

IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMPETITIVENESS IN ENHANCING COMPETENCY LEVEL AMONG MALAYSIA UNIVERSITY GRADUATES: LITERATURE REVIEW

Marfunizah Ma'dan, Muhamad Takiyuddin Ismail & Sity Daud

ABSTRACT

The investments in higher education and human capital development in enhancing the competency level among university graduates is one of the main issues in Malaysia. Through this human capital development, the country can generate more competitive graduates with the aims to meet current challenges in a competitive job market. However, based on a secondary review, this research found that the level of competency among graduates assessed through their knowledge, skills and attitudes to manage their field of work not only requires the aspects of human capital such as technical skills, interpersonal skills and conceptual skills, but also the development of competitive attitudes among graduates also need to be emphasized. Therefore, this article review outlines the dimension of emerging human capital and competitiveness aspects with the purpose to improve the competency level among university graduates. In addition, this research proposes a conceptual framework to increase the level of competency among university graduates. Finally, the researchers also give some suggestions to reduce unemployment rates among current university graduates.

Keywords: Higher education institution; Human capital; Human capital development; Competitiveness; Competency

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the main purpose of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is intended and crafted to equip graduates with skills and knowledge to enhance their creativity and innovation; besides to meet the demands of various industry sectors. However, today's changing global economic landscape requires graduates of more vitality, ingenuity, and affability that are not solely focused on traditional skills (Jisun & Soo 2016; Van der Heijden 2002). Hence, to meet the goal of producing competitive graduates at the national level, and as to develop our nation based on the services-economy, the country has expanded the intensity towards human capital development. This includes not only to enhance graduates that are able to develop and create new ideas, but at the same time graduates that can utilize their knowledge to provide better services in the advancement of new technological and global economic areas.

Thus, this tendency replicates the recognition of the human capital theory which has been provided by the government to promote the evolution of human capital emphasized in the Ninth (9) Malaysia Plan (2006-2010), which concerned primarily on the human capital advancement, to build a more competitive and resilient economy (Hasnah et al. 2009; Muhammad Hazrul Ismail 2012; Zulkefli 2007). Additionally, knowledge-driven and innovation-led human capital is the most important source to enable the transformation of Malaysia into a service-intensive economy. This current need is in line with the job

opportunities for graduates which usually defined as 'accomplishment of skills, knowledge and personal qualities that will determine their future work success as according to their desire fields' (Knight & Yorke 2004).

However, the issue of graduate employability has been a controversial and much disputed subject within the field of various problems arise after they graduate from studies at the higher education level and how their future directions are then often questioned. Besides, various matters arise and feedback has been received primarily from employers in the labor and industrial sectors, that most new graduates have no major features in dealing with the job market, including reluctance to be self-reliant and weak proficiency in English (Muhammad Hazrul 2012; Nooriah et al. 2013; Wickramasinghe & Perera 2010; Yasmin et al. 2012, p. 3). Furthermore, younger job-seekers are also looking forward to a higher and unrealistic salary, despite lack of experience. Hence, this has led to various issues, including increasing the number of unemployment rates among graduates. The issue has grown in importance considering the recent number of unemployment rate in Malaysia that increased to 3.4 percent above 0.3 percent by 2015 (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2016). Simultaneously, the number of unemployment rate of youth with higher education is about 15.3 percent compared to those without higher education at 9.8 percent in 2015 (Malaysia National Bank 2016). In fact, it shows that there is the possibility that the number of unemployed graduates is now foreseen to increase over time.

Consequently, the demand for talented human capital in Malaysia has also led to a review of several landscapes in education and human capital development. In fact, demand for more successful and sustainable talent growth is one of the challenges to meet global demand. Therefore, this study will outline the importance of developing human capital aspects and competitiveness to increase the level of compatibility among current university graduates as well as proposing a framework to reduce unemployment rates within the country. As such, this article is divided into some sections which are the introduction, literature review which consist of human capital development concept and model, the concept of competitiveness and graduates' competencies, methodology, discussion, a propose conceptual framework and conclusion.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Human Capital Development

