all the subjects. So they must, at the end of the programme, hopefully the students have reached that level where they can present their ideas well, they can be a good oral presenter, they can also structure their thoughts in the sense that, because we want train them as managers in the first place. So they must be able to structure their thoughts very well so that they can convince others. So that’s the main thing we try to train our students.

(MEr97, Deputy Director MBA, BS2)

(some) students very passive, quite shy to ... voice out some of their opinions. I can see a person who is very passive, don’t talk much after they finished my class at least he gained the confidence to talk. ... some of the students very shy, I say you must voice out because in your future career development if you have idea you must convey your idea .... Otherwise you are very talented but nobody know’.

(MEr77, 39, marketing lecturer, BS3)

Overall, the above findings suggest that the perception of the schools and MErs regarding managerial roles and competencies seem to focus on the functional aspect of managerial jobs in relation to organization needs. To this point, evidence of respondents’ attitudes towards the social aspect of managerial responsibilities was still unfounded. The only respondent that emphasized the functional and ethical responsibilities of managers happened to be the lecturer teaching the subject on ethics as shown below.
What do you hope that the students learn?
My hope ... because they are going to be managers, ... leaders so when they are doing something, when they make decisions, they take into consideration this ethical aspect. Don’t (consider) only the profits, profit, profit. And how you treat people. How you treat your subordinates, customers for example, and then your society how you treat them. Environment. In term of decision making. That is what I want them to consider. That’s one of the important things to be considered when they do decision making. It’s not just profit.

(MEr16, BS3)

Given that her subject was ethics, it is possible that she might have orientated her views to reflect her subject rather than her beliefs. Indeed, the ethical emphasis was absent when she spoke about another subject she taught. This showed that the respondent’s perspectives and her actual roles in MBA could have been subject-dependent.

To further investigate, findings of MErs’ perceptions on ethics are presented next to examine the extent to which they actually considered the social aspect of managerial responsibilities in their MBA teaching.

6.3.5 Attitudes Towards Ethics

The above findings have so far suggested utilitarian-inclined MBA perspectives amongst the schools and the MErs. To confirm this finding, the respondents were asked about their attitude towards managerial ethics to determine the extent to which they had considered the interests of other MBA stakeholders in their teaching. The findings were analyzed in relation to the social-utilitarian objectives of MBA.

Out of the three schools only BS3 had an ethics course in its MBA curriculum. Even then, it existed as part of business laws thus carried only 50% emphasis. The lecturer of the ethics component admitted that the duration and focus of ethics in the subject was ‘not enough’ to effectively inculcate ethical awareness in students.

(Ethics is) not enough. Of course it’s not enough. Something which is often abstract. Abstract. Ethics is abstract. It is very subjective. (Impossible to) teach in 7 weeks.

(MEr16, BS3)
The findings further showed that ethical inculcation by individual lecturers were also ‘not extensively covered’. Only some lecturers included ethics in their subjects and even then not all subjects had the ethical component.

... we don't incorporate too much of (ethics) in our curriculum or our syllabus yet. We have like one, two subjects ... that incorporate ethical issues. But I think the other programmes although they have but it is not extensively covered.

(ME1007, Deputy Director MBA, BS2)

Ethical awareness actually we don't really touch much about it even in the programme. Subject with such content is probably marketing management, maybe it has a little bit on ethics. So each of the subject will cover a little bit on ethical aspect, social responsibility.

(ME1003, BS1)

Despite acknowledging the significance of the subject, some lecturers seemed reluctant to include it in their class, stating that ethics ‘is not the core content’, suggesting that it should be perceived as a stand-alone subject rather than embedded in every subject / discipline.

I don't know about other subject but I teach marketing, but of course when you teach that is not the core content, you just integrated one of the contents. So you cannot spend all the 14 weeks talk about ethics because my class is not ethics class. But I will talk about ethics here and there to integrate into my content. But of course (that) ... is not so significant (proportionate) compare to the key content. ... But as far as I'm concerned, I will tell them even though it's not my key content. But I will integrate it here and there to let them aware.

(ME1017, 39, marketing lecturer, BS3)

In my class, I don't really emphasize (ethics). Because our cases is more of managing the technology, we don't discuss much about social responsibility etc. In managing technology there will be social responsibility aspect but it is not really emphasized. Because we want the student to understand, at the moment we want the student to grab the concept of managing technology on... how to manage technology.

(ME1003, BS1)

When asked about their role in ethical inculcation, respondents in BS3 seemed to conveniently push the responsibility to the ethics course.

What do you think about ethics in MBA programme?
Ethics, very important. That was brought up by our... industry) advisors. They said ethics is very important. Therefore we have one specific core on ethics and law.

(ME1003, BS3)
One of the claims about the MBA programme in the US is that it cultivates unethical managers and that its curriculum emphasizes more organizational profit maximization. What do you think? That’s why... I mean one of the subject is ethical. You know Business Ethics?
(ME17, 39, marketing lecturer, BS3)

(in reference to her earlier views) So in general do you think that the MBA here is balanced in these two aspects?
In a way yeah.
In what way?
In a way. Meaning that we have business ethics. ... business ethics subject is there.
(ME15, BS3)

The above opinions suggest that not only did the respondents feel satisfied with the adequacy and effectiveness of the subject, their responses also seemed to imply that they believed educating students about their social responsibilities as future managers is not be the responsibility of every MEr nor the emphasis of every MBA subject.

Some MErs’ definitions of ethics were surprisingly narrow. They suggested that ethics was company/industry-defined and concerned with organizations / industry stakeholders’ interests. As seen below, the respondents considered unethical something which is ‘not the norm ... policies ... values of the company’, and ethical practice is ‘it is fair to ... supplier, organization and (employees)’.

You do something which is not the norm of the company, is unethical. Not the policies of the company. ... Usually a company have certain norms, certain values that you need to follow in the company, ... not following ... the norms and the values that company underline, so being unethical. Not been following certain behaviours, positive behaviours that the company encourage people to do. You tend not to follow that positive behaviours and then you’re being unethical.
(ME10, BS2)

Ethical managers I think it is more towards fair practices. What is fair for you should be fair for other people. What is unfair for you should be unfair for other people. ... Good for you but may not be good for the company..... So when we talk about this fair practices, it may be fair to one party may not be fair to another party.
Can you define ‘another party’?
Can be the company, can be the supplier, can be own organization, can be other organization. ... We may have 3 parties – supplier, organization and you (own organization). ... If it is fair to all three then it becomes ethical practice. ... But the line is very grey. ... (Ethics) is subjective (depending on company’s practices).
(ME11, BS2)
Both views above looked at ethics from the interest of organizations. If such principles guided the respondents’ teaching, students might have been taught to fulfil their ethical responsibility by adhering to their employers’ standards. The opinions implied that the students were perhaps not taught to be critical, to question organizational practices and to look at the consequences of employees’ and companies’ actions to the public.

There were only two respondents that notably defined ethics more broadly, touching on the responsibility of managers to employers, employees and the public. However, one of them was the ethics lecturer while the other unfortunately did not include the topic in his class despite acknowledging the importance of ethical responsibilities of managers as shown below.

_**Ethics in MBA... is very important. ... There are many cases now about ethics, Arthur Anderson, etc...**_

*Do you emphasize that in your class?*

*In my class I did not emphasize much. ...*

*What is your definition of ethical decision?*

*Ethical decision... a decision which will not oppress another party.*

*Examples of party?*

*Another organization, or end consumer... as long as you are not... make end consumer suffer for self achievement, self attainment of profit for organization.*

_(MEr03, BS1)_

To ascertain the respondents’ roles in educating their students in managerial ethics, they were informed about literature claims that MBAs cultivate unethical managers allegedly due to its utilitarian-biased curriculum. The subsequent findings suggest that certain respondents seemed less passionate and quickly washed their hands of the whole issue. Some respondents were confident that they have done enough to create ethical awareness in their teaching despite the evidence above says the opposite. They stressed that ethics was personality-related and to change someone’s personality in the period of a short programme was impossible. They also believed that unethical conduct was not their responsibility but products of immoral individuals and organizations.
... it is easy to blame somebody but it’s not really easy to change people’s behavior. We can try to change by having ethics within our programme but there is no assurance that they’ll change in their behavior.

What you can do as management educator? We stress in all subjects, in all our learning experience in PU3 to talk about ethics. But that’s all we can do.

(MEr12, Head of MBA, BS3)

Do you inculcate (ethics)?
Inculcate that we have to ask organizations for that. Whether they inculcate that or not. But we encourage them the importance of ethics. We talk ethics from the business point of view.

---

Do you agree about the debate that MBA is partly responsible in developing unethical managers?
No no I don’t agree with that. What developed unethical manager is... maybe that organization itself... maybe to be blamed. And maybe that person strategy, or his own attitude. ... Don’t blame it on MBA... blamed on people’s attitude. ... You may use MBA as platform so on so forth. If you are attitude is like that then don’t blame MBA.

(MEr08, BS2)

There is a debate saying that MBA is partly responsible for producing unethical managers. What do you think?
(laugh) No, no. I think in our programme we have topic in HRM specifically on ethical behaviour, on ethics. So we always stress to the students that whatever area that you are in there should be ethics. ... in every of the classes we need to stress that in whatever you do if it’s conflict with whatever norms you must uphold these ethical behaviours. Ethical is very important. So whatever they do outside the classroom or whatever they do in the workplace this beyond our control. But we have always stress the important of having ethical behaviour in your career, in your professional undertakings.

(MEr10, BS2)

... MBA programme given this one or maximum 2 years cannot undo (emphasis) whatever evil that’s inherit in the students. That fellow not just during the MBA programme, probably they learned even before that, their upbringing, from their peers, from the organizations. ... (theories of unethical behaviour says) regardless where you get your MBA, it can happen. So if you are looking at in terms of... (MBA) may have a role in terms of confirming whatever bias someone may has towards cheating, towards lying, but ... I wouldn’t agree to in saying that it is a deliberate product of MBA curriculum these people like that.

(MEr13, 47, substantial academic experiences in local PUBSs, BS3).

Believing that ethical conduct was not their responsibility, some felt expecting universities to develop the character of students was just another unrealistic demand to place on universities.
There’s a certain limit that we can teach a person ... After that up to the person itself. ... Of course people would say the graduate of (certain university) then it will be a bit back to our university, but we will absolve ourselves from the blame. At the end of the day don’t blame us. Blame this person as an individual. Blame this organization for not being very strict. Or blame the organization for not observing ethics. ... People will always say that … responsibility of lecturer, responsibility of university, and so on. No. No, no, no. For example now you see the industry is everything is thrown back to university. They expect us to come up with graduates and so on and so forth. And the graduate can work on the word ‘go’, the first day itself. As though the industry are observing themselves from the orientation period, from the induction period and so on and so forth. Only a certain limit that we can teach. After that it’s between the individual and the industry.

( MEr08, BS2 )

Again as I always point to that the problem in this country is that we always want the university to solve problems. Student don’t have leadership skill, student cannot speak English, student don’t have interpersonal skill,... all these they expect university to solve. All these things are the product of what, primary secondary school education. They expect university to do everything. That’s why our university education become “rojak” (emphasize). You want to create entrepreneurial drive ... all to be solved within 3 to 4 years that you have. So what they have produced? People became even more confused by the time they graduated from university because they don’t know what they’re supposed to do.

( MEr13, 47, substantial academic experiences in local PUBS, BS3 )

The purpose of presenting these findings is not to deny that ethical conduct may be largely personally in-built, which by implication limits the influence of MErs on student behaviour. The research is more interested in discovering the attitudes of MErs regarding the issues in order to analyze their utilitarian-educational roles. As shown in earlier findings, some respondents were quite unaware and unenthusiastic about their capability of inculcating ethical awareness in their students. As also mentioned, the findings have shown that the roles of MErs in MBA in other aspects were found to be quite biased towards utilitarian objectives. It is felt that without this passion and realization, carrying out a more educational role to produce a balanced MBA would be quite difficult. The significance of a lecturer’s role in bestowing ethics was brought up by several respondents. While some respondents acknowledged ethics as largely personally-determined and difficult to change, they admitted that it was not impossible and that more should be done to inculcate ethics in their MBA students, as below.

48 A Malay word which may mean ‘smorgasbord’.
(referring to the debate blaming BSs) We are equally guilty of that because we don’t incorporate that much of (ethics) as well. In fact we don’t start out with saying we must have, we must now develop managers who are not only good decision makers, have good management skills but are also ethically, they’ve got ethics in their... We don’t have that part. We are equally guilty in that sense like I said although we are aware most of the things, we incorporate in terms of ethics are just to expose them, just to say it’s important. But how to go about becoming an ethically inclined managers we don’t put a lot of emphasis in our curriculum. So you are right there’s a lot more that kind of awareness but the implementations is not fully yet, that is not in our programmes.

(ME1597, Deputy Director MBA, BS2)

(referring to the debate) I kind of agree on that aspect because most.. I don’t know if most lecturers when they didn’t touch on ethics at all, ... maybe could produce student who when they make decisions then ethics become secondary although in my opinion, ethics go along, together with your decision making ability. But like you mentioned about the debate, when we didn’t touch specifically on ethics to the students meaning that they would always look at profit, or performance, very performance oriented which doesn’t come hand in hand with ethics aspect. Then we will see that people will think of Machiavellianism will emerge, we will produce Machiavellian kind of managers. Maybe based on the argument maybe the ethical aspects could be well introduce or given emphasis in MBA programme. Because (in Malaysia) we already have a lot of problems I think, not necessary in US only, here also maybe it’s time to emphasize on ethics.

(ME1593, BS1)

(referring to the debate) Yeah, maybe. ... But...ethical if you ask me it’s behavioural. ... You are either behaviourally ethical or you are behaviourally unethical. It’s not situational. --- ... we wanted to do more of that (ethical inculcation) actually ... (at the moment) ... maybe is not really in a structured this. Not really very rigorously, designing our programme, putting in all the ethical issues in, not to that level yet. --- ... I really hope that we can do something to address this issue. --- ... But of course, using the argument that ethical is behavioural, well... ...so we just have to make them aware.

(ME1514, BS3)

(To change students’ perspectives on ethics is) Difficult but it is not impossible. Difficult because everybody bring their own behaviour, they already have their own attitude, values, their own culture. Especially you’re teaching (quite older) students ... they are already make up their mind, they already have their own belief, their own everything. But it is not impossible (to influence them).

(ME1515, BS3)

Like I said when you said MBA it’s not that you want to change people. But you want to instil the values so that after this if they want to make decision, they will consider that (ethical) aspect. If before this they don’t consider but they have, after this they have, the criteria that they must consider. It’s not just profit.

(ME1516, BS3)

As demonstrated above, respondents emphasized that the role of lecturers was to make students aware about the obligations of managers not only to organizations but
to society as well. The respondent below agreed, stating that lecturers ‘have to have that realization (about ethics importance) first’ before they can positively influence students.

_The only way is to throw them something to wake them up. ... for you to do that (lecture) have to attract the interest, have to show that you are empowered in the subject. You have to gain their respect, look up upon you, then only you can change them. If you cannot do that, they don’t bother, ... --- Recognized you. Respect in you first. Then only you can impart this on them. ... --- Lecturer have to have that realization first in order to do that to the students isn’t it?_ (ME16, B53)

### 6.4 Conclusions

The research was conducted with the aim of exploring the views of three main ME/MBA stakeholders (i.e. faculties, industries and students) on the adequacy of PU MBA provisions in Malaysia. This chapter presents findings from three selected BSs and their MErs, considered one of the three important MBA stakeholders covered in the research. The practices and perceptions of respondents were explored to answer four research questions, namely their perception towards: 1) the roles of MBAs; 2) their roles as MBA providers; 3) what is relevant and should thus be taught in MBA; 4) the types of managers and competencies MBAs should develop; and 5) their concerns towards social responsibility issue. Their views were discussed in relation to the extent in which they reflected the dual academic-professional, training-education and utilitarian-educational purposes expected in an MBA programme.

Overall findings suggest that the perceptions and practices of the schools and their MErs in MBA to a different degree seems to be utilitarian-inclined. First, their mode of operation / management of schools seemed to be inclined towards that of a business. Secondly, they perceived of their roles as MBA providers more like ‘trainers’ preparing students for career progression and industry consumption. Thirdly, their definition of relevance seemed quite heavily oriented towards pragmatic relevance as according to industry needs, less on academic relevance. In other words, they believed that MBAs should be practical-oriented rather than theory-oriented. Fourthly, their idea of the types of managers the programme should develop were inclined more towards their economic roles for the fulfilment of strategic objectives of their organizations, and the competencies emphasized / developed in MBA were more on competencies relevant to effective performance to better serve organizational
objectives. The utilitarian orientation of their perspectives was further verified by their attitude towards managerial ethics, where the findings demonstrated not only a lack of effort in educating students about social responsibility but also a lack of awareness about the problems of an imbalanced MBA education. Some respondents considered the grooming of students into strategic agents of organizations and the principle of profit-maximization that commonly guides MBA/ME curriculums as ‘normal’.

There is also a debate that the way MBA programmes are implemented or the way curriculums are structured is more towards profit maximization of companies. What do you think?

That one is normal, normal. It’s normal. That would be the goal of the companies to get as much profit as possible from the employees. So for me that is normal. (MEr10, BS2)

Comparatively, the utilitarian-education orientation of the schools may be roughly mapped on a continuum as below.

Utilitarian                      Academic

BS1  BS3, BS2

Although the inclinations of the schools are currently at different stages, the findings suggest that they would probably all move toward the same direction, and the speed at which they get there might depend on certain factors as described in the final chapter.

This chapter has presented the findings from the first MBA stakeholder, i.e. BSs and their MErs. The next chapter will present the findings from the second MBA stakeholder, i.e. industries.
CHAPTER 7
FINDINGS: PERCEPTIONS OF INDUSTRIES
7.1 Introduction

The research aimed to explore the views of three main MBA stakeholders (i.e. faculties, industries and students) on the adequacy of PU MBA provisions in Malaysia. This chapter presents the findings from the industries. The data is based on interviews conducted with HR representatives from five companies, chosen based on the criteria described in the Methodology chapter. Backgrounds of the companies and their representatives are described in Appendix C. The findings here are to answer research questions 2 to 6, i.e. their perceptions of the roles of MBA; roles of BSs/MErs and/or universities; definitions of relevance; roles of managers and associated competencies; and concerns about the social responsibility of managers and their education. The findings were examined in relation to the utilitarian-educational purposes of MBAs / BSs.

7.2 Companies’ Approaches to MD

The findings showed that not all companies considered the traditional MBA a significant method in their MD initiative. Company 4 estimated that although over 30% of their executive and manager groups had MBAs ‘they come in probably some of them already have MBA ... some who are doing it while they are working’. This suggests that pursuing a MBA was more of an individual than company initiative. Whereas, Company 1 estimated that from the 480 managers with masters degrees only 25% were MBA holders. The lack of significance of the MBA was clearly mentioned below:

How significant is MBA to your company?
Not really.
Not really?
Not really because the MBA is not the only place we get our leaders. Not really that significant.

(Director of HCD, Company 1 - construction & infrastructure conglomerate)

The significance of MBAs was more evident in Company 5. During the interview they were collaborating with a local PU about MBAs to provide business knowledge to their non-business background staff to prepare them for managerial roles.
So they all get the (business) exposure (received in MBA). ... after they graduated, they can be put as operation manager (OM). Now we already interviewed them. I think half of them already become OM. ... So far even before finished study I already appointed a few to be general manager (GM)... 

(GM of HR, Company 5 - healthcare provider)

As a note, Company 2 had had similar MBA collaborations in the past but there had not been another one since.

The findings showed that the companies regarded the MBA like any other masters programmes and granted scholarships to qualified staff to pursue education programmes not necessarily in MBAs. For instance:

(our scholarship applications) we open, because we have our scholarship unit. ... It is actually the aspiration of the company to sponsor staff to further study doesn’t matter Masters or diploma or degree or any level, not necessarily MBA.

(Manager Talent Development, Company 3 - Telecommunication provider)

Nevertheless, MBA was reportedly the ‘most popular programme’ for scholarship applications.

But (MBA) is the most popular, it is the most popular programme when staff apply for CEP (continuing education programme) the 70% (company scholarship). If MBA about 60%.

(Manager of HCD, Company 1 - construction & infrastructure conglomerate)

The findings showed that the more common way for them to develop their managers was through professional MD or other types of generic MBA programmes⁴⁹. All five companies interviewed happened to be GLCs⁵⁰. Being GLCs, their operations (thus includes HRD initiatives) were designed to support the government’s agenda.

Like now the government is pursuing innovation economy. So our next programme probably will be based on that innovation economy.

So it depends on the government’s agenda?

Yes.

(GM of HR, Company 4 - Cooperative Financial Institution)

⁴⁹ Like Masters in Leadership and Masters in Practising Managers.

⁵⁰ Government-Linked Companies.
Being GLCs, the companies’ MD initiatives (especially for top managers) are regulated by Khazanah Nasional\(^5\). Khazanah’s scope includes producing a general competency framework to guide individual company competency frameworks of GLCs, conducting ‘Leadership Gap’ across GLCs to determine MD programmes for their future leaders, promoting various synergy efforts among GLCs like assigning specific programmes which they should provide to others to avoid redundancy and waste of resources.

What Khazanah has done so far on development, they have identified which company to do what kind of training. So that not everybody, every companies provide the same training.

But the trainings are open to all GLCs?

Yet. So in the end they have come up with this training manual, or training calendar like this (showing a training calendar booklet). ... So anybody from other GLCs companies who wanted to attend just contact. ... (thus the trainings) don’t overlap. All different.

---... We (GLCs) all follow this ... Leadership Gap (framework) across GLC, ... So each GLC has their own responsibility to answer to Khazanah. ... So our competency framework is also similar to this.

(Manager Talent Development, Company 3 – Telecommunication provider)

Khazanah’s control over GLCs explains a lot about the benchmarking and referral practices among the researched companies. Some of the examples are invitations to participate in MD programmes (i.e. Company 2, Company 5) and development of talents through temporary assignments in other GLCs (i.e. Company 2). The referral practice of GLCs was also seen in the selection of programme providers as shown below.

How did you find out about the American Management Association?

... (University of Northumbria) They have done with (Company 1). Company 1 and us is GLC so we got the news through Khazanah and whatnot so they came to see us, so they also sold the ideas of what they have done in Company 1. We’ve got impressed so we bought the idea and we bought the programme. ----- we got this recommendations, good recommendations from those who have done it especially in this case, Company 1, so we just want to give it a shot.

(Manager Talent Development, Company 3 – Telecommunication provider)

\(^5\) The investment arm of the Malaysian government in charge of all GLCs.
The findings also showed that sending managers for MD programmes offered by ‘reputable’ and ‘renowned’ universities (particularly American-based programmes and speakers) was a common practice in line with Khazanah’s aspiration.

... for talents we actually go for big names, big institutions which we think can really develop our talents. Not only the aspiration of the company but also Khazanah.

What is Khazanah’s aspiration?
I think so because like Khazanah’s initiative they work together with Stanford University, Harvard, Imperial College, with Cambridge or Oxford either one or both, so they work together with these universities to recognize talents from GLCs to undergo Masters and PhD programmes. So it is, not to say a norm, but it is being practiced in GLCs. I think so. That our talents go to reputable institutions. Ivy League universities. It’s not written but it is a practice.

(Manager Talent Development, Company 3 – Telecommunication provider)

As the shown above, they went for ‘big names, big institutions’ because they ‘think (they) can really develop (their) talents’. University ranking was an important reference when selecting the programmes ‘otherwise the costs won’t be justified’ (Company 3) and, for instance, only those which ranked at least ‘top 100’ or ‘top 50’ were chosen. Strong university name and ranking performance were seen as guarantees that their MD programmes would be delivered by ‘people ... of high quality’.

We don’t actually look at the university. We look at the package. Warwick, Warwick. AMA, AMA. They come with the names and then the ranking as well. We know the ranking. So having known the ranking, having known the status we don’t really look much into the details aspects of who are the trainers because we believe these people are those really bring that institution into that ranking. So we can safely said that these people are of high quality.

(Manager Talent Development, Company 3 – Telecommunication provider)

Altogether the above findings suggest that the companies seem to favour generic ME programmes to develop their managers. Traditional MBAs were shown to be more individual staff initiatives. The findings also suggest that the companies had very high regard for foreign ME providers because of their international reputations. Their perspectives of the research issues continues below.

7.3 Roles of BSs

To explore the views of companies on the roles of BSs, their attitudes toward the foreign programme providers above were further analyzed. The findings showed that
the companies seemed to view their relationships with the providers as business ventures. Three companies actually used the terms ‘sell/sold’ or ‘bought’ suggesting that they may have perceived them as business dealings.