The development of human capital is a focus and attention given with efforts to improve human resource development. Basically, it relates to the capability and commitment of a person viewed from the aspect of skills, experience, potential, and capacity in an organization (Mohd Fauzi & Mohd Khairul 2012). Meanwhile, Haryati et al. (2009) viewed the development of human capital as providing teaching and learning to meet the requirements needed for life improvement. As such, Malaysia is also focusing on the invention of human capital by emphasizing this aspect as important fundamentals for future development (Mohd Fauzi & Mohd Khairul 2012). In this regard, human capital development is an important resource for the country's economic advancement as well as contributing to the nation's stability and consistency including in political, cultural, and social aspects. Hamzah et al. (2015) also pointed out in their study that some countries can achieve high economic growth through quality human capital even though they have less physical capital. Accordingly, this support the idea that the elements of human capital evolution are vital in generating individuals with higher knowledge,

moral values, and competitive skills. In fact, the value of human capital itself refers to the use of high quality minds which include cognitive, effective and technical skills in making the goals of nations become true and valuable (Mohamad Kamil et al. 2014). Fitzsimons (2015) also noted that education and training emphasized through human capital theory are the key to engagement in the new global economy today. Therefore, the role of education, specifically in higher education to produce valuable human capital is crucial to reinforce the productivity among young graduates. Moreover, the effort in developing human capital in this stage is a key thrust in generating services-intensive economy, besides for sustaining our nation in a global context.

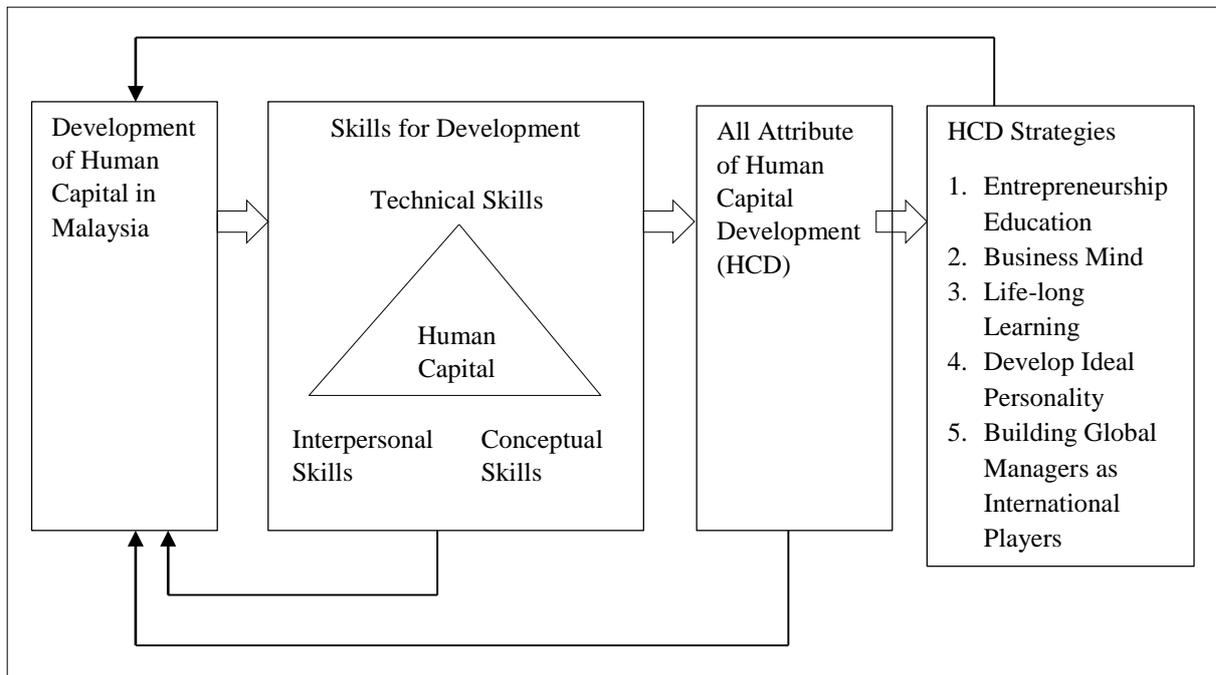
Human Capital Development Model

Basically, expansion of human capital is an understanding and pragmatic of human capital theory. This theory was first introduced by Jacob Mincer in 1958. According to Mincer's view (1958), the establishment of human capital theory relates to how acquisitions of a person's earnings according to their strengths or abilities. He argued that the capability of an individual is related to the amount of revenue that will be obtained. Hence, the growth of human capital is the expansion of typical information, habits, social attributes, and the personality of an individual, including the creativity contained with the ability to perform the work efficiently to get some value and profit, especially from an economic point of view.

Subsequently, Schultz (1961) extended the view of human capital development theory by discussing the value of the economy through any investment undertaken in raising human capital. According to Schultz (1961, p. 9; 1971, p. 161), the investment process is necessary to produce higher quality of human capital. The investments required include health and service facilities, training for employment, provision of education from low to high level, adult learning programs, and opportunities for getting better job. Based on these five forms of investment, the government with the cooperation of the institutions and industries involved is required to produce human capital and outstanding citizens especially in their respective professions. Therefore, education and training are identified as important components needed in the development of human capital (Mohd Fauzi & Mohd Khairul 2012). Becker (1994) also highlighted that individual and communities can enhance their income as well as contribute to economic development through education and training. In addition, Robeyns (2006) and Bernston et al. (2006) also concluded that investments are needed in developing skilled and knowledgeable human capital, especially in improving the productivity of individuals and employees.

In line with human capital development theory, Ab. Aziz Yusof (2009) has introduced a comprehensive model for the quality of human capital growth in Malaysia. There are three important aspects of the key skills identified to enhance the quality of excellence person and determinant of future competitiveness which in terms of technical, interpersonal and conceptual skills. Hence, to ensure that the nation can produce a quality human capital that will contribute to a sustainable nation, the education system in Malaysia needs to develop and strive to produce capable graduates who can possess these three skills. Figure 1 below shows the comprehensive Human Capital Development Model in Malaysia introduced by Ab. Aziz Yusof (2009).

Figure 1: A Comprehensive Human Capital Development Model in Malaysia



Source: Adopted from Ab Aziz Yusof (2009)

Based on the figure 1 above, all three skills, namely technical, interpersonal, and conceptual are the key elements to be addressed in the field of education to create competitive human capital as well as to cope with all forms of challenges in today's global economy.

Technical skills refer to the human capital capabilities that individuals need to carry out tasks in any fields they involved. The characteristics of technical skills include the detailed knowledge of specific fields, according to specific procedures and techniques based on various aspects of work such as finance, production, engineering, marketing, and others (Ab. Aziz 2009; Ahmad Nabil 2011). Generally, technical skills derive from formal education and subsequently enhanced their knowledge through appropriate training programs, and then gained experience can be used in real work (Robles 2012, p. 453; Weber et al. 2013). Fletcher and Tyson (2017) found that most of the employer concern on the matter of students to view their technical skill specifically using the right equipment and technologies, conducting the technical skills needed properly and can utilize their talents in an innovative and creative way. Unfortunately, Suhaili (2015) has found that one of the causes for unemployed graduates was incapable to use technical skills which include the methods, procedures, and techniques required by their employer. Besides, according to Ahmad Nabil et al. (2011), technical skills and other additional skills are essential for all skilled workers in any industry to increase their productivity in the workplace; thereby further enhancing the country's economy through various industrial sectors. Also, Yahya et al. (2015) found most employers gave positive feedback about the needs of workers with technical skills since these skills can help to improve their level of competency specifically in handling their tasks better. Hence, the lack of technical skills can contribute to an increasing number of unemployment rate in the country. Moreover, the rapid growth of the economy requiring skilled workforce to facilitate the service of employment in any area, indicates that these skills need to be emphasized in student learning especially at tertiary

institutions. Considering that technical skills are vital for employment, graduates need to be more exposed on the specific task skills required since in higher education.

Additionally, as a graduate of HEIs, each graduate must have the ability to work with different people originating from different cultures, beliefs, and norms. This characteristic namely interpersonal skills or better known as soft skills, which is one of the skills that managers should have in handling an organization (Azedevo et al., 2012; Beenen et al. 2017, p. 2; Weber et al. 2013, p. 313-314). Interpersonal skills are characterized by the nature, attitudes and behaviors, and a difficult skill to measure with the specific personal characteristic that determine the personality of a leader, officer or manager (Robles 2012, p. 457; Cacciolati et al. 2017, p. 10). Furthermore, individuals with interpersonal skills can improve their self-motivation in doing so (Ab. Aziz 2009). Naturally, they need to have good social skills, high awareness, and the ability to understand the feelings of others. Equally important, the findings of past studies have shown that lack of interpersonal skills has caused a delay the employment opportunities among youth (Laila et al., 2015, p. 124). Whereas, according to Beenen et al. (2017), although employers and learners know that interpersonal skills or soft skills are essential for job management, but only a few of these skills are devoted to and evaluated in the management of student career programs. On the other hand, most of the feedback received from employers in the labor industry today show that our graduates generally lack interpersonal skills or social skills required when looking for work (Hurrell 2016, p. 605; Yasmin et al., 2012). According to Hairuzila (2014) and Laila et al. (2017), graduates, especially in technical fields, have the necessary technical skills to prepare them to work, but most of them lack interpersonal skills which are the basis for them to be more efficient in technical skills. Besides, Yahya et al. (2015) also agreed that highly competent employees with good interpersonal skills can set aside their own interests to achieve organizational goals. Thus, with interpersonal skills becoming increasingly important for organizational success from various industries, this skill cannot be ignored by any parties that are involved in the graduates' development process including HEIs, policy makers, and industries. Moreover, these social skills can be enhanced through a student development program as such to build their confidence level that will benefit them more for future use.