(BS1) want to sell one scheme, Master programme...

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

(on how they learned about Northumbria) They have done with (Company 1). (Company 1 and Company 3) is GLC so we got the news through Khaganab and whatnot so they came to see us, so they also sold the ideas of what they have done in Company 1.. We’ve got impressed so we bought the idea and we bought the programme.

(Manager Talent Development, Company 3 – Telecommunication provider)

(on their meeting with Northumbria about their programme proposal) ... They came. They wanted to sell their programme ...

(Director of HCD, Company 1 - construction & infrastructure conglomerate)

The findings also showed that the companies seemed to view BSs as ‘business’ partners. The word ‘partner’ was specifically used by Company 2.

For Executive MBA we actually engaged University Malaya, to be the partner. Basically the partnership is that the university will be responsible for all the academic programmes. We are more or less just the sponsor, getting the people to come for the programme, to provide the venue, the fees, whatever to assist the students.

(Senior Manager Talent Development, Company 2 – Energy provider)

The companies only wanted to be linked with providers that had strong brand names. It seemed like part of corporate image exercise as the following respondent said ‘it’s all about leveraging’.

... we want your Masters, your PhD to come from universities which we can you know.. somebody say “hey this is MBA Warwick”, wahl (impressed) You feel that, you know. Masters of Economics from Bristol, wahl (impressed) We feel. We don’t want, with due respect, err... Hertfordshire or East London or .. because these universities are coming up, they haven’t reached there yet. People don’t know them yet. Northumbria, people don’t know yet. These are old polys that became universities. They have their own strengths because they are technically-inclined and what not, but they have not reached the level that we want link with them. Because it’s all about leveraging.

(Director of HCD, Company 1 - construction & infrastructure conglomerate)
The sentiment to link universities with their reputations also originated from the staff and this had given more pressure to the company in ‘reassessing’ their relationship with universities they felt ‘don’t really have the name’.

(referencing their MSc collaboration with Northumbria) ... some of our people who did it they finished the 6 (modules). They say I don’t want (the paper qualification), “who’s Northumbria?”. Ha there are some quite arrogant, “I graduated from UCL, I graduated from Imperial”. Northumbria? Never heard. So they do all the six, they go off, they don’t want to do the last one. Which is ok with us because the Northumbria certificate or diploma or Master is icing on the cake, we don’t need it. But if you want you pay Northumbria yourself.

Just for the name?
They don’t really have the ‘name’. I’m not very... that’s why I said I’m reassessing it.

(Director of HCD, Company 1 - construction & infrastructure conglomerate)

The findings suggest that the perceived business-like relationship was reciprocated by the BSs. The providers seemed to be quite aggressive in marketing their programmes to the companies, and marketing by highlighting American ideas and practices proved to be a powerful selling strategy, as one company stated:

... they (AMA) come from US and what they have been telling us is that they will be teaching our talents based on Harvard methodology and these people will gain access to Harvard library. ... And they will be teaching our talents based on Jack Welch’s principles. So bulk of their marketing is more on success stories of American management guru. So when we see big names we feel ok, sounds good, sounds good. And then we look at the modules and after all this is very modular. So we kind of impressed.

(Manager Talent Development, Company 3 – Telecommunication provider)

While more famous institutions may have less difficulty attracting participants, foreign providers with less stronger reputations had to be more creative in their marketing efforts as illustrated below.

Why did you choose (to collaborate with) that (UK) university?
We didn’t.
Sorry?
We didn’t. They came. They wanted to sell their programme and then we said we don’t need your programme because we’ve got our own programme. And they look at the programme they say, “oh my God, this is something new”, you know. But it is something very unique because we really want this programme to benefit our people. So they said why don’t we do this, we become your quality controller, ok, so we whoever we choose to train us within the 6 modules, they will assess. Alright. And if you qualify for a certain standard, university standard, then they will give us the certificate, the diploma and the Master.

(Director of HCD, Company 1 - construction & infrastructure conglomerate)
The findings showed that the companies seemed to have had quite significant influence over the actions of the providers. The Company 1-Northumbria programme seemed to be led more by Company 1’s needs than Northumbria’s academic influence. Company 1 claimed that about 90% of the programme input / modules were set by the company, whereas only the remaining 10% came from the University of Northumbria to look at the ‘quality control’ and to ensure that the curriculum followed ‘certain university standards’ for the fulfilment of relevant qualifications. And as shown in the above quotation, the school seemed to have less qualms about changing their original proposition to suit the needs of companies, although that seemed to have resulted in a decrease of their academic input. Similarly, the AMA-Northumbria programme seemed to be led by AMA\textsuperscript{52} and as AMA is a professional training organization, their inclination towards a practical programme was to be expected. Whereas in Company 5-BS1 MBA programme, there were just too many parties involved in the design of the curriculum, which suggests that the programme was driven more by industries than academics\textsuperscript{55}.

Given the huge amounts of input into programmes by industries, there is a concern as to whether universities are actually able (or want) to influence the programmes to meet their educational expectations. In this kind of arrangement, the role of universities as ‘academic quality controller’ should not only be on the fulfilment of technical matters like credit hours requirements for qualification conferment but ensuring that the programmes, while customizing them to the needs of industries, also meet their ‘educational’ purpose, that is to protect the interests of other stakeholders.

However, the evidence suggests that some universities to a certain extent, did not really seem to mind that they would not have much academic input in the

\textsuperscript{52} The ‘whole programme’ was reportedly fully run and delivered by AMA. Company 3 reported that Northumbria was only brought in because of the inability of AMA to award the Masters ‘since (AMA) are not academic based institution’.

\textsuperscript{55} Company 5 claimed that the programme ‘uses scheme like Henley management’. The programme’s conceptualization work, curriculum input and teaching staff seemed to be led and derived more from industries than the university. The role of BS1 was described as more ‘on the academic’. Even the teaching staff were claimed not to be staff of BS1 but ‘practitioners outside’. The programme contents, as findings show, had indeed focused primarily on the utilitarian needs of industries.
collaborative programmes. This may be seen for instance in the case of Northumbria, whose alleged action in approaching the company with their programme but apparently ending up accepting the company’s modules almost in its entirety, had no problem stamping their university seal on the degree. Furthermore, the actions of other universities in teaming up with practitioner-based, professional providers created a situation whereby these universities had the excuse, or freedom, to produce utilitarian programmes (as a result of their partnership with non-academic institutions) while at the same time providing them the convenience of using their ‘academic status’ to confer ‘academic’ degrees (a factor that was shown as a selling point to market a programme). This observation was actually mentioned by Company 2, who described it as common, i.e. ‘many organizations are doing now ... they throw out some management development programmes and finally they called it this is Masters in whatever.’ He further pointed out that the companies had no problem in finding universities who were willing to give their academic stamping on companies’ custom-made programmes.

_We do run mini MBAs. It’s something like the MD programme which we have those days. Practically you learn the same thing but it’s more in the compressed manner and more of customization which many organizations are doing now. They throw out some management development programmes and finally they just called it this is Masters in whatever. And some universities give them acknowledgement._

*(Senior Manager Talent Development, Company 2 – Energy provider)*

This issue reflects the power of industry in influencing BS inclinations. The schools viewed MD as a cash cow and did not hesitate to change their programmes and roles to suit the industries in order to secure corporate clients. For local providers, the pressure to conform to industry needs was probably greater because they had to compete with foreign providers, which as the findings showed were sometimes much more preferred by the companies. Findings from the schools described in the last chapter have shown the difficulty of getting opportunities to offer programme to corporate clients. Those that managed to do so tended to rely heavily on their contacts. Collaboration with foreign universities was found to be a way of securing corporate clients although this arrangement tended to result in minute involvement of the local universities. As illustrated by Company 3 below, the curriculum of its Warwick-BSI MSc programme was set up and delivered mostly by Warwick while BSI only taught one subject.
What is BS1’s role in the programme? Do they actually teach?
Only one module, Operational Research. The rest is from Warwick.
(Manager Talent Development, Company 3 – Telecommunication provider)

Furthermore, it seemed that in order to appeal to the companies, the local universities had to follow their foreign counterparts. The companies mentioned how they had wanted a utilitarian programme and that foreign providers could provide it. Foreign providers may therefore have had some influence in the utilitarian inclination of local programmes. If they did not do as such, local providers would just not be able to compete with foreign providers. If they didn’t follow industry needs, the schools would not be popular.

Therefore given such little involvement, the extent of influence and control that these universities had on the programmes to ensure they were utilitarian-educationally balanced is highly questionable. This in turn raises the question of whether the managers in these programmes had been holistically developed. The findings also suggest that perhaps universities are slowly losing ownership of knowledge as well as academic freedoms and powers. It seems that the industries are the ones holding the reins, pushing their utilitarian agenda. Without a stake, it would not be far-fetched to believe Drucker’s prediction that universities would someday become ‘relies’ (Drucker, 1997 in Friga et al, 2003:233). With the trends of BSs progressing at the current rate, this prediction might become reality sooner than expected.

7.4 Roles of MBA

The findings showed that the companies acknowledged the role of the MBA as the MD platform. MBAs were considered particularly helpful in providing business and management knowledge to staff of non-business background.

Of course when we give (GM position to) these people (non-business background) they need to have good accountant backup. ... So we train them their backup has to be important. ... like the Master programme UTM it’s specific (in giving all business knowledge). So they all can get the exposure. After graduation, they can be put as operation manager.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)
The role of the MBA was further noted for its contribution in developing one’s ‘maturity’ with the result that it made a graduate’s ‘presentation and proposal are more sharp’ and ‘complete’.

---... (Those with MBA) They become more maturity.... presentation and proposal are more sharp. More complete.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

However, there was doubt about the ability of a MBA to satisfactorily develop practical needs and skills. One of the issues raised was that the MBA, being a formal education, was viewed as effective for imparting theories but falling short in developing managerial skills which were more tacit in nature like ‘good judgement’ which the respondent believed could only be developed through direct on-the-job practices.

I mean programme which you did with UTM, do they like inculcate (the mentioned company competencies) in the programme?
Of course not fully because MBA is more on theory. That’s normal for MBA right. --- College doesn’t teach good judgement right. It only teach you what’s theory, what’s practical but good judgement sometime you have to balance between the real required, the real dos and don’ts.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

The lack of theory-practice relationship in MBAs was further noted by Company 1. who believed that ‘the MBA does not guarantee performance’ but only ‘guarantees that (graduates) have some knowledge’. Again, this opinion suggests that the perception of a good MBA is a practical MBA.

... The MBA does not guarantee performance. It guarantees that you have some knowledge. But the knowledge, does it come with understanding? Can you use whatever that you learned? The whatever models to help us with our treasury. If you yourself did not understand, study to pass exam MBA, no point.

(Director of HCD, Company 1 - construction & infrastructure conglomerate)

The theoretical strength but practical limitation of the MBA was also raised by Company 2:
Would or could MBA provide all these competencies (company’s competency framework)?

Would or could MBA provide? If you ask me, no I don’t think so. --- MMA would be able to provide part of those competencies especially on knowledge aspect. To some extent the skills, the leadership skills, … to some extent, it’s not everything.

(Senior Manager Talent Development, Company 2 – Energy provider)

He further suggested that the extent to which MBAs were able to fulfil a company’s needs ‘depends actually on (the type of) MBA’. Based on Company 2’s experience in collaborative EMBA and their corporate university’s MBA, he concluded that the two programmes were contradictory in objectives, target recipients, use of learning, and stakeholders. Because of these differences, the respondent suggested that the ‘Corporate MBA … would serve many of (company’s) needs’ as it matched the company’s emphasis on the applicability and transferability of learning. Whereas he mentioned that despite the MBA programme addressing some competency development issues, it was considered ‘still academic in nature’ and lacked ‘real industrial experience exposure’ so important for the company.

So if it had been Corporate MBA it would serve many of its (company’s) needs. But again Corporate MBA does not dwell too much go into the academic portions, and maybe that will be sufficient (for company’s needs). Because what I’ve found out when I attended that executive MBA it made me be able to become a lecturer (laugh). But those guys who attended the Corporate MBA were not considered. That time our deputy vice chancellor who was from that ILSAS, he doesn’t believe that what you learn over 2 weeks you can actually be a master in those areas. That’s not much time for learning. But for corporate people you don’t really know to know everything, in and out and so on. It’s actually the ability to translate your knowledge into skills and applications. So that skill is another part, whether they are able to actually to deliver or not. For example when I attended the UM programme of course they gave me, we’ve got assignments, those things yes, it does help; we got to see people out there in the industry, get feedbacks, get interview them, make presentations, those presentation skills, those meeting people skills are being developed and so on. But apart from that it just, it became very academic, although in the academic curriculum you have case studies, you are supposed to be able to extract whatever. But still it is still academic in nature. You actually need that, that real industrial experience exposure kind of thing.

(Senior Manager Talent Development, Company 2 – Energy provider)

The above findings reveal that companies acknowledged the different purposes between company MD and university MBA programmes which affects their educational-utilitarian inclinations. They also realized that merging both purposes satisfactorily was difficult even for a corporate university MBA. This apparently
happened in Company 2’s corporate university UNIMY\textsuperscript{54}. Although the original plan for establishing UNIMY was to train Company 2’s staff, UNIMY’s programmes (including MBA) were not able to realize its original mission because its university status required them to move ‘more towards academic’. The respondent suggested that in order to become more academic UNIMY had to move away from focusing on the company’s specific utilitarian needs to ‘make (their programmes) a little bit more generic’ for instance by ‘make sure that ... all (related academic) foundations being addressed’ and ‘make sure (students) learn everything’.

Why didn’t you let UNIMY in charge of your programmes, I mean like a real corporate university like Company 2 envisioned before?

Yes (UNIMY) were invited in 1 or 2 of the EDP programme to provide some of the courses and so on but ... their priorities are more towards academic. That is not their main priority — to be a corporate university for us. They are something like all the other universities which is trying to capture the market out there by bringing in many of these students from outside. Having a lot of slant towards academic curriculum. ... and I do not blame them for that because anybody who want to make sure that they’ve got all these foundations being addressed. If you have somebody who goes in there to learn whether it’s degree, masters, they want to make sure that they learn everything. But for us we say no, not really required. Because we have competencies and these is one of the areas that we are interested at. So how can that value of that degree or masters programme be worthwhile outside. To us yes we might be looking for people with the skill but not only on the academic achievement but also on their skills, competencies to be developed. So they have to make it a little bit more generic, isn’t it, in order to optimize their resources. So they do introduce, they do participate in some of the EDP’s but that is just pockets here and there as to sort of, to develop further on their resources. But it’s not the main drive. The main drive is actually academic. And I still say it’s academic up to this day. That’s where they can actually grow the university and at a very fast rate.

(Senior Manager Talent Development, Company 2 — Energy provider)

The findings suggest that the perceived difficulty of blending the educational and practical properties in a MBA may have been attributed to the academic status of the programme. The UNIMY case suggests that once the provider became a university it would have to move away from being utilitarian-focused to academic-focused.

\textbf{ILSAS (Company 2’s training center)} was the vehicle which we used to actually set up UNIMY. But finally when UNIMY got to be formed, ILSAS became a department (in UNIMY). Because they thinking being in the same venue you can have a lot of synergy and this and that and so on. So that training center for the staff became a department. They became like a service provider (to Company 2). UNIMY was like service provider. UNIMY was actually (also) a subsidiary of Company 2. But somehow or rather they (Company 2) learn that there was lack of emphasis on staff training. And for Company 2

\textsuperscript{54} Not a real name.
... competencies, staff competencies is our priority. But for UNIMY is actually an academic outfit. So their emphasis is more on academic matters like getting students to make up for the number of students, blabla. So there seems to be less, naturally there will be less emphasis on training. Training is there but it's just like any other one but a lot of the academic part is given more emphasis, in getting students.

(Senior Manager Talent Development, Company 2 – Energy provider)

The above demonstrates that companies acknowledged the purposes, the stakeholders and thus the roles of MD and ME (i.e. MBA) to be not only different but contradictory. They believed that due to its academic role, the MBA might not be able to fulfil industry needs for pragmatic programmes that could function more like trainings to meet their specific, utilitarian needs. Once UNIMY became a university, the growing mismatch between UNIMY’s programmes and Company 2’s needs suggested that the status/location of the provider (i.e. whether it is under a university or professional entity) had a considerable effect on the academic-utilitarian inclination of a programme. Thus it is perhaps safe to say that as long as a ME programme is offered by an academic entity that follows educational philosophies, the programme may not be able to fulfil all the utilitarian expectations of the industry. What industries expect from a programme (i.e. their definition of relevant knowledge) is presented below.

7.5 Definition of Relevance

The findings show that the companies defined relevance in relation to their organizations’ strategic needs. Their MD programmes were designed ‘based on (company’s) competency framework’ produced through ‘needs analysis’. The programmes were also designed to be ‘in line with (the company’s) policy’, ‘able to serve (the company’s) needs’ and for the business ‘to survive in a long term’. Staff sent to programmes to ‘close up their (competency) gaps’ or ‘to prepare them to be (company’s) future leader’.

Staff who attended learning programmes were required to demonstrate the benefits to their companies, for instance by ‘study(ing) the company’ and ‘suggest(ing) (ways) to improve’ company operations or to ‘come up and propose ... projects’ which can ‘create strategic impact’ for the company.
... each participant they have to go back to their hospital (i.e. employers) to have several case studies on their hospital. ------ So what (can they) to improve? For example, medical records, or debtors collection or IT system, or marketing tool, efficiency service. So for example every time they, let’s say, they did accounting paper (so) their input (should be) on accounting. Meaning suggest bill collection, or is it a good policy to review. This is their Master paper.

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(The assignments) It’s all about the companies?
It’s all about the group, or the companies. So we (our group) have 20 hospital. So up to them what to do. Of course the supervisor we take from their (participants) hospital (employer). ... And also whatever their (employers) input, they (participants) tend to improve what the study on their company.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

... So there is thing like we called PROGEM (Programme for General Managers). ... at the end of that programme the PROGEM groups are divided into groups to develop action learning projects. Action learning projects is for them to come up and propose on their projects to actually... for PROGEM members to actually create a strategic impact for Company 2. Which is normally of high value, strategic impact to Company 2. ... So we (also) introduced PROSEM (Programme for Senior Managers). ... And also for this group we have action learning projects. They’ve got to do projects. Of course at this level you will say at this level projects to address might be at operational level. If they can address strategic, well that’s good but we don’t expect them to be as good as PROGEM. So they are a bit level down.

(Senior Manager Talent Development, Company 2 – Energy provider)

The emphasis on learning transfer is further illustrated below, where value of learning was determined by employees’ ‘able to practice’, which suggests that knowledge was deemed relevant if it was applicable and transferable.

What is important is what you have learned from MBA, you are able to practice. That’s why we focus those who came back with MBA what are the things that you have gained from the programme, which you can implement in Company 4.

(GM of HR, Company 4 – Cooperative Financial Institution)

Furthermore, company definitions of relevance were constructed based on their internal experiences and/or industry practices. The prevalent emphasis on speakers’ ‘real industrial experience’, teaching approach based on the speakers’ ‘actual work’, ‘real life case studies’ and ‘hands-on, real situations’ when describing their liking for a particular programme / provider may suggest that knowledge was perceived as ‘real’ thus ‘worthwhile’ if they could relate the knowledge to their experience. Furthermore, the use of expressions like ‘hear it from ... horse’s mouth’ (Company 4) demonstrated the perception that knowledge legitimacy stemmed from the direct experience of speakers in the industry. This attitude is further supported by their preference for ‘real
businessman’ to deliver programmes as compared to (academic) ‘lecturer’ because the former ‘have been in the world of business’ to share their own practical experience.

... short courses like IMD, like Harvard is really practical. Because hands on industry. And the lecturer is actually is not a lecturer. Is actually a real businessman who have been in the world of business, sharing the working experience, sharing the exposure that they have.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

All these findings suggest that in order for knowledge to be deemed relevant, knowledge providers must have similar points-of-reference, understanding and possibly similar orientation and priorities.

The respondents also viewed corporate and academic relevance as contradictory. To them, knowledge was considered relevant if it had been ‘tested’, ‘implemented’ and proven with (positive) ‘results’. Knowledge which had not been ‘proven’, apparently common in teachings of traditional universities was seen as questionable.

... Corporate university content very much practical for the industry players. Like they offer programme like Six Sigma, so a lot of takers because they know it’s being tested and being implemented with results. But if university education, you go there you also are wondering whether it is proven theory. So that’s why there’s difference.

(GM of HR, Company 4 – Cooperative Financial Institution)

The above suggests that companies looked for practical and specific how-to techniques that could improve their performance. It also suggests that they felt typical university education fell short in providing the knowledge that was in accordance to their needs. And as shown below, typical university education was considered unbalanced as it focused too much on theoretical learning but very little on application opportunities, thus clashing with industry emphases on more hands-on learning approaches.

... if you do a degree in HR, sorry to say, either in UUM or UKM or UPM or, you do 3 years but your practical is only 6 months. But (the company collaborative programme) you study for 3-4 months but you practice almost a year. You apply hands on and everything. So that really worth. Then you came back (to study for) another level. Then you apply again.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)
The fall out between corporate and academic definitions of relevance was further noted by Company 2 who stated that knowledge relevant to corporate needs was competency-oriented and specific to company needs whereas academic relevance focused more on detailed, wide-ranging knowledge that was general enough to suit people with various needs.

... Their (UNIMY) priorities are more towards academic. ... They are something like all the other universities which is trying to capture the market out there by bringing in many of these students from outside. Having a lot of slant towards academic curriculum. ... and I do not blame them for that because anybody who want to make sure that they’ve got all these foundations being addressed. If you have somebody who goes in there to learn whether it’s degree, masters, they want to make sure that they learn everything. But for us (corporate) we say no, (comprehensive knowledge) not really required. Because we have competencies and there is one of the areas that we are interested at. So how can that value of that degree or masters programme be worthwhile outside. To us yes we might be looking for people with the skill but not only on the academic achievement but also on their skills, competencies to be developed. So they have to make it a little bit more generic, isn’t it, in order to optimize their resources.

(Senior Manager Talent Development, Company 2 – Energy provider)

Interestingly, one respondent suggested that the practical-theoretical relevance of an education may be traced to the origin of the education, i.e. US or UK. He felt that the educations of the two countries were at opposite extremes in terms of practical-academic inclination. Based on his personal and professional experiences, he generalized that US-based education was more ‘practical’, ‘really down on the ground’, ‘hands-on’, and ‘real time’ (i.e. current), compared to the UK-based programmes which he described as more ‘academic’, ‘orthodox’, ‘too rigid’, outdated and exam-oriented. Based on these factors, he concluded that the practical-oriented and co-curriculum balanced education received by US-educated individuals had made them more valuable and in line with industry needs.

I have 6000 staff, 6800 staff when I held 6 years HR (as General Manager). Those US-trained they are more approachable and more practical. ... Because the MBA practice a lot of things. Those trained UK they very orthodox. .... Those who went in UK you see they tend to stereotype, follow policy. (Because of their) different (education) environment. Talkative, outspoken in giving ideas all from US.
Which do you think is better for the company?
For the company I need US because you brave, Outspoken. They were trained. Because they played badminton, tennis they would get marks. If British education sorry to say, all exam.
I’m British trained. Exam. --- So we have a few US candidates who if you asked them to do project paper, you ask them to do marketing, they already trained, they already hands on.
The different worlds of corporate and academic relevance were further noted by Company 2. Given Company 2’s first-hand experience in this issue, it demonstrates that even industries themselves acknowledged the difficulty faced by universities in satisfying industry needs. Their acknowledgement of this issue again raises the question of a programme’s (i.e. academic, university programme) status and influence in contributing to this dual dilemma.

The conclusions are as follows. Based on claims in the literature, the knowledge perceived to be relevant to companies is practical and utilitarian which can directly contribute to strategic performance. The findings also showed a clash between industry and university views regarding relevant knowledge which the research argued is a result of contradictory utilitarian-academic objectives between industries and universities. As presented later, industries stated that the clash though difficult, was not impossible to solve, although their recommended solutions tended to benefit themselves more, requiring universities to compromise their own needs instead.

### 7.6 Managerial Roles And Competencies

The findings showed that the view of companies regarding managerial roles focused primarily on their responsibilities toward performance and profitability of organizations. They considered economic responsibility the first and foremost priority of a manager. This was illustrated by Company 5 who described that its potential managers (especially from non-business background) needed to have the ‘money sense to make it, sustain business’ and other relevant knowledge and skills to be ‘the captain of the ship’.