Conceptual skills are the ability of an individual to manage, administer, and perform tasks to remain the operation of an organization. Whiley et al. (2017) explained that conceptual skills are critical thinking capabilities which is the ability to think rationally and reasonably about what is believed to be done including values, emotions, and important actions. In contrast, studies have found that the teaching in university focused on the traditional method in which it tends to concentrate on memorizing content of student learning (Nooriah & Norain 2013). Therefore, this traditional teaching method was found to be less effective in promoting the development of problem solving among students. Meanwhile, Rampersad and Patel (2014) found in their study that employers placed a high demand for university graduates to have the value of self-creativity in leadership. This is because in today's highly competitive global labor market, the demands for leadership without emphasis on creativity elements is no longer enough. Certainly, this current economy requires managers of the organization to be inspired, efficient and produce creative solutions in developing the industry to maintain their position in an organization. According to Martz et al. (2016), the quality of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities is very reasonable and significant trait to enable graduates to handle their work in the workplace today. Regarding this, although the average employer has a technically skilled workforce, it is difficult for them to do something that requires creative thinking skills and problem solving which are necessary for improving the quality of their work. Thus, to produce

an innovative talent in the future, HEIs should do more to prepare graduates that will be able to reflect with their learning content, interpret suitable competency and get high achievement specifically through teaching method and graduate development program.

Concept of Competitiveness

The importance of competitiveness is required, especially in the face of furious competition among developing countries, including to enhance the quality value of individuals, citizens, and nations. Hatch and Dyer (2004) have found in their study that having employees with high-profile human capital skills, ability, and good behavior will improve the performance of an organization as well as being able to compete well. Saleeb and Fleming (2016) agreed that the competitive behavior is one of important qualification that must be taken in the selection process to enter the field of employment later. Basically, competitiveness is an ordinary trait that exists in one person which is the tendency or effort to do something that will benefit and satisfy him or herself. According to Norasmah et al. (2015), competitiveness is one of motivation that exists internally with the will to do something better, faster, and brighter than anyone else. Thus, a person who possesses competitive qualities can improve their productivity and self-esteem. Furthermore, a person who has a competitive attitude is an individual who has self-goal (Rajwani et al. 2006). Consequently, competitiveness is a healthy trait because it is self-motivated to increase the confidence of an individual to meet their desired dream. As stated by Tehrani et al. (2014), the competitive attitude inherent in a person is caused by internal motivation and self-will to meet certain goals such as winning the competition, getting excellent grades and for promotion in the job. Thus, by having a competitive attitude, one will work harder to meet self-satisfaction (Saleeb & Fleming 2016). Hence, this article discussed the seven competitive factors that are identified as important for future graduate employment, namely aggressive competitiveness, dominant competitiveness, self-improvement competitiveness, general competitiveness, organizational management competitiveness, goal competitiveness, and employability competitiveness.