*Of course when we give (GM position) to these (non-business background) people they need to have good accountant backup. Because they are not born as accountant. Accountant are people know money sense to make it, sustain business. ... (before Company 5 having the MBA collaboration) (the Executive Directors) have to teach (GMs) the skill of management, sometime they (the GMs) have to refer what they can negotiate, what is guideline, how to do costing. ... As ED your responsibility is to make your GM... the GM he’s supposed to be the captain of the ship. But on top of it the ED yang can guide policy and everything, debt collecting. (GMs) were never exposed so we*
have to teach them how to collect debt, how to give discounts, how to get efficiency in term of costing.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

The findings showed that company managerial competency frameworks were developed based on the social efficiency theory which focused on the pursuit of utilitarian objectives. For instance, Company 3’s competency framework for those at executive level and above focused overwhelmingly on performance-related competencies (‘business performance focus’, ‘customer focus’, ‘change focus’, ‘future focus’, and ‘people focus’) to serve the company’s strategic interests. Similarly, Company 4 quoted their MD competencies i.e. ‘self management’, ‘problem solving’, ‘people management’, ‘performance management’, and ‘customer orientation’ were also justified mainly from the utilitarian perspective. The utilitarian inclination was expected, and corresponded with literature claims about the prevalence of the social efficiency theory informing most competency frameworks within the HR field. And like the other widespread performance-related competency frameworks, these companies also tended to focus only on competencies that they considered were contributors to effective performance. After all, their competency frameworks were products of job and organization analyses.

first we have to identify what would be the job that it takes, what would the competencies. ... For example top management, we identify what would be their role kind of thing, to set up business direction, to lead organization, this and that and so on. So what kind of competencies ... (and) when we actually develop (programmes) ... (by) look(ing) at this key critical competencies.

(Senior Manager Talent Development, Company 2 – Energy provider)

Further analysis shows that the companies to a certain extent also addressed the social aspect of managerial responsibilities. For instance, Company 5 raised the issue that ‘integrity’ was one of the criteria they measured in a personality test conducted on shortlisted managers. This attribute was considered ‘the most important’ and without it ‘the organization will fall’ due to the nature of business which presents ample opportunities for possible corporate misconduct.

Before we employed (GMs) ... after all the interview, shortlisted, from the shortlisted, let’s say 6 candidates shortlisted, those who you not sure which one to take, so go undergo that [x profile] test. ... the X profile test will test you on your credibility, integrity, innovative, creativity, leadership, everything.

...
Why integrity?
That’s the most important is integrity. Because without integrity I think the organization will fall. Especially in our business. ... Because in our business we deal with billions. One equipment is a few millions. ... So without integrity, you know this happens to government, sorry to say, government hospital, and happen to other institute which I think that you can do all the wonder. Mark up the price, holidays overseas. You can do that. That’s why integrity very important.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

Nevertheless, the coverage of this attribute was limited. The test was only administered on shortlisted managerial candidates ‘before (Company 5) employed (them)’ and excluded existing managers. Elsewhere in the interview Company 5 claimed that their ‘staff know that (ethics) is part of corporate culture’. And the fact that this attribute existed in a personality test, implying that integrity was a personality trait, rendered the possibility of training a person’s integrity questionable. And indeed, as shown later Company 5 was sceptical about whether a person’s morality could actually be taught.

The morality issue was also mentioned by Company 4 (though only upon posing the ethical issue) who reported that being ethical was ‘mandatory’ not only for its managers but all bank employees. However, his perception of ethical awareness as a shared understanding based on implemented regulations and measures reflected an ethics that was approached more like a formality than a practice. Furthermore, his statement that there was no need to include ‘ethics’ in the competency framework on the basis that the ‘framework is just on general leadership competency’ seemed to suggest that managerial responsibilities and ethics were seen as separate rather than complementary.

What about your company’s stance on this matter (ethical awareness), is it included in your competency framework for instance?
Ethics is mandatory. It’s not in competency. It’s mandatory. You work with bank you must be ethical.
But it’s not mentioned in framework?
No. Framework is just on general leadership competency.
What’s the meaning of ‘mandatory’?
That’s Central Bank’s requirement.
I mean all the employees aware of that?
Aha. Because you cannot for example (if) you want to become director of the company you cannot have financial difficulties. This is all code of conduct which they have to fulfil to work with the company.
That’s in employee manual?
Yes. Like Company 4 we have act and the act already mentioned that.
So there’s code of conduct. Do they need to be reminded through a programme or something? That one we have staff ‘declaration’, have to sign.

(GM of HR, Company 4 – Cooperative Financial Institution)

Findings from Company 5 and Company 1 showed that their social responsibility was performed through CSR initiatives. For instance, Company 5 mentioned about their ‘Klinik Wakaf’ (i.e. charity clinic) programme which charged patients a low flat rate on medical bills. Similarly, Company 1’s CSR project involved collaborating with PU students to encourage rural school students ‘to get that into their (local youths) mind that they can innovate’ while at the same time ‘pulls them away from becoming ’mat rempit’ (engaging in social ills).

You know now we are going to school we are teaching the school student how to programme micro-controllers. ... students standard 6, form 1, form 2. Our idea is to get that into their mind that they can innovate. Secondly, it pulls them away from becoming ’mat rempit’55. Two things. ... (we spent) not even 50 thousands but we have done something. ... And then we continue to make sure that there’s a teacher look after these students. So now there’s one student he used the micro-controller so his mom doesn’t have to water plants. ... that we are thinking, how do we commercialize that? How do we make sure he makes money. If he makes money his friends they would also be interested right.

(Director of HCD, Company 1 - construction & infrastructure conglomerate)

In addition, Company 1 interestingly described their noble mission called ‘business jihad’ where they ‘grow other people’ (i.e. Muslim Malay businesses) hoping that they would ‘help the rest’ and ultimately make ‘the ummah’56 becomes better.

(Other than making money) there is something else that we are doing, we called it ... business jihad. We grow other people, the more Muslims, the more Malays become more successful, the better it is. More we can change. So we are doing that. Under Company 1 we grow all these SMEs to become our ... what’s the word, our nominated supplier. Let’s say you supply us cement, if we go to Indonesia we bring you, if we go to Qatar we bring you too. So you grow with us. And then you grow, you become stronger, you help the rest. We bring up. We bring up. So the ummah becomes better.

(Director of HCD, Company 1 - construction & infrastructure conglomerate)

Company 5 highlighted that their obligations towards other parties was also governed by the corporate governance body of Malaysia.

55 Refers to a phenomenon in Malaysia to describe young, illegal motorcycle racers. It is considered a social ill and is a great national concern.
56 Muslim community.
... as corporate governance you have to disclose a lot of things. If you are (public listed company) or you under the corporate governance ... and this is very important and also protect our minority. So there will protect us as guidelines. Meaning every time we make (decision) we have to follow corporate governance.

--- For every public listed company, PLC in Malaysia you have to follow corporate governance. Disclosure .. and everything, you cannot oppress the minority, minority have a right. That's why in any board of PLC (there is) ... independent director ... (to oversee the company's conducts).

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

The social responsibilities of the companies as claimed above were mainly approached at organizational level in the forms of policies, regulations or culture. Both Company 2 and Company 5 claimed that 'integrity' was their ultimate organizational 'core value' and 'company culture'. It was less clear whether social responsibility was translated into their HRD initiatives. As previously described, Company 4 viewed ethical practice and leadership as separate, thus there was not a need to insert 'ethics' into their competency framework. In the MD programme however, discussions on ethics tended to appear more like unintentional 'examples' perhaps suggesting its lack of significance.

... what about in your UNITAR-Melbourne programme, are there modules which try to develop this ethical competency in the participants?
In the creativity and innovation (module) they actually gave a lot of examples. Because creativity sometimes it become ethical issue. You are creative, you have creativity how you report your account. So when we discuss that there are many, we pick up examples, like Enron etc. More on the examples.

(GM of HR, Company 4 – Cooperative Financial Institution)

Similarly, Company 5 also felt that 'integrity' education could be gained only from (external) 'management course' but not company 'in-house training'. Furthermore, he was also sceptical as to whether 'integrity' being a 'value' could actually be taught.

... the integrity (education) you can get in management course, unless you did in-house training.

... The programme which you did with BS1, do they like inculcate (integrity) in the programme?
Of course not fully because (the programme) more on theory right. That's normal for MBA programme right. Anyway, how to make (integrity) a paper by itself. ... ----- integrity is something like value. It's not a paper challenge.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

The above findings may be taken to suggest a confirmation on the utilitarian stance of the companies. They viewed managers primarily for their economic roles as strategic
agents of organizations. Their competencies were also shown to focus more on fulfilling these strategic roles. Some companies claimed that they had certain measures to address the social responsibility of managers, however these measures appeared to have less to do with competency and learning programmes. As shown later, not only did they not address ‘ethical’ inculcation in their competency framework and learning programmes, but they actually felt that ethics was not a ‘competency’ and not quite teachable especially through formal learning.

7.7 Ethics and Roles of University

To further explore the attitudes of respondents towards ethics, they were informed about criticisms on MBAs/ME in the US which argued that its profit-oriented teachings had contributed to unethical managerial / business practices.

Company 1 vehemently disagreed that unethical managerial practices, or one’s morals for that matter, had anything to do with MBAs or university education. He believed that ethics was part of one’s personality which was a result of his/her upbringing developed ‘20 years or 15 years before (they took MBA)’.

... You use the word MBA, it means ‘business administration’. Business is profit motivation. If profit is your sole objective, then justify the means. You will do whatever to make sure your stock prices look good. Analysts look at your stock prices always compliments you. That’s what happen to Enron and the rest. Ok, fine. But MBA, is about what, 2 year programme? 1 year programme? What about the 20 years or 15 years before that? That’s where the ethical thing should come in. From the parents, to the school to the undergraduate. That is where. No way that 2 years can create all these havoc. You are putting a lot of blame on the MBA. No. ... MBA is not to blame. The people that have the MBA is what they do, that’s the blame. People. And 2 years MBA not enough to change you to become some sort of greedy, no.

(Director of HCD, Company 1 - construction & infrastructure conglomerate)

Similarly, Company 4 dismissed the whole issue stating that unethical cases in the US were noticeable only because ‘their industry is too big’ ‘therefore you have cases like this’. He argued that the lack of reports of unethical cases in other countries was because they were ‘covered’. Compared to other countries, the respondent perceived American values as good because ‘they didn’t cover’ malpractices and ‘they are very open about anything’ including ethics.
Americans are more ethical compared to other people in the world. Just because their industry is too big so of course when you have a lot therefore you have cases like this. We also have... just that whether you expose or not. The good thing American these kind of things they didn’t cover. I think these things happen in certain countries (but) nobody know (because it was) covered... I work with American for many times with (their) value... They are very open about anything, Diversity.. they can openly talk about gender, talk about sex, talk about gay all those. We never talk about those things. Same thing like ethics. They talk about it openly.

(GM of HR, Company 4 – Cooperative Financial Institution)

Company 3 responded that ‘not every MBA is bad’. He ‘believe in Ivy League’ universities’ and was convinced that because of their good reputation their graduates would be well taught.

It’s unfair for me to give blanket statement (on the criticisms that MBA curriculum is profit-oriented and develops unethical managers) because not every MBA is bad. If you come from good university, you bring along what you have learned from that university as compared to other MBA holders who maybe not from Ivy League universities. That we believe in Ivy League.

(Manager Talent Development, Company 3 – Telecommunication provider)

Further findings showed that the respondents felt strongly that ethics and university education (i.e. MBA) were unrelated. They believed that unethical behaviours were more a product of secular society. Company 1 argued that the decline of religion in most Western societies had ruined their social and economic systems. He believed that ethics was part of religion and that education should never be separated from religion because ‘if religion is not hand in hand with education, where’s the values, where’s the morals?’ This suggests that religion was considered as the ultimate source and guidance of one’s moral behaviours.

... You want to shape ‘akhlq (moral) is not (in) university, not (in) school. It’s (at) home. So going back, (Americans) have lost it long time ago. We call it west tacidition. It comes from the west and it’s toxic. They have lost it in the 50s. The parents can’t talk to their children. And then you want to blame the MBA programme. Not right. Yes MBA programme is profit motivated. But MBA programme also have ethics and business models and what not. Wrong. ... You blame the MBA, wrong. You must blame the upbringing. Everything is ‘I win you lose’. How do you start what do you call... an expose into business? Monopoly. You know, ‘do not pass’, ‘go’, ‘do not collect 200’. You remember Monopoly? Monopoly is a game where one man wins and everybody loses. That’s wrong. I take an example, Ray Croc... the founder of McDonalds... He said ‘business is a dog eat dog world, if I see my competitor drowning in the pool, I will take a pipe and put it in his mouth put some water so that he will drown faster. Dog eat dog. That is the basis of capitalist system. I must win, you must lose. That is what has been taught. This is what we called
west toxification. That’s the thinking from the west. --- if you come from Johor for example ...
where did you go after school? Religious school. It’s very deep, you know. Do you see that in the west? You want to bring church into the school, you cannot. And then you said oh because have MBA. No! (emphasis) Church is not in school. Meaning if religion is not hand in hand with education, where’s the values, where’s the morals? (emphasis) (That’s) my belief. --- ... The MBA is not at fault. First understand that. This is global economic crisis, is not the MBA. It’s the system. And the system was not only built by MBA. There were already banks before MBA.

(Director of HCD, Company 1 - construction & infrastructure conglomerate)

A similar theory was also forwarded by Company 5 who believed that American (or western) economic systems promoted unfair business practices. Comparing conventional versus Islamic financial principles as an example, he claimed that the former encouraged unfair business dealings as it takes advantage of people whereas the latter was superior due to its principles of fairness such as waqaf58 and zakat59.

For example, Lehman Brothers problem because they (just) sit on paper right, manipulating, manipulating, manipulating on papers. You see Arthur Anderson collapse because of the law. The client want, audit do like that. Good on the British, they follow the book. ----- But if you study carefully how did that (US) economy overcome, go back to the rules of (US economy). The businessmen must grow right. In US you put regardless of how much money you put, the (economic) system is like that. ... The best is Islamic. The best is Islamic economic style, and economic financial scheme. ----- (credit card Islamic is) different from conventional. ----- Because if we use Citibank credit card, you use credit (it’s) purely interest. But if Islamic Bank different, Bank Islam’s approach let’s say you use credit limit 30k, they will buy that 30k, take that 30k and put in your bank account 30k. And you can only use that 30k. And there’s no interest. (Of course) it has that service charge. That’s all your dealing. So they already bought that sum for you. But if you use (conventional) credit limit, that doesn’t have money. It’s just on paper.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

Corresponding to his suggestion above, Company 5 appeared to have called for local BSs to implement Islamic principles in their programmes. His endorsement of Islamic-based ME may be seen in both of his quotations below:

... the best is Islamic economic style, and economic financial scheme ... which (Malaysia) should have already implemented that.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

57 One of the states in Malaysia.
58 Islamic concept of allocating and preserving certain properties only for its agreed purpose and in line with philanthropic causes.
59 Islamic concept of tithe or payment of alms.
... I want to ask, since you do your PhD (on) HR go back to the Islamic based of HR practitioner. How to do? If you get (that), ... I like.  
(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

Company 1 was also confident that Malaysia would not face a similar crisis of ethics like the US if (Malaysians) go back to (their) roots. He strongly believed that ‘MBA programme in Malaysia can grow the eastern value way’, ‘different’ and better from MBAs in the US.

(in relation to his belief that the problem in the US was due to its secular system) You mean what happens in the US doesn’t apply in Malaysia? No. It should not apply. If we go back to our roots, our ‘gotong royong’ \(^6\), it should not apply. ... That’s why the MBA programme in Malaysia can grow the eastern value way. We make it different from MBA US. Can even win over their MBAs. This is my belief.  
(Director of HCD, Company 1 - construction & infrastructure conglomerate)

Company 1 further emphasized that to balance the profit orientation of businesses, companies needed to fulfill their social obligations by engaging in altruistic missions like Company 1’s ‘business jihad’. He also stressed that the principle of balanced business management should be emphasized in BSs’ teachings.

If MBA is wrong because of the profit motivation on the fact that it is a ‘business’ thing. ... (that’s why we need to do) ‘business jihad’ is all about.  
(Director of HCD, Company 1 - construction & infrastructure conglomerate)

----- For us, especially you are coming back as a lecturer, you must understand that you have to grow others in order for you to grow. You don’t kill people.  
(Director of HCD, Company 1 - construction & infrastructure conglomerate)

Company 5 however was quite sceptical as to whether local BSs were able to fulfill the above ideals. The first reason was ‘because even the lecturers don’t understand’ Islamic business and management principles.

... even the lecturers don’t understand Islamic banking, ... marketing lecturer don’t even know marketing approach Islamic. The one who teach statistic also no. The one who did accounting also no. So I don’t see (the possibility for Islamic-based ME) yet. Maybe the future, maybe the future can include.  
(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

\(^6\) A Malay word which refers to the concept of community spirit, cooperation and teamwork.
Second was the lack of initiative he felt among Malaysian providers in offering such programmes.

... I tell you ... there’s none (Islamic-based ME in Malaysia), in fact the Islamic International University by right it should have offered BBA Islamic Management (but) they haven’t yet. They haven’t yet.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

Furthermore, he felt the lack of expertise was a problem in the Muslim world because Islam often existed as theology rather than any kind of applied study.

It’s not the question of cannot (implement Islamic-based ME) but there’s nobody (in the Muslim world) is willing (or able) to share (about Islamic-based business and management approaches) ... (even in) Egypt they don’t have (such) Islamic (study) ... Because they don’t really practice ....
So what do they study (in universities)?
They study but they ... study the Al Quran, study Hadith, Sunnah ...
You mean just the theory. Practice?
If Islamic economic not yet. Not yet. They have to unite (Islamic theories and practice).
--- They are not a practical, they are not practiced like Malaysia.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

He also pointed out that sometimes lecturers ‘don’t practice what he preach’ thus they would not serve as good examples.

Do you agree if people say that academicians are quite responsible in making sure that the students have ‘integrity’?
That would be difficult if (a particular lecturer) teach. He had court cases. ----- So if (he to inculcate) the value, how? (He) don’t practice what he preach. (laugh). ---- So cannot. Academic is academic. The (integrity) value is in terms of the working, real life all that right.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

The above opinions suggest that the respondent felt the proposed Islamic-based ME could only be realized if BSs had the right expertise and attitude. Furthermore, the respondent pointed that as long as the ‘Islamic (world) ... don’t really have BSs which (companies) can really look up to’, the companies would continue looking to the west to learn about management.
You (proposed Islamic-based ME) but why people especially big companies always go to Harvard?

... Ok why I go for Harvard business school? ... You want to gain knowledge you go for the best school. ... Harvard is international recognized. It’s they said the most respectable organization like in term of good mindset, of good practice of management school. So you said you should go to the big names for this knowledge?

Yes because (in the) Islamic (world) they don’t really have BSs which you can really look up to.

(GM of HR, Company 5 – healthcare provider)

Several poignant issues were raised in the above findings. Firstly, based on the respondents’ belief that religion was the source of ethics, being ethical was not a job responsibility but rather a religious obligation of every Muslim. This might have been why ethics was missing from their competency frameworks and HRD efforts. Notwithstanding this perspective, cases of business malpractice, not uncommon in Malaysia (Say, 2010), showed that there was a need to be reminded of their so-called religious obligations in their job. Secondly, though the respondents initially felt ethical inculcation was not the responsibility of universities, their later proposal for BSs to embrace Islamic principles in their ME curriculums demonstrated that they acknowledged the role universities could actually play in shaping student ethics. Thirdly, even though the respondents disagreed with the alleged profit-orientation of MBA curriculums, the extent of any realization about possible bias in the teaching remained a question. It may be possible that the conventional business and management theories had become too entrenched and that the companies had become too accustomed to see their flaws. An opinion from Company 2 below perfectly illustrates this point.\(^\text{61}\)

After informing the Company 2 respondent about the alleged flaws in American MBAs, the respondent remembered a recent experience where he attended a talk calling businesses to switch from ‘corporate’ to ‘human’ governance. He then reflected on his experience filling-in a questionnaire which asked if he would reveal a little weakness in his company’s products to customers, whereupon the ethical dilemma dawned on him. He also illustrated another common workplace scenario about the implications on personal and family welfares of staff when requesting subordinates to work late. The respondent said that these situations made him realize each managerial decision had a moral consequence, whether directly for parties like

\(^{61}\) This data portion was based on a written note and was not audio-recorded as it appeared only after the interview had formally ended. This explains the missing verbatim quotations.
shareholders or indirectly for less obvious parties like employees and their families.

The findings above prove that being ethical is not clear-cut. A utilitarian bias in some areas of ME may not be very obvious because of the commonly-accepted idea that the profit-maximization principle is ‘normal’ in doing business.

7.8 Conclusions

The research aimed to explore the views of three main ME/MBA stakeholders (i.e. faculties, industries and students) on the adequacy of public university MBA (PU MBA) provisions in Malaysia. This chapter presented the findings based on the interviews of five companies, which were represented by their human resource representatives.

The initial part of the findings consistently pointed out the utilitarian stance of companies with regard to the research issues. They expected BSs to serve their human capital needs. In certain cases, they even viewed BSs as business partners. Ideally, MBAs are expected to act as training grounds for managers and teachings are supposed to tally with the specific needs of companies (although the companies all seemed to agree that this was perhaps not possible given the differences of organizational and academic interests). Correspondingly, their definition of relevance concentrated more on knowledge that was instrumental, pragmatic, tested, proven and result-oriented which could directly contribute to the achievement of company objectives. Furthermore, they looked at managers predominantly as agents of organizations tasked with achieving their companies’ economic objectives. Consistent with that was their managerial competency frameworks that tended to focus more on instrumentalist, functional and performance-oriented competencies. The findings further demonstrated that ethical / societal competency which is concerned with the ethical and social responsibilities of managers was not mentioned in their frameworks. These data showed that the companies, like any business seemed concerned only with the bottom line and expected BSs to deliver programmes that could contribute to this objective.
Toward the end of the interview sessions, the findings revealed a different twist. The companies instead expressed their belief that organizational / managerial social responsibilities were imperative and should be emphasized in ME. The findings showed that the respondents viewed being ethical not as a job competency but a human value which might have explained the silence of this concept in the companies’ competency frameworks, HRD interventions, and the respondents’ initial conversations. Ethics or social responsibility was found to be associated with individual religious obligations, in this case as a Muslim. Therefore, unlike western-dominated literature on competency where the inclusion of ethical/societal competency in competency frameworks is a pressing issue, the findings have suggested that in Malaysia being ethical was not considered a job requirement but rather a religious obligation. The respondents further felt that ethical values were not something that could be learned or taught in a formal learning programme but built from one’s religion, inculcated throughout one’s upbringing and environment. Despite scepticism about the teachability of ethical values in ME/MD programmes, upon analysing the alleged claims of the profit-orientation and utilitarian bias of MBAs, the respondents called for local BSs to produce MBAs that were balanced in utilitarian and societal objectives. To achieve this, they suggested local BSs to ‘return to their roots’ by embedding Islamic principles in their teachings.

This chapter has presented the findings from the industries. The next chapter will present the findings from the last MBA stakeholder covered in the research, i.e. the MBA students.
CHAPTER 8
FINDINGS: PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS
8.1 Introduction

The research was conducted with the aim of exploring the views of three main ME/MBA stakeholders (i.e. faculties, industries and students) regarding the adequacy of PU MBAs in Malaysia. This chapter presents the findings from MBA students, one of the three MBA stakeholders covered in the research. Their data was collected through several qualitative methods, i.e. 1 focus group discussion, 6 interviews, and 3 email questionnaires. Details of their profiles are tabled in Appendix E and F. The findings here are to answer research questions 2 to 6, i.e. their perceptions towards the roles of MBA; its providers; definition of relevance; roles of managers and associated competencies; and concerns about the social responsibility aspect of managers and MBA. The findings were examined in relation to the utilitarian-educational purposes of MBA/BSs.

8.2 Roles Of MBA

The findings showed that the students looked to a MBA primarily for its status as a Masters degree (rather than an ‘MBA’ per se) and perceived its value from a career perspective. They felt that Masters degrees had become a necessity to compete and progress. The following suggests their careerist orientation in pursuing higher education.

Why, did you decide to further your study?
First there was market demand why people want to, I mean in the first place the need to have an MBA. … at one point of time I told myself that I need to have MBA because people (employers) don’t look at degree anymore. Employers would look at MBA, or some kind of Master degree. Because having only degree won’t take you anywhere.
(Student 7, 33, Senior Executive)

…I didn’t intend to pursue a Masters at the beginning but when I thought of the trend whereby now many people take MBA and to go for further career advancement, now I think it’s necessary to compete in company, in jobs. Compared to the others at least we would have like a better advantage, opportunities compared to others.
(Student 9, 35, Assistant Manager)

…I think I have to further my study because I want to get a better job, better position and better salary.
(FG Member 1, 30s, 3 years experience)
The necessity to have higher degrees for career advancement was found to be more evident among working students. Their experience had shown them that academic credentials and career advancement went hand in hand. This perception seemed to be particularly evident in students with families who perhaps felt greater pressure to advance their careers in order to improve their family economies.

As you grow older you need to enhance more in terms of education values. So that’s why that’s what made me decide to pursue my education in MBA. Then … of course and other opportunity if I can find other jobs … so that I have option in life. Let’s say I want to get out from this travel industry, I can do that because I have something to back me up.

(Student 7, 33, Senior Executive)

… my husband is self-employed, and then his income … is not much. So I think if I have a Masters at least I have better chance for career development. And then I actually go for … career advancement also. … (My husband) had to engage in agriculture, but agricultural business is not that profitable unless you have capital to do large scale. But he is doing it small scale only. ----- That’s why I pursue a Master (laugh) … just in case right. ----- Because I can be considered as the family breadwinner. So I have to think on career advancement, about future.

(Student 8, 35, Executive)

The significance of having a Masters degree is illustrated below whereby an interviewee believed his career had stalled due to not having a higher qualification. In his case, the MBA was simply regarded as a paper qualification, a ‘stamp’ to endorse his experience and ultimately, to gain the trust of his potential employers to hire him for managerial positions.

Secondly (of why I studied) is because … unfortunately in Malaysia I don’t know, but for me at least, the interviews that I go sometimes people don’t respect for your experience. After working for so long people still don’t respect. So why I take MBA or for that matter advanced degree is just to recognize my 23 years of experience of work. Like a stamp mark, ok I’ve come to certain stage. Because my ambition if ever I involve working with people or organization I want to be in a senior management post, without having a paper qualification is hard even though you have a lot of experience. … Because having experience alone, in my case, if you apply for jobs is very hard, it’s very hard if you can pass even a manager post and above, let alone being a GM or a CEO. So, that’s a nature in Malaysia. So it’s either we adapt. But personally if you ask me, I even run a company today, but who’s going to trust me if I don’t have certain criteria, so to speak.
What do you mean ‘trust’? ‘Trust’ in what way?
Doing the job. Not trust personal. But doing a job you know. But again if you don’t have the qualification, that so called certain perception on qualification, in Malaysia a lot of perception, that’s the problem (laugh). You are living in a perception world, so it’s very difficult. ----- MBA is just a stamp mark.

(Student 4, 44, 23 years experience)
The findings showed that the students chose MBAs (over other degrees) due to its career-enhancing reputation in other countries. MBA graduates were seen as highly-marketable, and having the degree was considered a must if one aspired to hold top corporate positions. There was also a student who followed a trend where engineers took up MBAs.

(I chose MBA) Because MBA more marketable (compared to other programmes) …
(Student 3, 30, 5 years experience, foreign student)

I took MBA because MBA is more marketable because I heard about foreign country especially in US and Europe, may be... because I'm from electrical background and many engineers when they take Masters they'll take MBA after working for many years something like that.
(FG Member 2, male, 20s, no experience)

You said it didn’t matter whether MBA or other higher qualifications. So why did you choose MBA eventually?
Because it is wider in terms of market demand.
(Student 7, 33, Senior Executive)

The students were also attracted to the MBA for its wider career options. They felt that the programme’s functional curriculum would qualify them for various careers not restricted only to managerial positions. Having an MBA was seen as a way to open up more diverse career options than what they perceived their education background had prepared them for. This perception was especially notable in students from non-management/business education backgrounds who needed management knowledge to qualify them for managerial positions.

If I were to do Masters in Tourism for example, ...then it will narrowed down my scope again. So, if I wanted to go to the open market, ... a job in a bank for instance, Masters in Tourism that is not related. And then let's say that even I had Masters in Tourism, the tourism thing in Malaysia is not like, is not like in America ...like ...our tourism effort is up to the government here and then relying on travel agents' product. So it's like not, is very very irrelevant for me. At least personally if I had MBA I can go other fields, if I want to.
(Student 7, 33, Senior Executive)

So why did you take MBA and not other types of programme?
That's why because before this my background is finance ...But then when I Master I thought again it's better that I take management course (because to go) for managerial level and such they (the company) look on that (qualification). That's better.
(Student 8, 35, Executive)
So that is why I take MBA when I’m not, I don’t want to take accountancy, because I
don’t want to major in accountancy. Meaning if I wanted to further up if I wanted to fill in
that field I have to take ACCA or CIMA. Because I’m not in audit firm. If I am in
audit firm I would prefer to go to ACCA. -----... Yes, I don’t want that. I want to widen
my scope. Because I’m looking at my work is all on accounting. So I think I had enough
experience in doing accounting. That’s why I prefer to look at other course and then the
MBA is the suitable one. Because it’s more on how to manage, I mean, business and so on.
(Student 9, 35, Assistant Manager)

(I chose MBA) Because with MBA specifically business study then I can be a manager.
You’re talking about the financial, about the management, about the HR, and anything
that we don’t want to be leader also you can go for many jobs compare to the electrical or
something like chemical they are more focused.
(FG Member 2, male, 20s, no experience)

The findings show that the role of a MBA as a MED platform seemed to be more
evident in the perceptions of experienced, working students compared to those with
less or no experience. As shown in the following quotations, working students
acknowledged and specifically chose the MBA believing it would provide them the
knowledge, skills, opportunity, and confidence to undertake managerial roles. This
was also clear in their plans to pursue managerial-ranked jobs after the MBA.

... MBA (as compared to other types of programmes) is the best programme to
gain knowledge in terms of business management, organization management, creating
entrepreneurship spirit and effective way of managing people through leadership skills and
knowledge.
(Student 1, Manager, 13 years experience, Agricultural Background)

(on why she chose general MBA) ... General you learn everything so your scope is
wider.
How would that be important to you?
Because you have to know because why we pursue Master because you want to go further up
to another level like managerial level and GM level. So been there especially in business you
have to know everything. You have to know marketing, ... human resource, ... not just
accounting, you have to know everything. So I prefer that way.
(Student 9, 35, Assistant Manager)

(I pursue MBA because) I need to pick up the knowledge on the management. Because
I get my first degree in chemical engineer. So now in managements position I need to pick up
the basic technical know-how about management.
(Student 5, 30s, Marketing Manager, Engineering Graduate)

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In contrast, the MED role of a MBA was not as clear in the perceptions of students with less or no experience. Only two out of six in the focus group mentioned how the programme would help them engage in managerial / business-related careers. The others either aspired to join academic careers or were still undecided about their future. This was totally different to the working students who almost all had planned to embark on managerial-related careers. Furthermore, for the non-experienced students, the MBA was viewed more as a paper qualification for them often, to gain better first-time employment. The focus group which consisted of almost all fresh graduates quoted that they pursued MBAs primarily to get better jobs. These findings show that the less or inexperienced students may have regarded the MBA more for its postgraduate degree status in securing better employment rather than as a platform for a managerial career.

Most important thing for me is I’m more to fulfilling my scholarship requirement. Because I’ve been offered a Finance course actually. But then there is no specific courses offered in (this university) for Finance. That’s why I chose MBA.

(FG Member, 20s, no experience, sponsored, future academic)

If you ask me why (I pursued MBA), I don’t know why. Because my mum just filled the form and then she said she will pay all, so I came. Because after I finish my final in UIA then I register here.

Why MBA? Did you ask her?

She feel that I have not prepared myself for work. She feel that I’m too young to work …

(FG Member, 20s, no experience)

The above findings correspond with the literature in two ways. Firstly, it confirmed that students viewed MBAs with their own interests. And their interests ultimately centred round employment and career. Secondly, it supported the notion that students perceive MBAs to be mainly for employment and career-enhancement. The findings however did not demonstrate any evidence that the students linked MBAs with higher earnings potential as reported by the literature. Notably, the career-
enhancing role was not exclusively linked to MBAs but to other types of Masters as well. The students implied that any types of Masters degrees could offer the same career-enhancing impact. The MBA was finally chosen more for its perceived marketability, career versatility and career relevance. Although MBAs were perceived to enhance employment and career values, this however was found to be a mere perception. The students admitted that having the degree would not guarantee any career advancement. However they acknowledged that the degree would open doors for opportunities or serve as a bonus should there be promotions. The findings also showed that their perception was influenced by the reputation of MBA graduates in other countries.

8.3 Definition Of Relevance

The research further sought the students’ definitions of relevance. Corresponding to the above findings, relevance was defined mainly from the perspective of their work and organizational needs. This perspective was more prevalent among working students, who perceived a subject as ‘useful’ or important when it taught the knowledge and skills required that could improve their job performance. The findings showed that this perspective was constructed more in relation to their current and daily working needs, and in the context of their current organizations. This may suggest that their perception of relevance is quite limited to their direct experience and constrained to their immediate job needs or challenges.

What is your favourite subject?
I like most is definitely marketing. Definitely, ... -- ... because it’s my kind of line. I meet people, marketing there’s always, there’s no right or wrong, ... the subject of marketing also enhance the way I look things. Because last time we learned 4Ps, then 8Ps, then increased to 10Ps. Now 10Ps. So, meaning we have to... follow the changes of today needs.

... You said the programme was generally ‘good’. Can you elaborate what you meant?
Ok for instance... like... I didn’t foresee that OB is very an important thing to his like me working in this environment. But when learned OB oh ok yeah hmm... you learned how... meetings being conduct, you learned how to position yourself in the meeting, you learned of what to talk in the meeting rather than going around the bush, you keep it to your points. I mean this is a very good thing.

(Student 7, 33, Senior Executive)
(on subject contents which had given her the most impact) I think maybe on HR because when you work, you are dealing with people, you have to know on HR matters. ------ the others like marketing as well. ... Because marketing I think I learned a few, a lot like in marketing it teach you when you start a business ... what should you do? Like that. What are the steps... The others (subjects) is like ancillary. ... Towards business. I'm talking about towards business.
Towards business?
Meaning business environment, when we work we are talking about business environment.
(Student 9, 35, Assistant Manager)

You mentioned ‘useful’ just now. Can you describe a bit about how that course or the extra subjects would be ‘useful’ to you?
Well over here I would say that it gives us the outlook on the hypes and approach of the strategy available in the world. So the lecturer did take a lot of example from UK, from US, from Michael Porter, what is the blue ocean strategy, is that working, what is their view and then they relate it to the current local enterprise like Air Asia, Maybank, MAS. So it give us some outlook, some information on how do they perceive these companies’ strategy, and what is these companies supposed to do. So over here it did manage to give us some information for us to relate to our daily job.
(Student 5, 30s, Marketing Manager, Engineering Graduate)

In concurrence with the above, the students expected the MBA to provide them with practical knowledge and lecturers to show clear connection between theories and practice. They felt that MBAs should fulfil the needs of its students i.e. working people who wanted something they could directly apply in their work. Furthermore, the students felt that academic and practical knowledge were two different things and argued that for a MBA, the latter should always be the priority over the former.
Similarly, they expected the teaching approaches to be practical rather than academically-oriented by teaching students the tools and techniques applicable for work and organizational effectiveness. They also expected the teachings to resemble practice and to closely emulate real working environments. They perceived that ‘academically-oriented’ teaching would result in disconnected learning and work. Altogether these findings further suggest that the students’ perspectives of relevant knowledge tended to be tied to existing, direct work experience within the context of organizational strategic objectives.

(on her programme improvement suggestion) ... I think on the teaching approach like I said I like the HR subject approach. ... the assignment is more towards working environment. Because we are working people so when we learn we learn the learning could be connected to our work. Just that I don’t want too textbook-oriented. ... There should a book but the teaching should not be too strict on the book contents. We cannot follow the book closely because because when in working environment different thing. ------ Because sometimes when you learn theories ... ok, but you must link up with the working environment. If only
theories with no link up with working environment you won’t see... what is the relevant? Because we are working people right, so we have experienced so many things. So if you give only theories, like us we won’t see oh what’s the connection? We don’t see the connection. So that’s difficult.

... For me my opinion I would prefer programme which is more towards business environment. If more academic sometimes is difficult because sometimes if more academic sometime it doesn’t apply at workplace. That’s why if it’s more academic you don’t see the connection to work. They must mix together. If too much academic is also difficult.

(Student 9, 35, Assistant Manager)

Another student also looked at subject relevance in relation to its usefulness to business needs. He believed that MBAs should only teach practical subjects as that was the purpose of its existence. His opinions below, suggesting that MBAs should teach only subjects significant to managers demonstrated his belief that relevance should be perceived from a pragmatic point-of-view. He also believed that MBA teaching should be limited in theories and more focused on competencies.

... Because as a student, for me what’s most important is practical knowledge, not theory.

... Actually MBA should not have any theoretical subject. It should have to begin with, it should be all practical subjects. Because you are giving students tools to practice or to apply in the real world when you run business. So you shouldn’t teach theory subjects. It has to be practical subjects. That’s why sometimes, sometimes people will ask, 1 year is enough to do MBA? 2 years is enough? ½ year? For all intent and purposes MBA should be just financial management.

Why?
Because being a business manager, you are supposed to be able to value a lot things. And Financial Management gives you a lot... ok maybe add another one strategic management. FM and SM, enough. Maybe, I don’t know, that’s my take. The other things are all ancillary.

.... The world is now about useful skills. Not static skills. Because knowledge, even long after you leave MBA you still can acquire. But if there is no environment to allow you to make mistakes, you carry into the real world, you go for interview, you are done.

(Student 4, 44, 23 years experience)

The findings further suggest that the students perceived industries as the most important MBA stakeholder and that MBA teachings should thus be made to tally with their needs. As shown below, theories learned in MBA were considered ‘valid’ if industries deemed so.

(on his suggestion for universities to invite captains of industry to give talks to students) Why is it important?
Of course they they can actually share with us what are they doing now. Ok. If he have some questions that we ask if it is true in the book, 5 years ago is it still valid now in the industry?

(Student 5, 30s, Marketing Manager, Engineering Graduate)
The students’ utilitarian-oriented relevance definition is also evident below. MBA knowledge was considered ‘useful’ because it helped them to ‘better serve the organization’, to become ‘efficient and respected leader’ in their organization, and ‘to improve (their work) performance’.

The programme had provided me with some useful techniques and knowledge in management which I have never experienced before and these will be useful to be applied in my work in order to improve my performance and better serve the organization. --- I gain better knowledge in how to do strategic thinking in order to do strategic management in the operation of organization. Better able to apply analysis thinking style and produce rational decision. It also help me to identify useful guideline in how to become efficient and respected leader. (These are significant / useful because) It can improve my character, thinking style and ability and leadership skills.

(Student 1, Manager, 13 years experience, Agricultural Background)

While the working students were more concerned with the pragmatic aspects of their learning, the relevance definition by students without experience had less to do with their career plans or needs. Instead, they looked at subject relevance mainly in relation to their past education experience, its usefulness in their performance in other subjects, and to a little extent, their future education plan. This is demonstrated below.

(in relation to their earlier opinions that some MBA subjects are ‘unnecessary’)

What subjects are not ‘necessary’, you think?
Member 1: To me Business Research Methodology. Because it’s not really that relevant to ABR because ABR is applied.
Member 6: For me I think it’s important because we have to do research.
Member 3: I think it helps, it helps. Especially for us who are not from business studies that means from sciences, sciences and social studies is quite a different things in how you conduct your research. Because last time in sciences we do more on like test, more on experimental you can see. But in social science you need BRM, for me. Because you want to, you want to I mean analyze the qualitative data not quantitative data. That’s the difference. For me what I think.
Member 4: It’s very helpful. Because previously when I did my undergraduate degree, I never learned about research, at all. So I learn… and then… ABR also.
Member 2: I think it help. Because it helps us to do the research and what a research must have, and the differences, and how to do it. Because from my undergraduate study of the research study only the lecturers know. We only know what the lecturer wants.
Member 5: I think it (i.e. Research Method subject) helps if you want to pursue your study, I think it helps.
Member 1: … If you want to further study, business methodology (is necessary), yeah.

(FG Members)
Altogether, the above findings agree with Kellie (2004) in the sense that working students’ definition of relevance is constructed in relation to job and organizational relevance. Knowledge was considered relevant and therefore needed if it had direct application to their job, was based on real working practice, and was result-oriented (i.e. to job and ultimately organizational effectiveness). The constant reference of the working students to their daily working needs and current organizational practices may suggest that their definition of knowledge relevance was short-term, focusing on immediate needs, and informed by their own personal and current experience. Relevance seemed to be something they had (already) experienced so they could appreciate the ‘connection’. The difference in definitions between students with and without experience showed the impact of students’ backgrounds on what the students expected of MBAs.

8.4 Managerial Roles and Competencies

The findings showed that the students’ idea of managers focused round their economic roles in benefiting organizational interests. Their overall opinions on the research issues (definition of relevance, MBA roles, programme improvement suggestions, plans after MBA, etc.) all seemed to emphasize on the economic roles of managers in serving their employers.

Almost all students had gained positively from their MBA. However, there was a difference in the type of competencies gained by the students with and without working experience. The students with experience related their competency acquisition more in relation to managerial careers.

The biggest gain from the MBA was knowledge in business and management. This was particularly recognized by students from non-business backgrounds who felt that the knowledge had enabled them to better understand their work.

…… if you really want to be a manager. Manager and then you want to climb higher, that knowledge (provided in MBA) will make you understand. When the management talk you can understand. Before when people talk about accounting, figures, you didn’t understand. What you know is Operation, spending money only. At the end you have to know profit, how much bonus you get. But you didn’t know in terms of company, why is it like this, what effects, the economic impact to the company. So before it was difficult to
understand the impact of oil prices on our operation because we used gas. And then how we forecast for the tax profit when the situation improves. And then we learned economics, the equilibrium, the impact.

(Student 6, 41, HR Officer, Engineering Graduate)

(I learned) How to do our time management and to understand those things that it is impossible to know if you are not participating in this MBA programme. Those new knowledge about economics who is going to spend 2-days with you to let you know how to read the balance sheet. Maybe the company will have. But whoever trainers that coming in they just present in a very surface kind of knowledge and you can't really link. But through this MBA you learned the economic first, macro view and then you go to the accounting, micro view and you go to the practical and you also have a human resource management, all those things coming in and it really can judge you know the whole concept of the management what is it about, what is the gee of this.

(Student 5, 30s, Marketing Manager, Engineering Graduate)

For some, the knowledge served as confirmation of their thoughts and experience. The lessons learned in class were used to verify their existing knowledge and techniques. As mentioned below, a MBA resulted in ‘more structured’ thinking.

What were other things that you learned from the programme?
... one thing for sure ... before I did MBA I myself I think ok if I want to do in this line I have to study my external environment like what is the Malaysian Plan, what is the opportunities that I can capitalize from the situation that is being offered by the government. I thought I’m the only one who have such thinking. But when I entered the class I said oh ok that’s right. I just want to confirm that.
The opportunities out there you mean?
Yeah, there is opportunities out there but when I entered MBA, it (my thinking) is more structured. Then you you learn, you thought only one but you learned more.

(Student 7, 33, Senior Executive)

MBAs had made the students more strategic-oriented when examining the strengths and weaknesses of their companies and had enabled them to propose strategic measures to enhance their companies’ performance. The acquisition of ‘strategic thinking’ skill can be seen in the following quotation.

So when I did MBA it helps a lot in terms of application towards marketing, values. Then decision making in work, ... and then to foresee whatever... to have the kind of strategic thinking. This is what, this is what ... I can see that, this is what this company is lacking. Because not many people in this company can’t think strategically. ... (My company) don’t have inbound department. In a travel agent there must be an inbound, outbound, ticketing, tour, ... account. But her no inbound (laugh). Inbound means you have to promote those people to come in to Malaysia. No.
So you think there should be one?
Of course there must be. That’s why now I’m preparing papers for the management to look into this problem. ...

(Student 7, 33, Senior Executive)

Similar benefit was also reported by the other students. The knowledge gained in MBAs had enabled them to better ‘evaluate one company’, analyze the ‘prospect of (their) companies’ and propose strategies for their companies to ‘go further’. These testimonies showed that the MBA had developed the students to become strategic agents of their organizations.

In terms of competencies, what did you learn there? I mean in terms of soft skills aspect? ... if you can compare yourself 2 years ago.

Hmm, I would say that of course the financial side, have a bigger view of... how things happen. And what is the prospect of the current company, in terms of ... so we can analysis, we can roughly have an idea what are the aspects that we have to look in when we want to evaluate one company is it good or bad.

(Student 5, 30s, Marketing Manager, Engineering Graduate)

What are the biggest changes (in yourself after the MBA)?
Biggest changes...every topic in the discussion (i.e. office meetings) I can participate... I can give idea. ... Previously no. Before I more on my knowledge only, I’m on the operation. When I’m from the transmission division, if they talk about operation ...then I can participate. ... So now when we have discussion, I can participate what business which I think (my company) can go further. This is the type of business that we should go.

(Student 6, 41, HR Officer, Engineering Graduate)

The students also reported that the MBA had given them the tools to increase their work effectiveness.

So what do you think of your experience there?
I think it’s a good experience actually. I think, I actually can see myself changing. ...
Because.. ok first when we did Masters in coursework so there’s a lot of coursework, so when there’s coursework we have to search one thing, search from internet. Before this I already know how to search (in the internet) but then when you search you have to know the technique, it’s not just searching blindly. You have to know the technique. ... this one I learned from lecturer also for example if looking for stuff in PDF so you just type PDF and then what you want to look for. So all the listing will be in PDF. So before this I didn’t know the way. ----. So that one one thing I learned. And then another thing we did a lot of presentations. So learned how to do Power Point. Effectively. ...not just a normal power point. A good one which when you see you (will say) wah (impressed). So I learned that. So before this it was difficult to prepare a power point, so time consuming, like ... very hard to do, very slow because we like looking here and there. So now I can prepare a power point just within half an hour. ---- I could even finish a meeting presentation instructed by my
boss with no problem. A very pretty one not just a normal power point. That's why they (my boss and colleagues) said you are good. So that's a compliment.

(Student 9, 35, Assistant Manager)

... (MBA) relate to us how to view the economics, how to erm.. get the models right, right models for strategic planning to be used in our daily presentations, erm.. and ... the business like.. business law it let us know what are the things that we can do, what are the things that we cannot do, what are the things that people will take advantage from us, what are the things that we can protect ourselves. So daily we have as a marketing you have to sign a lot of agreement with the supplier, agencies, so there are ... print there to what extent you have to check. So all these things is very important.

(Student 5, 30s, Marketing Manager, Engineering Graduate)

The findings also showed that the students had not only gained know-why (knowledge) and know-how (techniques) as described above, but they had also acquired the know-who competencies. They had made ‘friends from different field, different company’. ‘Networking’ was considered very useful for work.

Ok what other things that you learned there?

... another thing is networking. Because you have friends from different field, different company, so you have networking. So easier, ... sometimes when you work you need information then you would remember oh I have friend working there, there, ok you can contact a friend, how to get this information. And maybe sometime I’m lack of ... for example, I’m lack in example engineering (knowledge), so my boss needs such information on that, and then I can call my friend who does, knows about this thing...

(Student 6, 41, HR Officer, Engineering Graduate)

MBAs had also given the students the competencies needed for their career development. The following respondent reported that she had learned the 'presentation skill', 'how (to) dress up during presentation', 'knowledge', and 'confidence level' that she believed made her prepared to assume a managerial position.

And then (I have learned) the presentation skill. I think that's very important being a manager and higher level up, you have to have presentation skill. Because we will be less scared after doing a lot of presentations, you'll learned, and then sometimes in the class the lecturer would say ok this is how you should dress up during presentation, this is how you should speak, like that.

... You said just now you are one step from getting a managerial position right?
Yes.
So do you think that you can perform?
God willing I think because the confidence level, because when you learn, when we learned a lot we learned new thing, you get confident (when) you have to have knowledge.

(Student 9, 35, Assistant Manager)

Unlike the working students who made sense of their programme gains in relation to managerial work, the competencies reported by the less experienced students were more generic in nature and not specific to managerial or organizational contexts. The most significant gain they reported was improvement in English communication. Students in the focus group discussion unanimously agreed that the MBA, which stressed student class participation, developed their ‘confidence level ... to speak in public’. They reported that they had become ‘more outspoken’ in giving their opinions. They reported an improvement in all communication aspects including idea organization, argumentativeness, and written and oral presentations. Interestingly, this gain was notably mentioned by all respondents in BS2, regardless of experience background, but less by students in the other two schools.