An aggressive competitiveness involves emotionally competitiveness that reflects the extent to which individuals will be affected if they cannot win a competition. Thus, a person who possesses aggressive competitive traits not only enjoys competition, but they will also experience the excellence and greatness through competition (Newby & Klein 2014). Meanwhile, studies conducted by Barlett and Anderson (2012) show that aggressive nature is related to one's emotional stability, such as dissatisfaction with others which causes aggressive behavior to be done to win a competition. Besides that, aggressive competitiveness also known as the tendency of an individual to fulfill his wishes by overcoming other competitors and assuming they are challengers to make their positions more stable (Alexandrova 2004). However, the findings of the study by Norasmah et al. (2015) revealed that HEI students in Peninsular Malaysia showed that they lack aggressive competitiveness. In this regard, the researchers viewed that if HEI students display low aggressiveness, the quality of their self-esteem in today's competitive market will also be affected. Additionally, aggressive competitiveness not only enhances individual self-esteem but also affects the success of an organization. According to Bartos et al. (2015, p. 30) and Junior (2015), aggressive competitiveness is the tendency of an organization to overcome other competitors directly and intensively in enhancing or strengthening their market. With this, it can be concluded that aggressive competitiveness is essential to improve performance of individuals, communities, firms, and productivity of a country.

Dominant competitiveness is the criteria needed by a person to be the best compared to others in showing self-excellence towards others (Newby & Klein 2014). In this case, one of the dominant competitiveness is more likely to be viewed more powerful and influential than others (Norasmah et al. 2015). Accordingly, the dominant competitiveness also views as the way a person competes with himself for personal improvement as a means of measuring ability or self-motivating to succeed (Hibbard and Burshmester 2010 & Newby and Klein 2014). Therefore, dominant competitiveness is necessary to reinforce the individual's personal value in the competitive environment. Nevertheless, the results obtained by Norasmah et al. (2015) has recorded a mean score of between 2.89 and 3.51 for the dominant dimension of competitiveness. In fact, this dominant competitiveness is particularly important in improving interpersonal skills or managing relationships with others, especially in addressing today's gradually competitive job market challenges.

Self-improvement competitiveness reflects tendencies towards competition for self-esteem, mastery, achievement, and self-advancement (Newby & Klein 2014). Therefore, self-improvement is a positive trait which is not giving up and has a high level of effort in doing something to meet the desired goal. This suggests that a person who has a self-improvement competitiveness will continue to strive to meet a goal while competing with others to improve the efficiency required. Accordingly, the findings of the study by Norasmah et al. (2015) proved that HEI students in Peninsular Malaysia have a high level of effort in doing things to improve their self-esteem. The study concludes that feedback received from others will be the motivation for students to continue their work until achieve their goal. Meanwhile, Shimizu et al. (2015) found that individuals with achievement goals will increase their score than those with the goal of improving performance. Overall, the findings show that, assuming the task being given as a challenge and not a threat will induce a person to learn from failure to meet his or her own goals. Therefore, a person who wishes to succeed in life must always have a high endurance to improve their self-esteem.

General competitiveness reflects to what extend an individual relies on the competition and asserting himself to be a competitive person. Thus, an individual will feel satisfied through general competitiveness, gain a positive benefit through competition and reflect the extent of one's feeling of self-improvement through the competition (Newby & Klein 2014). Basically, general competitiveness is referring to the desire to win something in an interpersonal situation (Newby & Klein 2014; Yeoh & Yeoh 2015). Therefore, competitive individuals will work harder and more effective than others because of the higher attitudes to compete, the higher the performance level (Hinsz & Judnt 2005; Yeoh & Yeoh 2015). Thus, through competition, an individual can expose their ability to others. This is in line with the decision obtained by Norasmah et al. (2015) that overall HEI students in Peninsular Malaysia have an awareness of the importance of competing to achieve the goals they dreamed. According to Albert (2017) the main reason why students have felt for competing and entering the competition is because they want to expose their ideas to others, to reassure their emotions and at the same time they want to reveal their own greatness to others. Hence, it can be concluded that through the competitiveness one's can verify self-esteem, give new exposure in the fields involved and gain experience to strengthen the quality and productivity of themselves. On the other hand, the findings from Wu (2015) found that many students in HEI were aware of the need to put themselves in a state of fierce competition with others for a satisfactory job opportunity. However, they pointed out that there is a lack of confidence to face in today's gradually fierce labor market. Meanwhile, the results of Selevich et al. (2015) on the problem of addressing competitive attitudes among HEI graduates shows that most of HEI students have the goal of

improving self-quality through competitive attitudes. This is certainly because academic achievement alone is insufficient without a high degree of competitiveness to meet the challenges of today's competitive marketplace.