What are the things that you have gained here? Other than communication and public speaking, that you mentioned earlier. Other skills?
Member 2: Confidence level ... To speak in public.
Member 3: Expressing things.
Member 6: How to come up with your ideas.
Member 5: Sometimes we have the idea but we don’t know how to convey that.
Others: Yes, yes.
Member 5: ... during the class most of the lecturers said that it’s ok for you to give your opinion as long as you know the impact, and then you know what something that you can gain out of it.
Member 1: That means don’t be afraid to say anything even though it might be stupid or whatever. We just say. At least you learn from it.

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Member 4: (I’m happy doing MBA) Because before this I cannot speak like this.

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Member 2: For me because....(MBA) help me to be more outspoken because .... myself is ..making me outspoken.. The study for the ... from the year one you have to be outspoken. Because here they make us to be more outspoken. Everything must be must be presented.

(VG Members)

The non-experienced students described their gains quite generally rather than aligning them to a specific job or career. Furthermore, they tended to make comparisons with their undergraduate degree experience. It seemed that the competencies were considered valuable because they did not obtain similar exposure
during their undergraduate degrees. Their positive MBA experience may perhaps be viewed as rectifications of their past education’s shortcomings.

How would these two things (referring to ‘communication’ and ‘public speaking gains) be important to you?


Member 1: Communication is important because we have to communicate to people. So the quality of communication is important, how you express yourself, the words you use, everything reflect who you are, the confidence level, the knowledge, like in presentation you have to know the knowledge first then you can present. That means the basic ground is knowledge. You know about the topic then you present. That’s about it. That means in a way communication enhance the knowledge. So that people, the recipient whether understand or not what you are presenting. To me like that.

Member 6: ... And one more thing, we learned in one of the subjects, more to analytical thinking.

Member 1: Oh yeah.

Analytical thinking?

Member 6: Yeah. Compared to the degree it’s very, very exam oriented. But this one does not have exams and one more thing all the assignments is more to like how you construct the ideas into a framework. How you really, how you think, how you really, you know, we call the impact of every issue that happen in the world. How far you can think...

(VG Members)

Altogether the above findings suggest that the competencies the students gained and acknowledged in MBAs were those concerned mainly with performance, career or personal development competencies which are concerned with the pursuit of utilitarian objectives. The findings showed no evidence about the gaining of societal-typed competencies like ethical values, viewed as necessary to fulfil the social responsibilities of managers. There was no evidence from the students’ perceptions to show that the programme / providers had developed them holistically through the development of their ethics, values and morals as managers.

8.5 Conclusions and Some Discussions

The research was conducted with the aim of exploring the views of three main ME/MBA stakeholders (i.e. faculties, industries and students) on the adequacy of public university MBA (PU MBA) provision in Malaysia. This chapter presents findings from the MBA students.

The findings above consistently suggested the students’ support for practical, utilitarian MBAs, and they considered organizations as the most important
stakeholder in MBAs. They joined the programme based mainly on career orientation and perceived that its career-enhancing role (or reputation) would open up career opportunities for them. The MBA was perceived as a platform for industry people to gain business and management knowledge and skills. They thus expected the programme to teach practical knowledge and tools that were useful to their job and organizations. Likewise, their definition of managerial roles was constructed by viewing managers as strategic agents of organizations. Given this view, the students thus recognized and placed significant value on the acquisition of performance-oriented competencies.

The students justified their views on the grounds that as job seekers, their main concern was employability. They believed that pragmatic, utilitarian-oriented MBAs would ensure employability. As shown below, there was a belief that graduates’ employability should be the concern of any education provider.

...at the end of the day if the objective that university to help this programme - other than making money which is the number one priority anyway, nobody can deny that even though for academic institution which all the people say philosophy, with all the ideas, at the end of the day they have to survive, they have to make money, fine. Second priority, these people that takes our MBA, where would they go? Where would they end up? That’s a question they have to ask. There’s two questions. Are we making money? And where does our product go? That’s it. The rest is not important.

(Student 4, 44, 23 years experience)

The findings showed no evidence regarding the importance of managerial social responsibilities and the teaching and learning of societal or ethical competencies in MBAs. One student’s view provides a possible explanation of the silence. As found in the industries’ findings, the issues of ethics and religion were simultaneously raised side-by-side. The following quotation that ‘the good or bad (of a person) is (a matter) of aqidah (faith) suggesting that it has nothing to do with MBAs, BSs or universities. The student believed that religion should ultimately guide one’s actions in life, including his / her job.

The good or bad (of a person) is aqidah (Islamic faith). So you can also emphasize that all the things we do in life is because of Allah. If you do for yourself of course you will be lost (of guidance).

(Student 4, 44, 23 years experience)
Furthermore, he believed that the inculcation of ethics should start from a young age otherwise it would be difficult to change if ‘we already have certain belief system’. And similar to industry suggestions, the student also related the responsibilities of a manager to his/her religious obligation, i.e. ‘when you become as CEO you have to look at your organization as life, as ... you want to lead the ummah (i.e. Muslim community)’.

... I think MBA for that matter; it should be also something to do about life. ... Because an organization is about life anyway. When you become as CEO you have to look at your organization as life, as ... you want to lead the ummah (i.e. Muslim community). That’s why the Prophet Muhammad, if you look at his foundation, where did he get his foundation? From very young. Before he Islam. But his trustworthiness, his accountability, all from young. Not when he was 40 years old when he became the Prophet. These (attributes) were already there. From young. So the young age is very important, not the later age. Like people said bend a bamboo while it’s still a shoot. If ... we already have certain belief system, then difficult to change.

(Student 4, 44, 23 years experience)

Although believing that one’s ethics was shaped by his/her religious background and was irrelevant to MBA, his following opinion suggests that the programme could actually play some role in cultivating one’s ethical actions. He argued that managers could change negative organizational cultures ‘if he had the conscience to change the culture’. He believed that such ‘conscience’ could be gained in MBA if its curriculum contained certain subject ‘components’ which could produce ‘more CSR-typed of people, or individual’.

(On claims that the profit-orientation of MBAs was partly responsible for producing unethical managers) ... that it’s nothing to do with MBA. I beg to differ. It’s about culture. Long before this guy came out from Harvard MBA and join the company, the company already has its own culture. It’s up to this guy, if he had the conscience to change the culture. But unfortunately it’s not done, for whatever reason maybe his learning in school doesn’t give him to be more CSR-typed of people, or individual. That’s why (certain) components (i.e. core courses) are important. The components must be in the curriculum, (students) must study ... and then you let them off.

(Student 4, 44, 23 years experience)

The above student’s optimism that MBAs may make a difference in the ethical conduct of managers is taken as a positive signal for the creation of balanced MBA. Other evidence in the findings about the students may also suggest that they could actually appreciate a utilitarian/ social-balanced MBA. For instance, as shown below, they required lecturers who ‘has wisdom’, that can coach them to ‘appreciate and adapt new knowledge’, and can ‘making (them) think’.

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...I like lecturer who has wisdom. ... Ok apart from delivering the subject matter, coaching is important. Especially from us that's not business background. From us and try to appreciate and adapt new knowledge, it's hard. But if you are good at coaching, it makes it easier.

(Student 4, 44, 23 years experience)

Member 1: To me the final semester, semester 3, the way of teaching must be more ... about making us think because actually... I mean ... sometimes they said the main problem is the quality of the graduates right. So the quality of the graduates sometimes depend on the lecturer. So if the lecturer can produce a good students or... students that means the quality would increase.

(VG Members)

The above are considered positive signs that students may be open to a different kind of MBA. It also shows that the students are aware and acknowledge the need to improve the MBA. Having such support from one of the main MBA stakeholders is crucial to create a program that is balanced and satisfactory to everyone's needs.

This chapter has presented the findings from the MBA students. The next chapter will cross-analyze, discuss and conclude the research findings in relation to the research aims and objectives.
CHAPTER 9
DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS
9.1 Introduction

The impetus for the research was triggered by criticisms surrounding the relevance of BSs (Goshal, 2005; Khurana, 2007; Dunne et al, 2008; March, 2003; Cornuel, 2005; Connelly and Gallagher, 2010) and their ME (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2008; Mintzberg, 2004; Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Antonacopoulou, 2010; Rubin and Dierdoff, 2011) to their constituencies. These widespread criticisms have been attributed to the duality of the academic-utilitarian model that governs BS operations (Cheit 1985; Wilson, 1996). BSs appear to suffer from an ‘identity crisis’ (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002) and are now at a ‘crossroads’ as to what they want to be (Datar et al, 2011). Its MBA was said facing an extinction (Schlegelmilch and Thomas, 2011). The research focused on the MBA, the flagship of BSs, for its popularity and accessible form of MED, and because of the controversies surrounding it that made the task of balancing its utilitarian-educational duality more challenging and gratifying. The research argued that to be relevant, MBAs needed to satisfactorily serve the interests of its most important stakeholders i.e. academia (BS/MErs), industry and students (Camufo and Gerli, 2004; Neelankavil, 1994). MBAs had to produce well-rounded managers who were not only professionally competent but morally sound. Against this backdrop, Malaysia was chosen as the context for the research as the country’s aspirations for national development and current orientation of its higher education closely resembled the same educational-utilitarian concerns.

The chapter is organized in the following order: 1) summary of findings in relation to the research questions; 2) discussions of the findings according to several themes; 3) research contributions, implications and suggestions for future research; 4) suggestions for MBA (or ME in general) practices in Malaysia; 5) limitations, and 6) self-reflections.

9.2 Findings in Relations to Research Questions

The research aimed to explore the perceptions of the three MBA stakeholders on the adequacy of Malaysian PU MBAs in preparing well-rounded managers. The research questions and summaries of the main findings are depicted in Table 9.1.
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<thead>
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<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Research Objectives – To Investigate the Research Questions with Specific Reference to:</th>
<th>Main Findings</th>
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</table>
| 1. What is the current practice of MBA education provided by Public University Business Schools (PUBS) in Malaysia? | 1.1 Background of MBA In PUs 1.2 Popularity And Value Of MBA 1.3 Curriculum 1.4 Teaching Staff 1.5 Entry Criteria 1.6 Profiles of Students 1.7 BSs Association, Accreditation, Ranking and Alumni | - The MBA provision by Malaysian PUs remains small.  
- There is no strong evidence to suggest the monetary reputations of MBA.  
- MBAs in PUs and private, private-foreign universities seemed to be in a different game.  
- From the outset the MBA programs by PUs could be somewhat similar to other MBAs.  
- There was no major difference in MBA and EMBA programmes except in the aspects of semantics, structure and target students.  
- The PUs were more relaxed in terms of their requirement on working experience of candidates.  
- Factors often associated with top BSs and MBAs in other countries (i.e. strong associations, alumni, close industry relationships, and media ranking) were underdeveloped in Malaysia.  
- The American influence in Malaysian ME is evident. |
| 2. What and how do the stakeholders perceive the roles of MBA?                     | 2.1 Perceived objectives / purposes / functions of MBA. | Both the MEs and students were positive with the roles of MBA as a MED platform. The MEs believed that the MBA to a certain extent, could adequately provide the theoretical and practical aspects required by managers. Likewise, the students to some extent recognized that MBA was a programme to gain knowledge and skills required for managerial-related careers. However, industries were less optimistic and acknowledged MBA more for its theoretical role but less for its limitations in practice, and they contributed this to the lack of industrial experience of MEs. What is striking is that the findings showed that companies were sceptical that MBA (or university education in general) would ever be completely relevant to their needs due to the contradictions between the academic and utilitarian interests. |
### Table 9.1 (cont.)
#### Summary Of Findings In Relation To Research Questions

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| 3. What and how do the stakeholders perceive the roles of its providers (i.e BSs, MErs, and/or university in general)? | 3.1 Perceived roles / responsibilities of BSs.  
3.3 Perceived roles / responsibilities of MErs.  
3.4 Also possibly, perceived roles / responsibilities of universities.  
3.5 Beneficiary(s)/stakeholder(s) of MBA perceived as the most important. | Both industry and students, not surprisingly, acknowledged BSs, MErs and/or universities for their vocational role. Industry expected them to provide trained human capital according to their needs. Similarly, the students also perceived that BSs believed employability of graduates should be their main priority thus had to ensure that their teachings followed industry needs. However, findings about the MErs were more of a concern as they too viewed their roles predominantly from an economic perspective, i.e. to prepare students for their career progression and for industry consumption. There was limited evidence to suggest concern for their educational, societal roles as academic departments. Furthermore, the BSs of these MErs behaved increasingly more like businesses than academic entities. |
| 4. How do the stakeholders define ‘relevant’ MBA?                                  | 4.1 Perceived criteria of relevant/good MBA / education.  
4.2 Beneficiary(s)/stakeholder(s) of MBA perceived as the most important.           | The findings suggest that all three stakeholders’ definitions of relevance were generally similar. For the BSs/MEs and industry, the evidence showed that the pragmatic emphasis was very clear, compared to the theory and rigor of the curriculum. Knowledge / teaching was seen as relevant based on its applicability to work, contribution to job and organizational performance and strategic objectives, tested and proven-results. In a similar way, the students defined relevance in relation to their career and organizational needs. Similar to industry perceptions, they also viewed relevance in relation to the knowledge contribution to effectiveness of organizations (employers). The findings showed that students with experience were more rigid in looking at relevance from the work, utilitarian lenses. While the definitions from industry and students were rather expected, the definitions by MErs were more of a concern. The research has shown that the way the academics viewed relevance was (increasingly) similar rather than different. |

Source: Author’s Construct
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Summary Of Findings In Relation To Research Questions

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| 5. What do the stakeholders look for in a manager and what are the associated competencies they think ought to be inculcated in an MBA? | 5.1 Descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of 'ideal/competent/effective' managers.  
5.2 Managerial competencies perceived important.  
5.3 Beneficiary(s) / stakeholders(s) perceived most important.                                                                                                                                                     | All stakeholders to a large extent had similar ideas about managerial roles and responsibilities and their required competencies. For the industry, managers were viewed predominantly as agents to achieve profit-oriented agendas. Similarly, student definitions also emphasized the importance of their contributions in achieving their employers' strategic objectives. These expectations were shared by the MBAs as they too looked at managerial roles and developed their MBA students mainly to become strategic agents of organizations. These perceptions corresponded with their views on the associated managerial competencies. The emphasis by companies on performance-oriented competencies in their managerial competency frameworks and/or MD initiatives showed that their perceptions of important competencies were built based on the social efficiency theory which supports the utilitarian purpose. The main concerns of students regarding career and performance-related competencies showed that they too believed in the same purpose. The sentiments of industry and students were shared by the MBAs who were also concerned mainly with inculcating technical and strategic competencies in their MBA students. |
| 6. To what extent are the stakeholders concerned about the social responsibility aspect in managers and MBA? | 6.1 Perceived importance of the social responsibility of managers.  
6.2 Perceived importance of the socially-balanced MBA.  
6.3 Suggestions to create a balanced MBA.                                                                                                                                                                | This research question was introduced to verify the stance of stakeholders in the above findings to examine the extent to which they had actually considered the social aspects in the responsibilities and development of managers. Their opinions were explored through two main questions, i.e., importance of ethics in managerial work, and literary claims that the profit-orientation in BBA/MBAs teaching was responsible in inculcating morally-impaired managers. The findings have shown rather surprising results. Not only was there limited awareness and inculcation of managerial ethics (thus the notion of 'moral managers') in MBAs in the three schools, but also some MBAs who were notably quite pessimistic and less enthusiastic about the whole issues. Ironically, there seemed to be more positivity in the views of industry and students about the importance of technically and ethically competent managers and subsequently the need for a balanced MBA. Furthermore, suggestions for the creation of a balanced MBA came more from the industry and student findings than from the academics. |
9.2.1 Research Question 1: Current Practices of MBA Provision by PUs

Despite claims about the growth of business education in Malaysia (Lewis and Pratt, 1996; Quraeshi and Luqmani, 2009), the findings revealed that the provision of MBAs in Malaysian PUs is still small. To date, 10 PUs offer MBA programs which is only an increase of 2 compared to 1995 (Zabid and Ling, 2003). More development can be observed in private providers. There are 7 private universities and 14 foreign MBAs (with local, private partners) that offer MBAs in Malaysia (Yes-Asia.com). These statistics are not formal nor comprehensive as some providers are not listed nor accredited by the Malaysian Qualification Agency. Daily newspapers have reported the mushrooming of foreign MBAs (mainly from the UK and Australia) offered in collaboration with local, private institutions.

The research did not find strong evidence to support the common perception of MBAs as university cash cows, or as having salary-career enhancing value for graduates, or as having much significance to organizations. The findings from the three BSs showed that the monetary significance of MBAs is quite limited. The fees for PU MBAs are the lowest compared to other MBAs. To give an idea, the MBA fees in local PUs are USD4-5k; by local private universities are USD6-9k; by a foreign university in Malaysia is USD13k; and by foreign universities with local private partners could be as high as USD24k (i.e. Sunway-Manchester MBA)\textsuperscript{62}. The MBA brand in the US/UK is generally strong and MBAs can often fetch high premiums which are the main reasons for their popularity to many applicants (The Economist, 2009). However, the research found no evidence to suggest that PU MBAs in Malaysia had created a similar impact. The students perceived the MBA more as a Masters degree than as an MBA itself. They did not necessarily associate the degree with higher salary. Instead, MBAs were seen more as stepping stones to better and higher career opportunities. Even then they felt that promotion would depend more on work performance than on the degree itself. Findings from the companies seemed to concur showing that MBA graduates were not necessarily preferred nor could the degree necessarily command a higher premium.

\textsuperscript{62} Reference: PostgradMalaysia.com.

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Competitiveness and marketing strategies were less evident in the PUs compared to private providers. Their program advertisements could only be found occasionally in newspapers. One of the three BSs covered in the research did not even have impressive and updated brochures or websites. Yet, they had little problem filling up classes. Programme aspects like fees, English medium, free meals, location, class schedule, and relaxed entry criteria were often used and considered as program strengths and differentiation factors to compete with other PUs. Findings from the students confirmed that some of these factors were responsible in their program / university selection decisions.

The findings showed that from the outset the MBA programs offered by PUs were somewhat similar to other MBAs. Full time MBA study in Malaysia may take a minimum of 1 ½ years with credit hours ranging from 44 to 51. The curriculum contains subjects following common functional structure and specialization components. There may be different usages and intensities in the types of teaching methods used in the programme but this is not intended to be explored in the research. What was found in the research however was that the approaches towards MBA and EMBA programmes in Malaysia are actually similar and may only differ in semantics, structure and target students.

To provide some perspective, findings on MBA entry criteria were compared to the AMBA accreditation standards. For instance, the AMBA stipulated that students should have a minimum of three years of appropriate and relevant postgraduate work experience upon entry. However in Malaysian PUs, the findings revealed that the work experience prerequisite was not only optional but the BSs were also fairly relaxed in the length and nature of the experience required. In certain schools, academic grades were treated as a substitute for work experience. Findings on the three schools suggested that flexibility with regard to the work experience prerequisite was sometimes regarded as a strategy to compete with other PUs. However, this practice was not well received by most of the MErs and in fact student working experience was one of the most debated issues in the research.

Top BSs and MBAs in other countries are often characterized by their strong associations, alumni, close relationship to industry, and media ranking (The
Economist, 2008; Finney, 2011; Zimmerman, 2001). The findings showed that in Malaysia these are quite undeveloped. There is no local body specifically for BSs to govern their practices. Very few BSs / MBAs were accredited by the AACSB, AMBA or EQUIS. Their alumni were under-developed and existed at the university rather than BS level. Their relationships with industries were not only weak but problematic. The MErs grumbled about difficulty getting the cooperation of industries to share their knowledge with universities. At the same time, industries complained that academicians were reluctant to leave their comfort zone to learn about ‘real’ businesses. The impact of international media ranking appeared to be less of a concern. The research also found evidence that suggested a lack of systematic compilation about MBA provisions and synergies among the schools.

The hegemony of American ME in other countries has increasingly been noted (Neal and Finlay, 2008; Tiratsoo, 2010; Kipping et al, 2010). However, none have so far been mentioned about Malaysia but in this respect, the findings about the three schools suggest that Malaysian ME is no different. The American influence in Malaysian ME is evident and can be seen in the curriculum design, teaching materials, methods and assignments. The findings have also shown that the belief or rejection of certain approaches by schools / MErs sometimes tended to be justified based on their perceived practices of American BSs. The findings also showed that this influence permeates mainly through American degrees received by many of the MErs. A notable number of MErs in the three schools had received MBAs or other types of ME degrees in the US. Their American educational experience was shown to have significantly influenced their beliefs and approaches in MBA. The American influence was also a result of the involvement of American schools in the early establishment of ME in Malaysia. Two of the three BSs have built their MBAs based on the foundation set up by their previous American partners. Judging from the future plans of the schools/MErs, the research anticipates that American influence would continue to have a stronger impact on the local setting.
9.2.2 Research Question 2: Stakeholders’ Perceptions Towards the Roles of MBA

The proclaimed strength of the MBA is that it adequately addresses both the theoretical (educational) and pragmatic (developmental) aspects of managerial needs (Brown et al, 1996; Monks and Walsh, 2001). Therefore, the objective above aimed to study the extent to which stakeholders perceived MBAs in relation to these roles.

The findings have shown that for the MErs, MBAs were perceived as a form of MED in the sense that they positively believed, to an extent, that it could adequately provide the theoretical and practical aspects required by managers. Similarly, the students, also to some extent, recognized the educational and training aspects of MBAs for gaining business and management knowledge and skills. However, industries were shown to be less optimistic and acknowledged the MBA more for its theoretical strength but considered it limited in practice. The lack of industrial experience of MErs was mentioned as the major cause of the gap. In this respect, the findings correspond with the literature regarding the longstanding and persistent complaints by industries about the insufficient practicality and relevance of MBA to their needs, and their view that teaching in BSs was too divorced from real business problems (Cheit, 1985; Porter and McKibbin, 1988; Neelankavil, 1994; Chaudhry, 2003). Of note was the fact that some of the companies’ representatives were sceptical that the MBA (or university education in general) would ever be completely relevant to their needs. The academic nature of the MBA (being a university programme) was seen as a restraint on the programme to fully match their company-specific, utilitarian needs and was instead seen as an automatic demand on the programme to emphasize more on theory and rigour and less on practice.

9.2.3 Research Question 3: Stakeholders’ Perceptions Towards the Roles of MBA Providers

The dual education-utilitarian purposes were investigated further by exploring stakeholders’ views regarding the economic-societal roles of BSs. The findings from industries and students were not surprising. Industries perceived BSs / universities mainly for their economic role i.e. as training grounds to provide developed human
capital for their consumption. Likewise, the students also viewed BS mainly for their economic role. They enrolled in MBAs mainly with a career orientation in mind and were attracted to its reputation as a ticket to better employment / career. They believed that graduate employability should be the main priority of universities, whose role they felt was to prepare human resources for industry needs. Consequently, they expected the teaching to meet industry expectations.

The perceptions of BSs/MErs were more of a worry. Their roles in MBAs were predominantly economic and they were shown to be more concerned with the preparation of students for career progression and industry consumption. Their definition of success in terms of graduates, schools and accomplishment as MErs was judged mainly on the career performances of their students. There was rarely any mention about the development of students as responsible members of society. This seems to suggest their lack of concern about societal roles.

9.2.4 Research Question 4: Stakeholders’ Definitions of Relevant MBA

The dual academic-utilitarian orientation transcends the way one perceives knowledge relevance, which relates to rigor and/or pragmatic emphasis. As academia, relevant knowledge is associated with scholarship, rigor, neutrality and the benefits of the greater good. Whereas, utilitarianism is concerned about the extent to which knowledge is useful for practice and in this case how it would contribute to organization objectives. This duality was pursued to explore the perceptions and expectations of stakeholders with regard to the kind of knowledge they believed should be covered in MBAs.

BSs and industry do not always see eye-to-eye on what constitutes a relevant curriculum (Pfeffer and Fong 2002). The research however suggests that this notion is less applicable and the way MErs and companies view relevance is similar. For industries, their view of relevance was unsurprisingly defined in relation to pragmatic relevance. Knowledge was seen as important if it was useful for contributing to job effectiveness and the achievement of strategic objectives. It was further shown that knowledge was deemed relevant if it had been tested and proven with results. In this
respect, this finding agreed with past literature (Kellie, 2004; Rubin and Dierdorff, 2007; Garrick and Rhodes, 2000; Wilkinson, 1999).

To the students, relevance was defined in relation to their career and organizational needs. They expected MBAs to provide them practical knowledge that could be useful in their job and organization needs. Like industry, they also viewed relevance in terms of knowledge contribution to organization effectiveness. The definition by the students concurred with past research (Kellie, 2004). It was also noted that defining relevance based on work experience was stronger and clearer in students who had work experience compared to those with little or none. This might suggest that experienced students tended to have a more rigid view of what constituted useful knowledge and expected the MBA to teach them accordingly.

Surprisingly, findings from MErs suggest that they also seemed to emphasize more of the pragmatic aspects in their teaching. They believed that MBAs should follow industry’s lead and teach more pragmatic and practical-oriented subjects. At the same time, they believed that MBA teaching should emphasize subjects that students could appreciate, relate to and apply in their work. The main justifications they provided for having this orientation was that they were simply meeting the working students expectations of practical knowledge; and that they believed the practical orientation was the true (i.e. original) purpose for the existence of the MBA (as in the US).

9.2.5 Research Question 5: Stakeholders’ Definitions of Managers and Competencies in MBA

The above objective was pursued due to the increasing calls for managers and their education to not only emphasize their economic roles but also their social responsibilities (Drucker, 1985; Cornuel, 2005; Cabrera and Bowen, 2005; London and Morfopoulos, 2010). The academic-utilitarian purposes highlighted in the research can also be seen in the way the stakeholders defined the roles, responsibilities and competencies associated with a managerial job. In this case, the stakeholders’ opinions were analyzed to ascertain whether they reflected the emphasis for managers to be technically and socially-balanced.
The findings suggest that all stakeholders to a large extent had similar ideas regarding what constituted good/effective managers, their responsibilities and the required competencies. For industries, managers were primarily viewed as agents to achieve economic objectives. Similarly, student definitions of managerial roles were evolved mainly by regarding managers as employees that served the interests of organizations. These expectations were fulfilled by MErs as they too believed MBAs should produce managers who could perform as strategic partners and could contribute to organization objectives.

The views of the stakeholders above corresponded with their perceptions towards the required managerial competencies. For the MErs, the competencies they inculcated in MBAs appeared to centre mainly on performance-related competencies. While from the point-of-view of industries, their managerial competency frameworks (basis of MD, assessment and promotional decisions), also focused on instrumentalist competencies which dealt directly with the strategic roles of managers. In terms of MBAs, the companies emphasized the transferability of learning to the workplace. The MBA students also expressed similar concerns, i.e. they emphasized career-related competencies that would help them build their career and assist in their daily work (a finding which confirms past studies i.e. Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Baruch and Leeming, 2001; Sturges et al, 2003). Their perception of competencies suggests they were formed based on the social efficiency theory that supports instrumentalism commonly found in company HRD interventions (Burgoyne, 1989; Cheetham and Chivers, 1996). For industries therefore, their instrumentalist perceptions were perhaps understandable and forgivable given their common profit-orientation. However, for MErs to look at the issue from a similar perspective contradicts their roles as educators.

9.2.6 Research Question 6: Stakeholders’ Concerns Regarding the Aspect of Social Responsibility in Managers and MBA

The stance of the respondents in the above findings were verified to uncover the extent to which they had considered the flip side of the coin, i.e. the social aspect of the research issues which relates to the educational purpose of a MBA. Questions related to ethical issues were used for this purpose. The respondents’ opinions were
gauged for instance, on the importance of ethics, social responsibility, and a balanced MED.

The findings showed rather surprising results. Not only was there limited awareness and inculcation of managerial ethics (thus the notion of ‘moral managers’) in MBAs by the schools and the MErs’ interviewed, some of the MErs were quite pessimistic and less enthusiastic about the whole issue. Ironically, more positive impressions emanated from respondents in industries and students, who seemed more aware and expressed more emphasis on the social aspect of managers and MBAs. The explanations of what may have resulted in such findings are discussed in the next section.

9.3 Discussions

Informed by the widespread criticisms and dual dilemmas surrounding the relevance of MBAs to the industry and academia, a research was conducted in Malaysia whose needs and PUs were faced with similar educational-utilitarian concerns about holistic development for the production of well-rounded managers. The aims of the research were to explore the views of three main MBA stakeholders on the adequacy of PU MBA provisions in Malaysia. The stakeholders were gauged over their opinions on several subjective terms that carried academic-utilitarian connotations and were divided into five interrelated research questions. Their opinions were analyzed in relation to the educational-utilitarian models to see if the MBAs were indeed economically-socially adequate to produce functionally and ethically competent managers. The research findings raised several issues which are discussed in the topics below.

9.3.1 Are MBA Programmes by PUs ‘Adequate’?

The main aim of the research was to explore the ‘adequacy’ of MBA provision by Malaysian PUs. ‘Adequacy’ here refers to the extent to which the MBA envisioned by the respondents was balanced in educational and utilitarian aspects to educate functionally and ethically competent managers. ‘Adequacy’ also relates to Malaysia’s vision for holistic development to build a nation with a robust, sustainable economy.
and societies that are spiritually and ethically-strong. Based on these indicators, the research concludes that the present MBAs offered by the schools are not adequate.

The research findings suggested rather unified perspectives from all three stakeholders. They believed that the central role of BSs (or university in general) was to provide trained workforces to drive the economy. MBAs were expected to teach pragmatic and instrumentalist subjects which may directly relate to work and organizational effectiveness. Their idea of managers centred round their economic responsibility to serve their organizations, and they consequently emphasized on the managerial, performance-related competencies. While the findings of industries and students were somewhat predictable, for BSs and the MErs to look at the issues through the same lenses was a matter of concern. The utilitarian ‘bias’ of MErs in MBAs was further confirmed by their lack of effort and enthusiasm in the importance of social responsibility in managers and MBA teaching. MBAs in Malaysia still appear stuck in its orthodox form. The research further shows that the schools in Malaysia have not had subscribed to the increasing call for responsible and balanced ME (Grey, 2002; Cornuel, 2005; Datar, et al, 2011; Jain and Stopford, 2011, Hartel, 2010).

While most schools in the US and UK have long being directed to introduce ethics subjects in their MBA curriculums, only four out of 10 PU BSs in Malaysia had this component in their programmes. In the three case schools, only one had the component and even then the ethical emphasis was inadequate as it was shared with the business law component. The findings showed that the ethical exposure and inculcation by individual MErs was also very limited. This further suggests that moral responsibility in managers did not have a very important place in their teaching.

The research discovered that the utilitarian bias was not necessarily a deliberate or conscious act. As mentioned before, there were no indications in the beginning parts of their interviews to suggest about their concerns for moral managers or responsible ME. They only provided opinions about the issues when the researcher brought it up (except one student who volunteered his own opinion) toward the end of their interview sessions.63 It may be construed that this initial silence meant they were oblivious about the whole idea of managerial social responsibility and the concept of

63 Please refer to the methodology chapter for justification for the ‘leading question’.
responsible ME. In their transmitted views, the economic role was the only role of managers and thus the sole purpose of teaching MBAs. Profit-maximization was considered normal for businesses, and developing managers for this purpose was also deemed as normal. Upon sharing the relevant criticisms of BSs/MBAs, some responses were even more surprising. While some of the MErs (although initially surprised about claims that MBAs taught immoral practices) admitted they should do their part to promote more balanced teaching, others quite harshly disagreed that their teaching was biased and dismissed any suggestion of responsibility for the actions of their graduates. While some were quite reluctant and sceptical that they could provide positive impact on the characters of their students’, others were quite defensive and considered greater expectation to inculcate ethical values in students another ridiculous demand on PUs.

Returning to the aim of the research, these findings altogether suggest that the MBAs provided by the schools may have been inadequate in developing well-rounded MBA graduates who would be concerned about the ethical implications of their managerial decisions. This inadequacy may be used to suggest that the MErs had not satisfactorily fulfilled the educational aspect of the program nor their role as educators who should not only develop students for their vocational needs but also to nurture them to become responsible members of society (Grey, 2002; Hartel, 2010; Cornuel, 2005; Jain and Stopford, Datar, et al, 2011). Given the present approach in MBA, the country’s aspiration for holistic nation development may be greatly affected.

9.3.2 Social Responsibility as Religious Obligation

The research found that the question of ethics was associated with one’s religion. Although at first glance the findings above may be interpreted negatively, they reveal that the silence and un-enthusiasm towards ethics / responsible ME may be due to their belief that ethics comes from one’s religion. This association was clearly made by some company representatives and students who suggested that developing ethical values was not the responsibility of universities nor outsiders but that of parents at home. The findings showed that morality was closely associated with religion, family and upbringing. Issues such as the secularization of societies and capitalist systems were the factors they associated with the Western world that were blamed as the
reasons for the moral crises in corporate America. Surprisingly, the ethics-religion association was not evident from the MEr findings\textsuperscript{64}.

This piece of evidence suggests that unlike Western countries where the call for balanced ME teaching to develop ethical managers is a major agenda in the reforms of their BSs’ curriculum, in Malaysia this issue was considered fairly irrelevant because of the belief that religious foundations and family institutions were supposedly strong enough to adequately shape one’s morality not only as a person but transcends to the whole aspect of life including in his/her professional career. In other words, ‘managerial ethics’ was perceived irrelevant. Instead, the individual person’s ethics was the issue. This may explain their scepticism towards the idea, necessity or possibility of developing students’ ethical values in a short period and in a formal setting like the MBA course when they supposedly had an already established set of values.

The close association between ethics and religion/spirituality in the perceptions of Malaysians is common and has also been empirically observed by Rees and Johari (2010). In this respect, it greatly differs from most Western societies, where the involvement of religion in discussions is not always favourable. For instance, Dyck et al (2009) argued that the reason why management scholars (i.e. in the Western world) were reluctant to criticize the profit-oriented emphasis in conventional management theories using religious / spiritual arguments was because of their fear of appearing unscientific (as this supposedly jeopardized the field’s ‘legitimacy’) as well as imposing spiritual beliefs on others. Furthermore, the decline of character development in Western educational systems was also attributed to their lack of agreement on what constituted morality, resulting in the education being done primarily for vocational purposes (Cavanagh 2006, Huct, et al 2004). This research has demonstrated that these reasons are rather inapplicable in Malaysia, being a country where 99 per cent of its population identify themselves with a religion, hence making religion separate from discussions impossible. It should be noted however that religion too has the tendency to be (mis)used to justify or provide excuses in all aspects of life. Although the respondents viewed religion as overarching, encompassing all aspects of life, the

\textsuperscript{64} Except by a MEr who taught the ethics course. Even then, she only mentioned about the issue lightly.
exclusion of these values in their teaching ironically projected them as subscribers to secularism, the ideology they associated with the West.

Despite the belief that religion should guide one’s actions, the reality in Malaysia is less than meets the eye. Corporate malpractices are not uncommon although not all were exposed to the public (Say, 2010). Malaysia was notorious in human trafficking cases (humantrafficking.org). Its performance in the Corruption Perception Index (2010) was below 5.0 meaning that its public services were perceived to be significantly corrupt. The performance of Muslim countries was even more appalling as 51 out of the 55 Islamic OIC countries researched were considered corrupt and 38 were considered ‘severely corrupt’ with the score of 2.9 and below (Shikoh and Mushtaq, 2011). This illustrates the tendency to use religion as an excuse, a useful strategy in debates although in reality, the principles of Islam are rhetorical and merely ritual. Similar perspective were also noted by Shikoh and Mushtaq (2011) who called for OIC countries to return to the core principles of justice and morality advocated by their religion in order to eradicate corruption.

Religion should not be used as an excuse for not teaching morality in management practices. MErs cannot assume that students of religious or non-religious backgrounds are automatically informed about moral values. The influence of external factors (like capitalism, Morgan et al, 2011) and social degradation (Westerman et al, 2011) which have purportedly influenced moral values should not be used as a reason to acquit BSs not to perform their societal roles. Blaming external factors and relying on others to carry out the paradigm shift to rectify the moral crisis in business may damage the legitimacy and respectability of the management field that supposedly eschews certain accepted value systems (Boyle, 2004). Furthermore, research claiming the connection of BSs’ teaching with their students’ (im)morality both in America (McCabe and Trevino, 1995; Westerman et al, 2011) and elsewhere (Ozdogan and Eser, 2007) showed that BSs and MErs simply cannot deny that they directly or indirectly, may have contributed to the problem. For Malaysia, the evidence of considerable American influence in their MBA practices showed that they also inherited the same capitalist principles prevalent in BS curriculums that American BSs themselves are now trying to change (Bisoux, 2011).
9.3.3 Responsible ME is an Evolution?

There was an interesting suggestion in the research that related responsible ME as an evolution in the field. One ME explained that the lack of awareness in Malaysian BSs of ethical inculcation in their MBA teaching was because Malaysia was not ‘there’ yet as it was still struggling with the ‘basic’ economic purpose of a ME, i.e. ‘how to make profit’.

... I don’t know whether (more awareness about social responsibility of BS/ME teaching) is part of the movement, because it’s evolution process, you see. Just like last time we were not so aware about green marketing, environmental friendly, now people try to create that environment. So when thing start to learn, they learn the basic first. For example in business school we learn the basic first like finance, marketing, how to make profit, basic. Then, then we up the level ok not just that, it has to be corporate social responsibilities, societal marketing, we have social ventures, all these things. So they bring to the higher up level. ... So for my own views, it’s just an evolution stage as well, you know. So previously when people want to learn about doing business, we have to learn basic first, how to do business, how to do accounting, how to gain profit, profit is part of the survival of the business, no profit will go bankrupt, you see. So they have to learn the basic first. Of course when they learn basic it’s from business school. And then people start to study ab here comes the problem, you see. They are not aware about corporate social responsibility, about ethics, about this protection of property rights you know, then mispractice here and there, therefore we have to bring higher awareness. Not just the basic. Now we have to think. It’s just like now we have to be aware about our environmental friendly, not just business perspective but other perspective.

(ME17, Marketing lecturer, BS3)

So is it an evolution? There may be some truth in the above thesis. The stage of development of a country’s ME has been noted to influence the roles and purposes of its ME (Lorange, 2003; Easterby-Smith, 1989). Using the argument that the growth of business and management education is closely associated with the growth of capitalism and the theories developed by BSs are to provide solutions to the problems faced by businesses (Hasegawa, 2006), it may therefore be true that the development of a country’s ME depends on the development of its economy. As mentioned before, concepts, like corporate social responsibility, moral managers, and responsible ME conceived by American academics were a result of the corporate crises in the US. In other words, the American-popularized concepts were a response to crises in the American corporate world. That is to say, the more complex the business problems the more advanced the theories produced by the academics in the country. However, in the global world the American problems do not stay only in America but they
significantly affect (or ruin) other countries. Therefore, their corporate crimes are the world’s problems which require interventions from all countries.

There is perhaps also a question of whether researching social awareness in a country with less developed ME is ‘a little too soon’. Is it right to expect BSs in Malaysia to have such awareness when they are behind in many aspects even with regard to basic issues like quality of students and lecturers? To be fair, university-level business and management education in Malaysia only started about 3 decades ago compared to the US whose Harvard Business School had already celebrated its centennial birthday. Is it right to compare the extent of Malaysia’s approach to responsible ME when even in advanced countries, the issue only received serious attention a few years back? The UN’s Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) was only established in 2007. And unsurprisingly none of the BSs from Malaysia has subscribed to the organization. Schlegelmilch and Thomas (2011) recently called for AACSB, EQUIS, AMBA and GMAC to play a critical role in ensuring that their accreditation standards emphasized a balanced MBA curriculum to ensure the program remained relevant in the future. How would Malaysian BSs be affected by these moves when almost all of them had not obtained accreditation from these institutions\textsuperscript{65}.

While the development stage of a country’s ME is a factor (Lorange, 2003; Easterby-Smith, 1989), it should not however be a perpetual excuse for a school’s stagnation. BSs in neighbouring countries and those in similar or lower economic stages have already joined the global bandwagon of responsible ME. Without awareness and knowledge, there is great concern that Malaysian ME will end up like the situation in the US. As it is, the way that Malaysian ME is progressing is similar to what was experienced in the US. American BSs made their programmes more utilitarian as a result of criticisms from industries saying that the programmes were too academic and irrelevant for their needs. Similarly Malaysian BSs and public universities in general have also been bombarded with the same complaints and have shifted the emphasis to tailor university teaching to industry needs. And like what the Americans did before, the findings showed that the researched schools had been very active in trying to fulfill industry expectations. Subsequently, the move by American BSs to receive huge industry endowments, which was argued caused them to lose their academic

\textsuperscript{65} Except for one BS that had received AMBA accreditation.
sovereignty (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002), is now being ‘copied’ by one of the schools apparently because that was one of the ‘best practices’ they learned from other top BSs. Also, the highly-criticized economic values of the ME programmes which some American academics are trying to rectify is also being followed by Malaysian BSs. As an illustration, while American BSs like Stanford tried to change their image by projecting more responsible ME, one of the researched schools instead re-vamped their image by promoting their MBA based on its economic power. In recent years, writings in popular journals were dominated by debates about the crisis surrounding BSs. A recent workshop to discuss how BSs/MErs could have done things differently may suggest that they considered the path they travelled a mistake. (Hannah and Peredo, 2011). Furthermore, Pfeffer and Fong (2002) have warned that BSs in other countries should not repeat the same mistake. Yet the research found that the schools studied in Malaysia were doing similar things that were likely to lead them to the same situation as the American BSs. It is therefore important to learn from the experience of other countries. We do not need to go through the same process and make the same mistakes to learn.

9.3.4 Utilitarian MBA an Inevitable Choice?

The literary analysis has discussed that the academic or professional model adopted by BSs has considerable influence on educational or utilitarian inclinations in MBA practices. Comparatively, as revealed in the findings in Chapter 6, the utilitarian inclination was the most evident in BS1, followed by BS2 and BS3. On the contrary, the academic or educational inclination was seen most in BS3, BS2 and lastly BS1. As mentioned before, BS1, which was originally part of an academic faculty, had become relatively independent and showed the characteristics of a school that adopted the professional model. BS3 was part of an academic faculty but had recently become an independent entity. BS3 was still attached to the academic faculty but intended to detach itself.

Several observations can be made regarding these findings. Firstly, it confirms that the adoption of a particular model influences the approaches that BSs take in MBA. Secondly, it seems that when a professional model is adopted whereby organizations

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66 As stated in Figure 1.2.
are considered the main stakeholder, little concern is placed on social obligation. (eg. there were no ethics subjects in BS1). When a school was oriented towards the academic model, there was more attention paid on social responsibility but the relationship of the MBA to industry / managerial needs were less obvious. This suggests the dynamic aspect of the dual models. If a school is concentrating on fulfilling utilitarian needs, there is a tendency to ignore the social aspect. Likewise if the school is concentrating on the academic needs, it would be at the expense of the utilitarian aspect (i.e relevance of program to industry). This scenario illustrates the complexity and difficulty of maintaining the dual balance.

The findings further revealed that BS2 and BS3 were making efforts to detach themselves from their faculty, quoting the need to ‘grow’ as the reason. This might suggest that the MErs acknowledged the contradictory nature of academic and professional models. A serendipitous discovery from the company might further illustrate this issue. The company’s corporate university which was originally established to serve its company’s needs was ‘forced’ to divert from its intended purpose and in so doing had become less relevant to the company in order to progress as a ‘true’ university. The process was described as ‘inevitable’ as industry and academia were different in needs and growth. Hence these findings demonstrated not only that the requirements of the academic and corporate were worlds apart but most importantly, that even industry admitted the conflict of interest and had found reaching a common ground difficult even in their own university.

The above observations relate to the issue of the claim that putting BSs in the academic setting was flawed as it had caused BSs to face contradictory demands (Chit 1985; Bloom 1987 in Starkey and Tempe 2005; Wheatercroft 1970 in Brown et al, 1996, Pfeffer and Fong, 2002). Privatization had been suggested as a possible option that BSs could consider (Griffiths and Murray, 1985 in Brown, et al, 1996; Thomas, 2007). This resembled the above situation where schools tried to break away from their faculties, suggesting that academic rulings had inhibited their progress. Progress was seen as the extent to which schools broke free from their academic entities. This scenario raises questions about the relevance of academic universities. Do BSs need to be un-academic and operate like a private sector in order to be relevant to industry needs? Is utilitarian education inevitable?
The dilemma faced by BSs is not exclusive to business education but a problem for all tertiary education. Privatisation of universities is a global phenomenon (Lee, 2004; Mishra and Mishra, 2004). Malaysia began the corporatization of its PUs in 1998 and the move had seen the government withdrawing its funding and expecting PUs to generate their own income through commercial activities (Mok, 2007). This had completely changed the role of PUs from ‘ivory towers’ to commercial enterprises. There are great concerns that this trend would jeopardize the role of universities in developing civilization and safeguarding human welfare. In Malaysia, Faruqi (2011) highlighted that PUs overly-concerned with commercialisation and managerialism had resulted in academics who were preoccupied with profit-generating research activities rather than spending time developing students. Patriotta and Starkey (2008) noted that PUs previously had social contract in return for the funding they received from taxpayer money. Given the present trend in university budget cuts and rising university fees as has happened in the UK, does it now mean that PUs are less responsible for performing their social purpose? Research suggests that the role of universities is definitely changing priority. Strategic issues are reported the most important priorities in current and future roles of BSs (Rayment and Smith, 2010; ABS, 2007) and in higher education in general (Hussin and Ismail, 2009) more than the importance of societal roles and academic credentials. With this trend, it is easy to see why universities have been predicted to face extinction in the future (Drucker, 1985).

9.3.5 Developing and Educating Professionally, Ethically and Spiritually Competent Managers

The research had initially attempted to bridge the academic and utilitarian natures of MBA by looking at managerial competencies in MBA i.e. the competencies necessary to ensure that managerial graduates produced were well-rounded, competent professionally, ethically and in Malaysia’s yardstick spiritually. Although this aim had not been fully achieved as originally intended (see Limitations section below), the research did find some positive signs to suggest the possibility of creating a balanced MBA particularly in the Malaysian context although this had come more from industry and students’ views (though not all of them). The research found that
industries and students might welcome ‘alternative’ kinds of MBA that can serve both vocational and social purposes.

There was a suggestion by the respondents that balanced managers could be developed by embedding Islamic principles into the MBA. As discussed earlier, this suggestion arose out of their opinions that immoral business practices were caused by capitalism and secular societies which they associated with the Western world. Given this analysis, they suggested that Malaysian BSs ‘return to their roots’ by developing MBAs that are different from the values created by American MBAs. They called for a redesign of the MBA curriculum based on the Islamic economic system, eastern values and Islamic business and management principles to replace the capitalist ideology prevalent in most Western business and management educations. They acknowledged that business itself was profit-motivated therefore had to always be balanced with a moral, altruistic mission. This moral mission was referred to as ‘business jihad’ and may be likened in a slight way to the western-invented concept of corporate social responsibility. Lecturers were asked to play a balanced role by emphasizing the principle that ‘you have to grow others in order for you to grow’. From the student group, a similar association emerged. Despite believing that ethics was shaped by religious backgrounds there was optimism that the MBA could actually play some role in cultivating one’s ethics if it had the ethical / social component in the programme. These findings showed that in Malaysia, Western-based ideals were perceived from religious points of view. The concerns transmitted above reflect similarly calls in the ME discipline.

In the past bringing religion into academic discussions was not encouraged as it tended to be seen as un-scholarly, especially in the Western world (Dyck et al, 2009). Thus, the suggestions made above may not be acceptable to all. However, there is evidence in the field to show that there is (the return of) interest in religion or spirituality in the search for answers to business or ME problems. Some articles have analyzed the flaws of management theories, BSs and ME against religious/spiritual perspectives. (eg. Bay et al, 2010; Karakas, 2011; Dyck et al, 2009). The research regards the embedding of Islamic / spiritual values into MBA as corresponding to recent suggestions for the inclusion of knowledge and expertise from liberal arts, humanities and social science studies into ME (Mitroff, 2011; Patriotta and Starkey,
2008; March, 2003; Wright, 2010) to inject humanity concerns into the programme thus balancing its economic emphasis. The research feels that the suggestions submitted by the research respondents, i.e. for it to embedded religious / spiritual values in MBA, reflect the same concerns in the discipline.