One of the criteria to be an effective leader is to have a high level of passion competitiveness (Amira et al. 2017). In this case, a graduate must have a high degree of organizational management competency that is prudent to set up strategies, including making decisions and leading others in the organization they work. Thus, a competitive leader that is ambitious, ethical, diligent individual and has a strong mentality is needed to continue to succeed. Colbert et al. (2014) argued that leadership under the management team within an organization affects the organization's effectiveness through several mechanisms such as strategic decision-making, implementation and networking between workers and other organizations. As such, competitive leaders will be important to manage, organize and will make a convenience decision in every activity undertaken within an organization. Moreover, a dedicated and competitive leader can influence the commitment of its employees, especially in achieving organizational goals (Shin et al. 2015).

Basically, everyone has a desire or goal to achieve. Therefore, one of the ways to meet that goal is through competition. According to Hibbard and Buhrmester (2010), the competitiveness of the goal is the desire to do something better so that the goals can be achieved. In this case, a person who has the goal of competing not only focuses on competition against others, but it is even more for self-development. Saleeb and Fleming (2016) also found that although competition affects students to learn and to be better than others, the most important factor influencing them is to compete and achieve personal goals. Accordingly, a study conducted by Norasmah et al. (2015) found that among the nine competitiveness dimensions have been tested, constructs for goal competitiveness show the highest mean score. Therefore, HEI students in Peninsular Malaysia have had their own goals while they are in university. As such, these goals will encourage them to stay viable and strive to enhance their own strengths and competencies to meet those goals. This is in line with the statement made by Wu (2015, p. 40-41) that personal goals have a direct impact on the expectations of students at colleges and universities in obtaining employment opportunities. Whereas, a study conducted by Comeig et al. (2017) that both male and female officers are likely to compete to achieve the target rather than compete with the opponent. This is certainly because competition against the target is emphasizing goals and not directly compete with others.

The competitiveness of the workforce or employability is the individual's willingness to carry out the tasks assigned (Norasmah et al. 2015). Thus, without the competitiveness of workability, it is difficult to show the self-esteem to others, especially in the competition to take the opportunity to get the jobs. Employability competitiveness include basic academic skills, thinking skills and self-exerted qualities as non-technical skills that are relevant in various fields of work and professions (Fatoki 2014; Norasmah et al. 2015). The findings of the study by Norasmah et al. (2015) on the element of employability competitiveness notes that HEI students in Peninsular Malaysia have a moderate level of competitiveness. This evidence pointed out that HEI students in Peninsular Malaysia have a high degree of workability, such as a willingness to do tasks to achieve goals and willing to work with others when necessary to make changes to enhance self-competence. On the other hand, the study by Jackson (2013) found that the skills of workability from the point of communication and working within the group are the most important aspect needed in the self-development of the students. In this case, through employability skills such as communication and working within the group, it can determine that a person is able to work with others to achieve goals while sharing views to enhance their

capabilities. This statement was also agreed by Norasmah et al. (2015) that a person who can accept the criticism of others in discussion and consensus in making decisions is an individual who has a high degree of employability competitiveness.

Graduates' Competencies

In the context of higher education, graduates' competencies are an understanding of the knowledge, skills and capabilities (Velasco 2014). This concept of competence is viewed as an output resulting from the human resource generation processes, where the sources of inputs obtained through education, training and experience in educational institutions either in the lower, middle and high levels. In addition, according to Sauber et al. (2008), competency is a declaration of education products based on the level of understanding and a mixture of talent or expertise. Therefore, competent graduates are important in the process of selecting new employees today. Velasco (2014) and Nilsson (2010) also point out that most of the employers today focus on the specific competencies among new job seekers who can carry out a field of work including technical skills as well as the ability to carry out a specialized field required by employers. In addition, Ken and Ying (2012) also point out that only high-competent graduates are fearless to cope with the challenges and to compete for opportunities in the field of work they are interested in. Moreover, in the present times the country intensely needs a skilled workforce to support the overall transformation in the economic sector that intensifies knowledge, generates labor productivity and attracts investment (Ridzwan et al., 2017) to stabilize markets globally. This suggests that the more competent of an individual, the higher the degree of their marketability to enter the field of work that corresponds to the area studied. This is because the concept of competence itself demonstrates the function of providing graduates or employees who can compete globally (Sauber et al. 2008). Basically, the principle of competency model refers to the assessment of individual performance that includes the aspects of knowledge, skills and personal characteristics that enables an employee to perform specific tasks with excellence and effectiveness (Nasyitah et al. 2017).

In this regard, graduates' ability to market influenced by various factors (Pool & Sewell 2007) which based on certain criteria that allow graduates to fully utilize the knowledge at work in the future. With that, the skills that every graduate have will determine their future path after completing studies either in private companies or in government departments. Jackson (2009, p. 87) stated that a manager will be able to perform his job efficiently if he has a good element of personal competence that includes personal characteristics and basic skills. According to Jackson (2009), the ability to have the skills, knowledge and understanding, which is a good element of competence, will induce individuals to perform their duties accordingly, is one of condition in selection and placement process. Hence, to gain parallel employment opportunities as envisioned, every graduate must have an eminence quality of self-esteem.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used content analysis based on previous studies on the aspects of human capital development, competitiveness and graduate competency. The secondary data used is based on the impactful scientific writing through journal, theses and books. Further, the important relationship of the concept of human capital development, competitiveness and graduate competency is well discussed.

DISCUSSION

In essence, to produce skilled and competitive human capital is based on the excellence of the education and training system provided in a country. Therefore, to meet the desire of producing knowledgeable and competitive graduates, every institution involved in providing education, training and skills includes those involved with job development, such as policymakers, industry and educational institutions should be committed to providing three important criteria to graduates, from the perspective of technical ability, self-management with continuous learning and social ability to work with others (Yahya et al. 2015). Furthermore, employment opportunities for an individual are dependent on their knowledge, attitude and skills, including technical skills, effective self-management and social management with others (Yahya et al. 2015). In this case, the results of the study by Yahya et al. (2015) found that these three criteria are interrelated and contribute directly to the level of self-competence for a graduate. While research by Pandey and Pandey (2015) in discussing about unemployment problems among young people, argued the importance to expand the interpersonal skills in tandem with technical skills among young job seekers. It is aimed at the holistic development by fostering student attitudes in value-adding, motivation, increase desire and feeling to learn, and instilling futuristic thinking as a willingness to become more competitive especially in the worldwide. Therefore, every youth should have a sense of social responsibility to learn and improve their level of competency, which not only to be more competitive in the country, but for global competition. Meanwhile, Roulin and Bangerter (2011) have discussed the importance of students in applying additional curriculum activities as value added to job opportunities in the industrial market. This is because through this participation, they can improve their personalities by way of developing necessary skills such as social skills, and high self-esteem specifically when competing for their desire job. Ahmad Dardiri (2016) also advocates that value-added skills such as interpersonal skills and career guidance models like entrepreneurial skills can enhance competitiveness among graduates. According to Bartos et al. (2015), creativity and innovation skills in tandem with aggressive competitiveness are needed to improve the performance of a company, especially in the commercial field. In this regard, it shows that the element of skill and competitiveness is crucial to strengthening the performance and achievement position either at the individual, firm, community and country level. Hence, this study shows that the elements of innovation skills and competitiveness aspects are interconnected in improving the performance of a firm in addition to achieving the goals of the organization.

Based on previous studies on the aspects of human capital and competitiveness, many researchers explain the importance of human capital factors such as technical skills, interpersonal skills and conceptual skills are required by current graduates to increase their level of competency. However, competitiveness elements are less emphasized in terms of self-development of graduates to improve their level of competency. Although there are some researchers studying these aspects, but past researchers have less emphasis on the importance of these competitiveness elements owned by every HEI graduates to improve their level of competency. From this point of view, all factors of human capital development and competitiveness indicates as an important aspect to be concerned in student development to enhance their competency level. As we known, before this, an exam-oriented is truly focused by many industries to employ graduates in their company; nevertheless, nowadays the competency level of graduates is of much concern among these employers. However, as important as the competency level in current graduate employability issues, the value of

humanities also will become much more important in the future. Moreover, these elements will be analyzed and evaluated during their employment process by various industries nowadays. Accordingly, to equip our graduates to become a more holistic employee/person in the future, these elements should ensure to be part of our policy thrust.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Therefore, based on the discussion on the aspect of human capital development and competitiveness above, this study proposes a conceptual framework as Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Propose Conceptual Framework to Enhance the Competency Level of University' Graduates