The research is convinced that the present characteristics of Malaysian ME would make it possible to develop alternative MBAs that embed religious / spiritual principles as suggested by the respondents above. This is because the country’s BSs are still relatively ‘safe’ from the impacts of competitive/harsh media rankings, student/consumer power, powerful alumni and ‘ownership’ by companies. Without these factors, it is still possible to make a change. Secondly, as shown in the findings, the students seemed conscientious and appreciative of the value of learning rather than being solely motivated by the financial values of MBAs. They wanted lecturers who had wisdom and were able to inspire them to become better persons. These suggest a genuine interest in learning. The research regards having industries and students thinking along the same lines as crucial to enable the development of a balanced MBA that is relevant and satisfactory to the needs of all the stakeholders.

As a conclusion, the research whole-heartedly believes that the purpose of an education, regardless its type, is to create a better humanity. The research agrees with various scholars that organizations and managers must simultaneously serve and protect the interests of organizations, employees and public (Drucker, 1985; 2001; Cornuel, 2005; Cabrera and Bowen, 2005; March, 2003) and that their education provided by BS should ultimately aim ‘to encourage the emergence in companies of socially responsible behaviour which is at the same time appropriate in order to enhance corporate performance’ (Cornuel, 2003).

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67 Spiritual had been pointed out as the more appropriate term than religion as the former encompasses various kinds of faiths therefore may be more acceptable to some people (Rees and Johari, 2010). The term spirituality may also be appropriate considering the presence of multi-cultural and religions in Malaysia which has been noted will preclude any single paradigm from gaining predominance (Mellahi and Wood, 2004).
9.4 Contributions, Implications and Future Research

The research contributes to the discipline of ME most importantly by demonstrating how a non-western, religious, developing country viewed the issues of a balanced MBA, criticisms of the MBA, responsible ME, social roles, and ethical managers that dominated Western literature. The research discovered that not all MErs subscribed to these ideas. The research showed that spirituality played a very significant role in influencing the opinions of the respondents about the issues and their suggestions. Future research should look at other religious countries to see if this a universal phenomenon.

The research provided empirical evidence about what MErs actually felt about their roles in MBA/ME, particularly the social roles. The considerable debates regarding the morality and social roles of MErs/ BSs in the literature has so far appeared mostly as individual viewpoints, BS institutional directives or conference reports. The rarity of empirical knowledge on the issue resulted in the assumption that social obligation was a shared belief all MErs generally submitted to. The closest empirical research found in the issue was by Rayment and Smith (2010) who gathered views only from BSs/MErs. Although they had rather similar findings suggesting the lack of importance placed on societal roles by BSs, they had not however provided the underlying reasons for the views, which may have formed the samples’ opinions as the research has done here. The study has shown that not all the MErs researched were enthusiastic about their expected social role. The morality / social issues plaguing the ME field were viewed as a crisis of the Western world as a result of their secular society and capitalist economy. Ethics in Malaysian BSs was considered a religious obligation of individuals, not that of a job. Given this perspective, there was a tendency of relieving themselves from having to address the issue. Research conducted in non-traditional settings may be worthwhile to determine how their MErs viewed their economic and social obligations.

The research also discovered that the adoption of social responsibility in ME was associated with the stage / age of ME development in a country. Given Malaysia’s still undeveloped ME system, the economic roles were considered a basic responsibility and the social role was a higher role that might only be fulfilled once the
schools in Malaysia had satisfied their economic responsibilities. This finding may be taken to suggest that perhaps the social role is (currently) a concern of BSs in developed countries with more established ME systems. It is proposed that future research should investigate whether economic-social priorities as found in this research are applicable in other countries.

9.5 Suggestions for MBA / ME Practices in Malaysia

In addition to the suggestions above, the following are some others which may improve the state of ME/MBA practices in Malaysia.

- To ensure that their MBAs are balanced by emphasizing on the competencies, ethics and social responsibility of the needs of managers. For a start, all BSs should at least include the ethics course in their curriculum.
- To design programmes which are more appreciative towards the local needs and cultural practices. At the same time, to be extra careful when examining when importing or referring to ME practices of other countries.
- The BSs and MErs in Malaysia need to adopt paradigm change in the way they view the roles of organizations, managers, and their education. Orthodox view in defining managers with their economic roles is increasingly irrelevant in the world.
- To establish an association to govern and control the quality of ME programmes provided by PUs, to facilitate discussion and cooperation among the management educators for the improve the teaching and research, and to conduct other initiatives for the advancement of the field.
- To establish a greater relationship and cooperation with the industries.
- To place more importance on the requirement of working experience for entry into MBA programmes to ensure that both students and management educators can gain maximum benefits from the programme.

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68 Considering that having a stand-alone subject on ethics is not necessarily the only or the best approach in the ethical inculcation in the program.
9.6 Limitations of Findings

The research may be limited in certain ways. Firstly, its sample size might be considered small for some. Due to the qualitative nature of the research, the logistical issues associated with organizing 3 groups of samples from various sources, and the limited timeframe of a PhD study, the possibility of a bigger sample size was relatively unrealistic. The research however managed to gather very in-depth quality data from the respondents sufficient to form a complete story about the researched issues. Also as justified in the methodology chapter, the researcher believed she had reached data ‘saturation point’ (Mason, 2002) which signify the data adequacy.

Secondly, the findings to describe the MBA practices of all PUs in Malaysia need to be interpreted with caution. The findings only present some of the most notable characteristics that may differentiate Malaysia’s PU MBAs with top MBAs in other countries. They may not be as detailed or updated given that they were based on secondary data from websites and prospectuses of the PUs. The more detailed explanations were however provided on the practices of the three selected schools. Further, the practices of PUs described in the research may not be applicable to private MBA providers. The operations faced by the public and private universities in Malaysia are very different (Quraeshi and Luqmani, 2009). Similarly, the values of public and private universities or foreign MBAs can be very different (Zabid and Ling, 2003; Hoo et al, 2009).

Thirdly, the original intention of the research was to actually gather views from the stakeholders that could lead to the identification of list of competencies to design a balanced MBA. However after gathering the data, the researcher did not find much evidence about competencies instead the stronger themes that emerged from the research were more on about the roles of BSs. This explains some inadequate continuity and reference on the competency literatures in the discussion chapter. However, there are insightful explanations from this ‘unachieved objective’. As discussed above, this issue further showed that the concern for a more balanced MBA depended on the development of that country’s MBA. Borrowing Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, perhaps the emphasis on responsible managers and MBAs in Malaysia is
placed higher at the ‘self actualization’ stage whereas they are still at the lower level needs stage struggling with basic issues.

9.7 Final Reflections

The PhD journey was a long and arduous but nevertheless fruitful learning experience. It has benefited me tremendously both in a professional and personal capacity. Every step in the research process posed new challenges that also became opportunities to acquire new skills. Being an arts and crafts enthusiast, I liken the PhD process to building a picture from broken pieces of mosaic. Reviewing the relevant literature was like sifting through broken tiles of different colours and shapes. Gathering and making critical sense of the literatures and turning them into a research proposal was like creatively combining tiles together to create an eye-catching picture. Designing the research methodology involved breaking down the research questions into smaller objectives, and then into further possible interview questions. This was like separating the mosaic tiles again into even smaller pieces. I started my data collection with my questions prepared and was confident about what I was looking for and how it would contribute to my research questions. However, upon obtaining the data, I became overwhelmed with its amount and richness. Everything seemed relevant and interesting, I ended up analyzing and trying to squeeze everything into the research. The data analysis became too long and detailed. There were too many layers of analyses and too many data categories. I got caught up in the details and lost focus of the aim of the research. Using the mosaic analogy again, I found scattered pieces of mosaics (data) which I had broken down but did not know how to put back together to recreate the picture. It took me a while to get out of the mess and to make sense of my findings. However, when comparing notes with fellow qualitative research PhD candidates I realized this was normal and part of the thinking process. Doing a research of this capacity and of this length required a lot of focus, determination and positivity which my supervisor had endlessly assisted me throughout with his useful advice, experience and perspectives to enable me to shape and strengthen my research. On a personal level, his patience, encouragement and understanding of my character and situation had made the PhD hurdles easier to overcome.
Nevertheless, the hurdles above were incomparable to the test which God had planned for me. Little did I expect that the real lesson in undertaking a PhD study would actually be about life itself. This journey was less about a PhD and more about self-discovery and becoming a better person. I started my PhD journey well. In the first year, I was like other typical PhD candidates, i.e. focused, absorbed and highly-enthusiastic about my topic. My research proposal received positive reviews. With my research methodological strategies and tools in place, I flew home to Malaysia to begin my fieldwork with positive energy. At one point, I was quite confident that I could complete it in under three years. Unfortunately, in the beginning of the second year my circumstances changed unexpectedly. In December 2008, my son was diagnosed with autism. My life and priorities changed forever. My attention shifted to how best to help him. A long journey began with research on available therapies and subsequent enrolment in numerous programmes, some successful and some less so, but all expensive. My husband and I were drained financially, and a lot of times physically and emotionally. Constant worries about my son’s condition in addition to other family problems and loss of family members during those periods had tremendously challenged my will and sanity. Thankfully, with the help of my family and very understanding supervisor, I have managed to withstand and overcome the obstacles. After simultaneously facing huge challenges in both my career and personal life, I am just very grateful that I have come out on the other side stronger to face life. I have become calmer and learned to accept that life is seldom ideal and that there is a hidden blessing in everything that happens. I feel that I have become a better mother and our family has grown closer, and my sacrifices (though at the expense of my PhD progress) appear to have paid off. My son has developed verbal skills and is now happily enrolled in a mainstream school, which is what every mother with a special child would wish for.

The whole journey, though full of twists and turns, has definitely been a meaningful and worthwhile experience and I am truly lucky and blessed. Referring again to the mosaic analogy, not only did I manage to put the pieces back together, I feel that I have made it more beautiful.
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Appendix A
Student Survey

BACKGROUND OF MBA STUDENTS

Dear All,
I'm conducting a preliminary survey on the demography of MBA students in public universities, which is a part of my PhD research. Thus, I would be most grateful if you could share with me your details here. Your data will be kept confidential and will only be used for the research purpose. Thanks so much!

Rossilah Jamil
PhD Candidate, University of Manchester

1. Name: .................................................................

2. MBA Title .................................................................

3. Type of MBA  □ Full Time  □ Evening  □ Executive

4. Year  Final / First / Other (please state) ......................

5. First Degree Info
   • Degree Title: .................................................................
   • University: .................................................................

6. Work Experience Info
   • Have you had any working experience?  □ Yes  □ No (please proceed to item 7)
     • How long? .............. year(s)
     • Name of Current / Last Company .................................................................
     • Current / Last Position .................................................................

7. Study Financial Info  □ Self-financed  □ Sponsored (please state) ......................

8. Main Reason for Pursuing MBA: .................................................................

9. Career Plan After Gaining MBA: .................................................................

10. Age: ..................... years

11. Gender:  □ Female  □ Male

12. Nationality  □ Malaysian  □ Foreigner

13. Mobile No. (please if possible): .................................................................

Source: Author's Construct
### Appendix B

**Backgrounds of Management Educators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents &amp; Schools</th>
<th>Personal Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **ME01 BS1**          | - 41-year old female contract lecturer.  
- Received her PhD and MBA from Malaysian PUs and BBA in International Business in the US.  
- Have been teaching MBA in the university for 4 years.  
- Previously worked in another local private university as a lecturer.  
- Had experience as a school teacher.  
- Had some experience in supervising an American online MBA and examining foreign PhDs.  
- Teaches HRM subject. |
| **ME02 BS1**          | - 64 year-old male professor.  
- Have been the Director of BS1 for 11 years.  
- Obtained DBA, MBA and BBA from American universities.  
- Had served as an academician in the business faculty of another local university for 13 years and had held the Dean position. Had substantially influenced the setting up of Malaysian first MBA program in that university.  
- Had significant industrial experience holding a director position in the country's quasi-government company and as a director of a research company.  
- Teaches Research Methodology in the program. |
| **ME03 BS1**          | - Full time male lecturer in the early 40s.  
- - Obtained his PhD and Masters in the UK and MBA in the US.  
- - Have been teaching MBA for over 2 years. But have been teaching other masters and undergraduate programs for considerable amount of time.  
- - Teaches Technology Management subject. |
| **ME04 BS1**          | - 56-year old Malay, male professor.  
- Obtained his PhD and MSc from UK universities and a degree in Accounting from UMI, Malaysia.  
- - Appointed as the adjunct professor of BS1.  
- - Teaches several MBA courses including Accounting and Taxation; and Creativity and Innovation.  
- - Have been teaching in BS1 for 14 years.  
- Also teaches and was appointed as adjunct professor in other local private and public universities.  
- - Was also involved in the setting up of Malaysian’s first MBA program in UKM.  
- - Had quite substantial industrial experience as the general manager and accountant in bank and an international accounting firm.  
- - Also involved in entrepreneurship and consultancy activities. |
| **ME05 BS1**          | - 55-year old, Chinese male.  
- Served BS1 as an adjunct lecturer.  
- - Obtained his PhD from private university in Malaysia, MBA from AIM Philippines, undergraduate degree from UM, Malaysia.  
- - In total, have 16 years experience in teaching MBA programs in BS1 and other local private university and other British and Australian MBA in Malaysia.  
- - Had substantial industrial experience for over 30 years in both public and private sectors. Once held the CEO position of one of Malaysia’s top private companies for 10 years. |
| **ME06 BS1**          | - 60 plus year old male lecturer (associate professor).  
- - Appointed as a contract lecturer by BS1 and teaches marketing course in BS1.  
- - Also serving as an academic program advisor to a local private university. And had long experience as an academician in another local public university.  
- - Had quite notable industrial experience in Malaysia’s premium broadcasting company and was also involved in consultancy projects. |

Source: Author’s Construct
### Appendix B (cont.)

**Backgrounds of Management Educators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents &amp; Schools</th>
<th>Personal Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ME07B2</td>
<td>- 47 year old, female associate professor and was holding the Deputy Director position for the BS2 for over a year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Obtained her PhD in the UK, MBA and BSc in the US.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Specializes in marketing and teaches marketing and supply change management courses in the school’s MBA program.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>- Have been teaching MBA for 10 years but as an academician for 13 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Also had experience in teaching two local and British MBA programs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Had over a year plus of industrial experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ME08B2</td>
<td>- 57 year old male associate professor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Obtained his PhD in the UK, Masters in Accounting and Finance in the US.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teaches Strategic Management course.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Had 2 years of industrial experience with Malaysia’s Central Bank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME09B2</td>
<td>- 40 something, male lecturer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Had a PhD in Finance from the US</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teaches Finance subject.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Had over 10 years teaching experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME10B2</td>
<td>- 47 year old male full time lecturer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Obtained PhD in HRM in Malaysia, Masters Public Administration and BBA (Finance) from the US.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Specializes and teaches HRM course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Have been teaching MBA for 2 years but as academician for 12 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Had 20 years industrial experience, notably as HR manager in a large engineering and construction company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME11B2</td>
<td>- 47 year old male lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Had MBA in Operation Management in the US and a degree in Microbiology, UKM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Specializes in Operation management and teaches Operation Management and Supply Change Management courses in MBA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Have been teaching MBA for 3 years. And as academician for 20 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Had teaching experience in another local university’s MBA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Had 4 years of industrial experience as a manager in a manufacturing company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME12B3</td>
<td>- Male lecturer with 'associate professor' title.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The Head of MBA Program in BS3 for 5 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Full Member of BS3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Obtained PhD in Accounting and Finance in Australia, MSc in UK and BAc in UKM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Specializes in Accounting and Finance. Teaches Financial Statement Analysis course in MBA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME13B3</td>
<td>- 47 year old male adjunct professor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Obtained PhD in Strategic HRM in Dublin, MBA and BBA in US.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Specializes in Strategic HRM and OB. Teaches Strategic Management course in MBA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- He is a full BS3 UKM member.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Was appointed as an adjunct professor in UPM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Have been teaching MBA for 13 years and 23 years as academician. Had served various local Pus including UKM, UPM, UM and UTM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Involved in a lot of consultation work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME14B3</td>
<td>- Female lecturer in early 40s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Associate member of BS3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Obtained PhD in Management and MBA in the US and BBA in ULA, Malaysia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Specializes in Management of Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teaches Organizational Management course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Have been teaching MBA for 8 years and as academician for 14 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Had 1.5 years of industrial experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Construct

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## Appendix B (cont.)

**Backgrounds of Management Educators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents &amp; Schools</th>
<th>Personal Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| MEL15 BS3             | - Female lecturer in her 40s.  
                      | - Appointed as associate member of BS3  
                      | - Obtained PhD and MBA in the UK and BBA in the US.  
                      | - Specializes in HR and teaches HR, HRD and OB courses in MBA program.  
                      | - Have been teaching MBA for 10 years and 15 years as academician.  
                      | - Had 2 – 3 years of industrial experience as a front line manager.  |
| MEL16 BS3             | - Female lecturer in her 40s.  
                      | - Appointed as associate member of BS3  
                      | - Obtained PhD from UK and MBA from US.  
                      | - Specializes in OB and teaches Business Law and Ethics; and Management of Organization courses in MBA.  
                      | - Have been teaching MBA for 3 years and 11 years as academician.  |
| MEL17 BS3             | - 39-year-old female lecturer.  
                      | - Appointed as an associate member of BS3.  
                      | - Had PhD and MBA from the UK.  
                      | - Specializes in marketing and teaches International Marketing course in MBA.  
                      | - Have been teaching MBA for 4 years and 8 years as academician.  |

Source: Author's Construct
**Appendix C**

**Backgrounds of Companies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Profiles</th>
<th>Company 1</th>
<th>Company 2</th>
<th>Company 3</th>
<th>Company 4</th>
<th>Company 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• GLC</td>
<td>• GLC</td>
<td>• GLC</td>
<td>• GLC</td>
<td>• GLC</td>
<td>• GLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Established in 1966.</td>
<td>• Malaysia's main electricity provider.</td>
<td>• Malaysia’s main telecom provider.</td>
<td>• Half GLC (governed by Malaysia’s Central Bank and the Ministry of Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism)</td>
<td>• One of Malaysia’s main private healthcare providers with hospitals in Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conglomerate in the construction of infrastructure.</td>
<td>• MML involves generation, transmission and distribution of electricity.</td>
<td>• Owns Multimedia University which offers MBA program.</td>
<td>• A co-operative financial institution.</td>
<td>• Owned by a major state-government conglomerate with 30% of the Thai oil industry as its core business.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Established in 1949.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Staff size: 3,700</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Staff size: 28,000.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Staff size: 17,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Respondents’ Profiles | Male Position: Group Director of Human Capital Development (5 months), CEO of the company's education college. 3 years in the Group's education/training related positions. Previous experience: 9 years in management training in the corporate training college. | Male Position: Senior Manager (Talent Development), Human Resource Planning & Development Department. Previous experience (all in Company 2): 18 months in the engineering, distribution and generation. 3 years in training / HR-related positions. 3 years management lecturer in the corporate university. Education background: MBA, UM Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Brighton, UK. | Male Position: Manager (Talent Development) Leadership and Talent Management Department. 8 months on the position. | Male Position: General Manager of Human Resource (3 years). Previous experience: 18 months in HR-related experience in several MNC’s and in Central Bank (total 15 years). Education background: MBA. | Male Position: Executive Director can Group CEO of Company’s nursing and health science college. Previous experience: General Manager of Human Resource for Company (3 years). Company Secretary for MK Land Company Secretary for Shapati Berhad Others: Executive Chairman of National Productivity Corporation (NPC). Education background: Chartered Secretary, UK Masters, Health Management UK. |

**Source:** Author’s Construct
## Appendix D

### Student Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIVERSITY</th>
<th>BS3 (Sample Size: 14)</th>
<th>BS2 FT MBA (Sample Size: 16)</th>
<th>BS2 EMBA (Sample Size: 24)</th>
<th>BS1 (Sample Size: 25)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CRITERIA</strong></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WORK EXPERIENCE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>Experienced for any prior, the students all had about significant experience of work experience. Average: 9.2 years.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SECTORS**

| Local Public Sector      |       |      |                                       |       |      |                                       |       |      |                                       |
| Local Private Sector     | 4     | 28.6%| Majority of the students were from public sector like the government bodies and public enterprises. | 7    | 38.9%| Those with experience worked mainly in private companies. | 24   | 100.0%|                                       | 8    | 32.0%| 11 students were foreigners who had experience working in their own countries. 5 students were Malaysian and 6 students were foreigners. |
| Foreign (private or public) | 6     | 42.9%| Majority of the students were from foreign universities.                                   | 6    | 0.0% | All students were working in private companies. | 11   | 44.0%| 3 students were working in the public sector. | 11   | 44.0%| 3 students were working in the public sector. |
| Not Stated / Not Applicable | 4     | 28.6%|                                                                                         | 6    | 0.0% | All students were working in private companies. | 11   | 44.0%| 3 students were working in the public sector. | 11   | 44.0%| 3 students were working in the public sector. |
| **TOTAL**                | 14   | 100.0%|                                                                                         | 18   | 100.0%|                                                                                         | 24   | 100.0%|                                                                                         | 25   | 100.0%|                                                                                         |

**POSITION**

| Stated                   | 12   | 85.7%| Large number of the students had assumed staff doctor or manager positions in the hospital. | 9    | 50.0% | Except for two students who held the assistant manager positions, the rest of the students held major managerial positions. | 23   | 95.8%| 44 people were holding positions at manager / director / assistant director levels. | 23   | 92.0%| The titles of these positions may suggest that most of the students had been / were holding positions which may involve some managerial responsibilities. E.g., manager, chief executive, etc. |
| Not Stated / Not Applicable | 2    | 14.3%|                                                                                         | 9    | 50.0% | Except for two students who held the assistant manager positions, the rest of the students held major managerial positions. | 1    | 4.2% |                                                                                         | 2    | 8.0% |                                                                                         |
| **TOTAL**                | 14   | 100.0%|                                                                                         | 18   | 100.0%|                                                                                         | 24   | 100.0%|                                                                                         | 25   | 100.0%|                                                                                         |

**PREVIOUS UNIVERSITY**

| Same University          | 2     | 14.3%| Majority of the students obtained their previous qualifications from other local universities. | 11   | 61.1%| Slightly more than half of the students graduated from the same university. | 11   | 45.8%| A notable number of students had received an education from foreign universities. | 1    | 4.0% | Majority of the students obtained their previous education from foreign universities. The number is contributed by the large size of foreigners in the program. |
| Other Local University   | 10    | 71.4%|                                                                                         | 7    | 38.9%|                                                                                         | 6    | 25.0%|                                                                                         | 5    | 20.0%|                                                                                         |
| Foreign University       | 1     | 7.1% | Majority of the students obtained their previous qualifications from other local universities. | 0    | 0.0% |                                                                                         | 7    | 29.2%|                                                                                         | 18   | 72.0%|                                                                                         |
| Not Stated / Not Applicable | 1    | 7.1% |                                                                  | 0    | 0.0% |                                                                                         | 0    | 0.0% |                                                                                         | 1    | 4.0% |                                                                                         |
| **TOTAL**                | 14   | 100.0%|                                                                                         | 18   | 100.0%|                                                                                         | 24   | 100.0%|                                                                                         | 25   | 100.0%|                                                                                         |

---

Source: Author's Construct
### Appendix D (cont.)

**Student Survey Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIVERSITY</th>
<th>BS3 (Sample Size: 14)</th>
<th>BS2 FT MBA (Sample Size: 18)</th>
<th>BS2 EMBA (Sample Size: 24)</th>
<th>BS1 (Sample Size: 29)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRITERA</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FINANCIAL INFO</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Financed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loan (PT/PTN)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsored Private</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>Majority of the students were funded by the Private Sector.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsored Public</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsored Foreign Govt.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated / Not Applicable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GENDER</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>Majority of the students are female.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>Majority of the students are female.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 59</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 &amp; Above</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated / Not Applicable</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NATIONALITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: This survey was conducted for the purpose of sampling selection with some limitations as described in Methodology chapter. Thus the data is here may be limited and may not be entirely accurate to describe the overall characteristics of all MBA students in the schools.*

Source: Author's Construct
Appendix E
Backgrounds Of Focus Group Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FG Member</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>3 years. Executive in small private company.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1.5 year. Executive in small private company.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous University</td>
<td>Local Private College</td>
<td>BS2</td>
<td>BS2</td>
<td>Local PU</td>
<td>BS2</td>
<td>Local PU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financing</td>
<td>Self-Financed</td>
<td>Self-Financed</td>
<td>PU2</td>
<td>Self-Financed</td>
<td>Self-Financed</td>
<td>Self-Financed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>20 - 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Originally, 12 respondents were identified and approached to participate in the focus group in which the selection was done to ensure fairly representation of the population (please refer methodology chapter). Unfortunately only 6 six students showed up for the discussion.

Source: Author's Construct
# Appendix F

Background of Student Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Student 1</th>
<th>Student 2</th>
<th>Student 3</th>
<th>Student 4</th>
<th>Student 5</th>
<th>Student 6</th>
<th>Student 7</th>
<th>Student 8</th>
<th>Student 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financing</td>
<td>Sponsored</td>
<td>Sponsored</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Sponsored</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Sponsored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>Foreigner</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>BS3</td>
<td>BS3</td>
<td>BS3</td>
<td>BS1</td>
<td>BS1</td>
<td>BS2</td>
<td>BS2</td>
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<td>BS2</td>
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<td>Semester / year</td>
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<td>Final</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Degree</td>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Accountancy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Construct
## Appendix G

### Interview Questions to Management Educators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You've been teaching MBA for …… years right? What are the things you most enjoyed / most disliked in MBA teaching? Why? OR, What would you say is the most challenging thing in teaching MBA? OR, As a MBA lecturer, what are the things that you would describe as accomplishments? Or, what make you happy as lecturers in general? OR, How many of your students are working managers or have had managerial working experience? In your experience, are there any differences in teaching students with and without experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You teach ………… subject in MBA right? How do you decide what topics need / relevant to be taught or emphasized in class? OR, (Show a copy of MBA curriculum) What do you think (agree or disagree) about the MBA curriculum in general? Why? What aspect would you improve? OR, (If respondents say the syllabus is decided by the school) How did you decide which topics to prioritize in the teaching? Why? OR, (To respondents who are MBA policy makers – involved in deciding MBA curriculum) How did the school come up with the curriculum or subject syllabus? How do you feel about it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you describe class assignments which you have given to your students? How did you decide what types of assignments to give? Why? MAY BE FOLLOWED WITH, How do you assess the assignments? What criteria did you use to grade the assignments or your students’ performance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think about the aims/objectives of the school’s MBA? Do you personally agree with that? (May show the school’s objectives) Can you describe the competencies that you try to develop in your students in class? Why? (If answer based on the subject syllabus) What is your opinion on the competency targets stated in the syllabus? Do you agree or disagree? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOLLOWED BY, In your opinion, could the competencies you inculcate in your students help them in the future to effectively carry out managerial functions? Why? How? What kind of managers do you think that the program should develop? OR, What is your perception of an ideal manager (eg. competencies, values, qualities / kinds of jobs they should engage, etc.)? OR, What are the critical challenges that the students will potentially face as future managers? In your opinion, has the school’s MBA programme successfully focused and developed the ‘right’ competencies on the students? Why? Do you have any complaints/comments about the present MBA?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum: What? Why? Suggestions to improve? Competency targets set by the faculty? (eg. what competencies which you think you or the school should emphasize more) What? Why? Other areas related to the MBA? (eg. resources, duration, entry criteria, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the indicators of ‘success’ of MBA programme to the faculty? Why? FOLLOWED BY, So far, has the faculty’s MBA achieved the indicators? We always hear about complaints from Malaysian industries regarding the quality of our graduates, particularly those produced by PU. What is your opinion about the issue? FOLLOWED BY, Have there been such complaints about your MBA graduates? OR, Are you satisfied with the overall quality of your students or the MBA graduates that the faculty has produced? Why? Do you have any suggestions to improve the quality of your graduates? What? Why? MBA has been relabel as a common approach for managerial education and development. Based on your experience in the faculty, do you think that MBA has been an effective platform for developing potential or existing managers? Why? From your experience, do you think that the MBA has successfully bridged its training and education functions? Why do you say that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you regulate / emphasize ethics in the students? What is your definition of ethics? What is your opinion about the claim / debate that business schools (and MBA) is partly responsible for cultivating unethical managers?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Construct
Appendix H

Interview Questions to Companies

**EXAMPLES INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Can you briefly describe your experience as the HR / recruitment manager. FOLLOWED BY,
  - Do you have any knowledge or experience in MBA graduates recruitment? Or, have you involved with the company's partnership with the local public university's MBA? Can you please explain?

- * You have been the company's HR/recruitment manager for .......... years right. Have you recruited any MBA graduates? How common it is to recruit managers with MBA qualification? Are there any differences in terms of managerial competencies of those with or without the MBA qualification? Which ones do you prefer? Why? What competencies does the company normally look for in candidates for managerial position? Why?
  
  ALTERNATIVELY,
  - ** You have been the company's HR/recruitment manager for .......... years right. How many candidates for managerial positions have you recruited or interviewed? Based on your experience, could you normally identify candidates with the right competencies to perform effectively in managerial jobs? What aspects (competencies) do you see? What competencies does the company normally look for in candidates for managerial position? Why?

- Can you describe in general the roles and responsibilities in which the candidates would be expected to perform as managers?

- Are you happy with the quality of MBA* / education** provided by the public universities? Why?

- What criteria do you think necessary for MBA* / education** to be ‘relevant’ and/or ‘effective’?

- In your opinion, what is / should be the purpose / role of business schools* / university**?

- You have interviewed / recruited some of the MBA* / public university** graduates. Are you happy with the managerial competencies/skills projected by these graduates? Why?
  
  MAY BE FOLLOWED BY,
  - In your opinion, how successful are the MBA providers* / public universities** in focusing and developing the ‘right’ managerial competencies on the graduates / students? Why?

- How would you describe your experience / comments with the provision of MBA by the PUs?

- Are there any other suggestions that you think might improve the faculty MBA / the state education offered by PUs?

* For respondents who have experience with MBA graduates recruitment / MBA education.
** For respondents with no / very little experience and knowledge on MEA.

Source: Author's Construct
Appendix I

Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

OPENING
1. Introduce self.
2. Explain the purpose of research.
   Research Purpose:
   • In the broadest sense, the research intends to explore the views of three main MEMBA stakeholders (i.e., faculties, industries and students) on the adequacy of public university MBA (PU MBA) in Malaysia as a platform for the development and education of managers.
   • To achieve that, the research focuses on how the stakeholders define the subjective concepts of 'competent' managers / graduates, 'relevant' managerial competencies, and 'relevant' MEMBA.
   • Results of the research will be analyzed to see the differences / similarities of their views in relation to the academic/professional, training/education, and utilitarian/educational divide which encapsulate the MBA programme.
3. Explain the reasons for the interview:
   Reasons for Interviews:
   • To find the respondent's opinions about:
     o his/her role as a management educator
     o roles / functions / responsibilities of the School or the University
     o objectives / purposes of MBA
     o the importance of managerial competency development in MBA students
     o what types of competencies should be developed in the students
     o what kind of managers should the MBA aim to develop
     o his/her overall comments about the school's MBA
4. Seek approval for using the data for PhD purposes and may be for future publications.
5. Explain confidentiality procedures.
   • Only the researcher will handle the raw data and know the identity of the respondent.
   • Anonymity of respondents will be preserved in the thesis or other publications.
     Pseudonym names will be used.
6. Obtain permission to audio record the interview.
7. Invite questions before beginning the interview.

CLOSING
8. Thank respondents for the participation.
9. Invite questions, if any.
10. Ask permission to send interview transcripts for approval for reliability purpose.
11. Give a cap souvenir.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER INTERVIEW
12. Record any peculiarities or special incidences of the interview.
13. Complete demographic details form.
14. Transfer recorded interview to computer.

Source: Author's Construct
Appendix J

Interview Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part I</th>
<th>INTERVIEW CHECKLIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the stakeholders' perceptions of the objectives of MBA and the roles of the stakeholders in the MBA?</td>
<td>2. Management competencies that the stakeholders think ought to be inculcated in MBA? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Objectives/purposes/functions of MBA</td>
<td>5.1 Management competencies perceived important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Roles/responsibilities of business schools</td>
<td>5.2. Properties of the important competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Roles/responsibilities of management educators</td>
<td>5.3 Reasons for the perceived important competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Roles/responsibilities of universities, (possibly)</td>
<td>5.4 Success of the competency development in MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 What criteria for and how (satisfying measures) do they define &quot;relevant&quot; MBA?</td>
<td>6. How do the stakeholders view the need to practice holistic management?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Definitions of &quot;relevance&quot; (underlying reasons)</td>
<td>7. What demographic factors or attributes, if any, influence the stakeholders' perceptions of the research issues?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Criteria of &quot;relevance&quot; (underlying reasons)</td>
<td>8. To what extent that the views of the stakeholders differ or similar in relation to the training-education functions, professional-academic models, or utilization-educational purposes of MBA?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2.2 &quot;Management&quot; beliefs or beliefs of &quot;relevant&quot; MBA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2.3 &quot;Management&quot; beliefs or beliefs of &quot;relevant&quot; MBA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What are the stakeholders' expectations/requirements for the MBA?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Criteria of &quot;ideal&quot;/&quot;characteristics&quot; of managers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Responsibilities of managers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Most important characteristics in management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**New Discoveries:**

Year 26 emphasized in next interviews.

Source: Author's Construct
Appendix K
Management Educators Profile Form

DETAILS OF INTERVIEW
Date: .................................................  Venue: .................................................
Time Start: ...........................................  Time Finish: ...........................................

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS
Respondent No.: .............................................
Institution: ...............................................
Length of MBA teaching: .........................
Subject(s) Taught: ...........................................
Academic Area of Specialization: ....................
Age: ............................................  Gender: Female / Male
Educational Background (level, institution, year (optional)): .............................................
...............................................................................................................................
...............................................................................................................................
...............................................................................................................................
...............................................................................................................................
Work experience: ...........................................
...............................................................................................................................
...............................................................................................................................
Position in the School (if any): ..........................................
Professional membership (if any): .............................................
Other Info: .............................................
...............................................................................................................................
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...............................................................................................................................
### Appendix I

**Secondary Data About MBAs in PUs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA (UM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI PERANTI KEPATANAN MARA (UMP)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA (UKM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI ISLAM MALAYSIA (UIM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA (UTM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA (USM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA (UUM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH (UMS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia's first and oldest university. It was founded in 1909.</td>
<td>Malaysia's premier research university recognized at local and international levels. Most of its courses are commonly perceived as challenging.</td>
<td>Malaysia's largest university. Its traditional campus is located in Kuala Lumpur. Branches are spread across Malaysia.</td>
<td>Malaysia's national university. It is headquartered in Kuala Lumpur.</td>
<td>UTM is a multi-disciplined university.</td>
<td>UTM was founded in 1970 and is located in central Malaysia.</td>
<td>USM is the ninth public university in Malaysia.</td>
<td>UUM is located in East Malaysia.</td>
<td>UMS is a multi-disciplined university.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 1.3 Background of Universities

- **University of Malaya (UM)**
  - A relatively "new" university.
  - It began in 1909 as a training institute and then its status was upgraded to a "college" in 1950.
  - It was initially known as the "University of Technology (agricultural) Malaysia".
  - The concentration reflects Malaysia's economic policy at that time.
  - The name was changed to "Universiti Pusat Malaysia" in 1997.
  - Its educational courses have become more multi-disciplined over time.
  - Thus, UPM is well-known in Malaysia.

- **Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)**
  - UTM was established in 1970 and is located in central Malaysia.
  - UTM's philosophy and curriculum, which combine rigorous and academic programs with Islamic social and moral values.
  - Compared to other Malaysian public universities, its status is USA is probably the most "internationalized" judging from its large group of international students.

- **Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)**
  - USM was established in 1969 and is located in Penang, the second busiest economy hub in Malaysia.
  - USM is a multi-disciplined university.
  - It is located in Johor, the most southern state of Malaysia which is also the third largest economic hub in the country.

- **Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)**
  - UUM was established in 1964.
  - UUM is a "management university" which means that its academic niche is in management-related disciplines.

- **Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS)**
  - UMS is the ninth public university in Malaysia.
  - UMS is located in East Malaysia.
  - UMS has recently been recognized as one of the best in the country for its management education, IT and quality management.

### Source: Author's Construct
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI MALAYA (UM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA (UiTM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA (UPM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA (UKM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI ISLAM MALAYSIA (UIM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI SAINS MALAYSIA (UTM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA (UUM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH (UMS)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 affiliated colleges and a smart campus planned for the future. It has 15,000 employees and offers more than 250 academic programmes. It currently enrolls 100,000 students and around 70,000 of student intake is taken each time.</td>
<td>country's priorities in industrial and information technology areas.</td>
<td>Malay language, national and history studies.</td>
<td>Furthermore, when other universities adopt English as their medium of instruction, UiTM maintains the use of Bahasa Malaysia. Its website states that its continuous progress has proven the success of Bahasa Malaysia as a medium of instruction at the university level.</td>
<td>over 90 countries and its academic staff.</td>
<td>Furthermore, UTM's governing body consists of several international sponsoring governments of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).</td>
<td>the university is a social science / humanities courses which are also tend towards the engineering and technology disciplines to maintain the niche of the university.</td>
<td>Ringgit Malaysia to transform itself into Malaysia's first-world class university.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES</td>
<td>UNIVERSITI MALAYA (UM)</td>
<td>UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA (UiTM)</td>
<td>UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA (UPM)</td>
<td>UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA (UKM)</td>
<td>UNIVERSITI ISLAM ANANTARABANGSA (UIA)</td>
<td>UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA (UTM)</td>
<td>UNIVERSITI SAINT MALAYSIA (USM)</td>
<td>UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA (UUM)</td>
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<tr>
<td>government's pro-bumiputra policy which was implemented to minimize the economic and social imbalances between the Bumiputeras and other races allegedly created by the British. As a highly controversial policy, it is unsurprising that every move made on and by UiTM attracts much political debate.</td>
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</table>

### 3.2 BACKGROUND OF MBA PROVIDERS & THEIR MBA PROVISION

**The Graduate School of Business (GSB), Faculty of Business & Accountancy**

The GSB was established in 1980, making it the first formal, university-based business-related education.

**UiTM MBA** is offered by the Graduate School of Business (UiTM). It was established in 1997 and then restructured in 2011 as a specialist institution to provide several types of postgraduate education and research.

**MBA** is offered by the Graduate School of Business (USM). It was established in 1994. The Centre is under the Faculty of Economics and Business. The faculty was established since 1970. MBA has been offered since the early 1980s.

**MBA in UiTM** is offered by the Management Center which was established in 1993. The Center is under the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences which began management education in 1981. MBA was launched in 1994.

**MBA in UTM** is offered by the Advanced Management Center of the Faculty of Management. The School was established in 1989 and the MBA by coursework and online were started in 1992 and in 2008 respectively.

**MBA in USM** is offered by the College of Business. MBA in UiTM is offered by the Faculty of Economics and Business which was established in 1995. MBA was started in July 1999.

**MBA in UUM** is offered by the School of Business and Economics (SBE) which was established in 1995.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES</th>
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<th>UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA (UKM)</th>
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<th>UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA (UUM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH (UNIMAS)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA (UMS)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>provider in Malaysia. The GSB was being formalised in 2000 as a body in charge of postgraduate management education. GSB started offering MBA programme in early 1980s. making it possibly the largest management education provider and has the biggest pool of management / business students and alumni in Malaysia. Many of the management education programmes, including MBA, offered by the Faculty started as twinning programmes with foreign universities. The history of MBA study began as early as 1986 with the help of British and American universities. UTM offers its own MBA only in 1998. training in business management. Since its inception, UPM has produced more than 1,000 postgraduate degree holders in various fields of management. sufficiency and operating as a private sector organization driven by strategic objectives which is in line with the University's corporatisation move. Although being operated more like a 'business', the IBS is being governed by the University's top management thus suggesting for similar adherence to some standard academic regulations. To concur with the university's niche area which is in science and technology, management education in IBS centers on the concepts of technology management and innovation. The establishment of IBS also fulfills the university's vision i.e., to provide...</td>
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<td>PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES</td>
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<td>UNIVERSITI SAISI MALAYSIA (USM)</td>
<td>UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA (UUM)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### 1.3 MBA CURRICULUM

- **Types of MBA Offered**
  - General MBA
  - MSc with concentration
  - Management
  - Marketing
  - Finance
  - HRM
  - Business
  - Master of Management
  - EMBA

- **Offered**
  1. General MBA
  2. MSc with concentration
  3. Management
  4. Marketing
  5. Finance
  6. HRM
  7. Business
  8. Master of Management
  9. EMBA

### 3. General MBA

1. **MBA with concentration**
   - Accounting
   - Finance
   - Marketing
   - Human Resource
   - Management

2. **MBA with concentration**
   - Accounting
   - Finance
   - Marketing
   - Human Resource
   - Management

3. **MBA with concentration**
   - Accounting
   - Finance
   - Marketing
   - Human Resource
   - Management

4. **MBA with concentration**
   - Accounting
   - Finance
   - Marketing
   - Human Resource
   - Management

5. **MBA with concentration**
   - Accounting
   - Finance
   - Marketing
   - Human Resource
   - Management

6. **MBA with concentration**
   - Accounting
   - Finance
   - Marketing
   - Human Resource
   - Management

7. **MBA with concentration**
   - Accounting
   - Finance
   - Marketing
   - Human Resource
   - Management

8. **MBA with concentration**
   - Accounting
   - Finance
   - Marketing
   - Human Resource
   - Management

9. **MBA with concentration**
   - Accounting
   - Finance
   - Marketing
   - Human Resource
   - Management

10. **MBA with concentration**
    - Accounting
    - Finance
    - Marketing
    - Human Resource
    - Management

11. **MBA with concentration**
     - Accounting
     - Finance
     - Marketing
     - Human Resource
     - Management

12. **MBA with concentration**
     - Accounting
     - Finance
     - Marketing
     - Human Resource
     - Management

13. **MBA with concentration**
     - Accounting
     - Finance
     - Marketing
     - Human Resource
     - Management

14. **MBA with concentration**
     - Accounting
     - Finance
     - Marketing
     - Human Resource
     - Management

15. **MBA with concentration**
     - Accounting
     - Finance
     - Marketing
     - Human Resource
     - Management

16. **MBA with concentration**
     - Accounting
     - Finance
     - Marketing
     - Human Resource
     - Management

17. **MBA with concentration**
     - Accounting
     - Finance
     - Marketing
     - Human Resource
     - Management

18. **MBA with concentration**
     - Accounting
     - Finance
     - Marketing
     - Human Resource
     - Management

19. **MBA with concentration**
     - Accounting
     - Finance
     - Marketing
     - Human Resource
     - Management

20. **MBA with concentration**
     - Accounting
     - Finance
     - Marketing
     - Human Resource
     - Management
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES</th>
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<th>UNIVERSITI ISLAM MALAYSIA (UIM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA (UTM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI SAHABAT MALAYSIA (USM)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA (UNIMAS)</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH (UMS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>General Management</td>
<td></td>
<td>Centre for Education Development</td>
<td>Note: MBA and EMBA have the same curriculum structure. The difference is the study mode (full/part time).</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>International Auditing</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Islamic Finance System</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Master of Management</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 – 60 semesters</strong></td>
<td><strong>Full Time (Phase 1: 2 years; Phase 2: 1.5 years) Part Time (Phase 1: 3½ yrs; Phase 2: 3 yrs)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Full Time: 4 trimesters (1½ years or 18 months)</strong> Part Time: 6 trimesters (2 years)</td>
<td><strong>3 – 6 semesters</strong></td>
<td><strong>Part time: 2 years 6 months (8 semesters)</strong> Full time: 1 year 6 months (5 semesters) The total duration of study is 35 months or 4 semesters.</td>
<td><strong>Part Time: 2 years 6 months (8 semesters)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Part Time: 2 years (max 5 years)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Full Time: 1 1/2 years (max 3 years)</strong> Part Time: 2 years (max 5 years) (For online and international mba) Coursework Mode Full Time: Min 12 months / Max 24 months Part Time: Min 24 months / Max 36 months Online Mode Min 24 months / Max 48 months. (For MBA-D) Full time: Min 18 months / Max 36 months</td>
<td><strong>2 – 6 semesters (full time) 3 – 10 semesters (Part time) 18 months (full time) Or 18 – 48 months.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES</td>
<td>UNIVERSITI MALAYA (UM)</td>
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<td>UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA (USM)</td>
<td>UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA (UUM)</td>
<td>UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK (UNIMAS)</td>
<td>UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SOBAH (UMS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• MBA Structure</td>
<td>Total 51 credit hours</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Total 48 units</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Total 48 credit hours</td>
<td>Total 48 credit hours</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>(for online and modular mba)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Core courses 30 hours</td>
<td>• Core 30 credits</td>
<td>• Core 34 units</td>
<td>• Core 24 units</td>
<td>• Core 34 credit hours</td>
<td>• Core 38 units</td>
<td>Total 44 credit hours</td>
<td>• Core 30 credit hours</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Electives courses 15 hours</td>
<td>• Area of Specialization 6 credits</td>
<td>• Concentration courses 15 units</td>
<td>• Concentration courses 6 units</td>
<td>• Electives 3 credit hours</td>
<td>• Electives 6 units</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>• Electives 12 credit hours</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Research Project 6 hours</td>
<td>• Case study or project paper 6 credits</td>
<td>• Research component 6 units</td>
<td>• Research component 6 units</td>
<td>• Electives 5 units</td>
<td>• Electives 6 units</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>• Corporate Business</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Electives courses for area of specialisation 6 units</td>
<td>• Electives courses for area of specialisation 6 units</td>
<td>• Electives courses for area of specialisation 6 units</td>
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<td>• Corporate Governance</td>
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<td>17. Strategic Management</td>
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<td>• Medium of Instruction</td>
<td>NA (but assumed in English)</td>
<td>NA (but assumed in English)</td>
<td>English in instructions and assignments.</td>
<td>English is the predominant language of class instruction. However, students have the English or Malay language option in writing their assignments.</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>NA (but assumed it is in English because English proficiency is one of the admission conditions.)</td>
<td>NA</td>
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</table>
| • Assessment structure | Course work 60% Final exams 40% | Coursework may include: written assignments, written case analysis, oral presentations, class participation, mid-semester exams. | NA | NA | NA | Assessment is usually based on a combination of coursework and final examination. The weightage for coursework (i.e. assignments, presentation, etc.) and examination vary from course to course but is approximately 60% coursework and 40% final examination. | Individual and group assignments, examinations, class presentations and participations. | NA | NA
| • Class schedules | NA | NA | Full time first trimester only - Lecture for morning classes will be conducted either from 9.00 am until 12.00 noon every Monday to Friday | During office hours, evenings/weekends. | Classes for the full-time programme are on weekdays after working hours. Classes for part-time programme | Almost all classes are conducted on the weekends. | NA | Lectures conducted during the weekends for working executives. | NA | All classes will be conducted in working hours on weekdays and weekends. |
### 3.4 ADMISSION REQUIREMENT S

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<th>PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES</th>
<th>UNIVERSITI MALAYA (UM)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Recognized bachelor's degree or an equivalent academic or professional qualification.</td>
<td>Recognized bachelor's degree (honours) or an equivalent.</td>
<td>Recognized bachelor’s degree with a CGPA of at least 2.75 or its equivalent.</td>
<td>A recognized honours degree with a CGPA of at least 2.75 or its equivalent.</td>
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<td>2. At least two years post-qualification working experience.</td>
<td>Or other recognized qualification equivalent to an honours degree in a relevant field with relevant experience.</td>
<td>Or other recognized qualification equivalent to an honours degree in a relevant field with relevant experience.</td>
<td>Or other recognized qualification equivalent to an honours degree in a relevant field with relevant experience.</td>
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<td>3. Sufficient English language requirement (TOEFL: Score 550 / IELTS: Band 6)</td>
<td>A recognized honours degree with a CGPA of at least 2.75 or its equivalent.</td>
<td>A recognized honours degree with a CGPA of at least 2.75 or its equivalent.</td>
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**or 2.30 pm until 5.30 pm on Saturdays.**

Part time: Lecture classes will be conducted from 6.30 pm until 9.30 pm every Monday to Friday or 2.30 pm until 5.30 pm on Saturdays.

- [A recognized Bachelor's Degree in any discipline.](#)
- Minimum one-year working experience.
- Good command of the English Language.
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<th>PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES</th>
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<td>4. Minimum score of 550 or with working experience of at least five years at the management level of an organisation. Applicants with GPA below 2.50 will be considered if they have passed the GMAI (Graduate Management Admission Test) with a minimum score of 550 or with working experience of at least ten years at the middle management level of a public company or a government department.</td>
<td>6.U (BPT) is required for international students.</td>
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<td>whatever other qualification that is approved by the UPM senate.</td>
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<td>6. Applicants must have proficiency in the language according to the requirement of the University.</td>
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<td>7. MBA, corporate governance.</td>
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<td>8. Applicants are required to have an Honours Degree in Law, Business Studies, Accounting or Finance.</td>
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<th>Programme Fees</th>
<th>Local (Full time)</th>
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