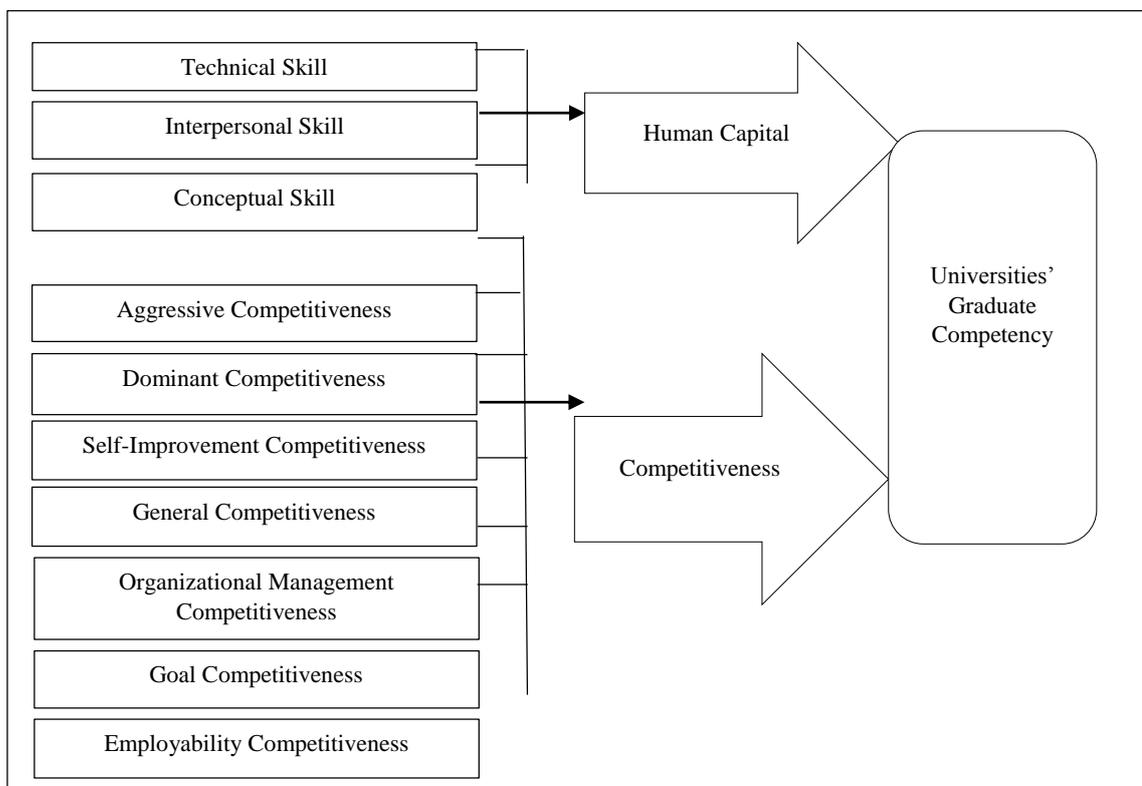


Figure 2 above is a propose conceptual framework to improve the degree of competency of university graduates today. Thus, this research suggests that all these aspects are incorporated into the learning and teaching of the university as a factor in the development of human capital and competitiveness towards increasing the competence level among graduates of HEI, and thereby to reduce the unemployment problem arises nowadays.

CONCLUSION

The evidence presented underscores the changing nature of HEIs in providing graduates not just with knowledge, but also the necessity to provide holistic human capital with suitable characteristics based on current demand. Thus, from the discussion above, to enhance the competency level among HEIs graduates, the elements of technical skills, interpersonal skills and conceptual skills as the human capital factors itself does not guarantee graduates get

employed. However, past review has indicated that the competitiveness as personal factors in graduate themselves should be emphasized. Simultaneously, the aspects of humanities should not be forgotten and will align with competitiveness characteristics in developing our future human capital. Hence, to address the challenges of a new and more competitive economy, it is necessary to foster and develop competitive, critical, and more impressive human capital. Therefore, the unemployment problems among graduate is expected to be reduced gradually. Partially, the parties involved in human capital development, including the policy makers, universities, industries and graduates themselves must be concern about the changes and conversions to ensure the competence value can be enhanced. These efforts are also meant to produce more graduates that will act as catalysts and drive the transformation of the national economy to a high-income economy and in the wake of innovation towards the achievement of the developmental state status.

REFERENCES

- Ab. Aziz. (2009). *Pembangunan Modal Insan: Asas Pendidikan Negara*. Sintok: Penerbit Universiti Utara Malaysia.
- Ahmad Dardiri. (2016). Soft Skill and Entrepreneurial Career Guidance Model for Enhancing Technical Vocational Education and Training's Graduates Competitiveness. *Innovation of Vocational Technology Education*, 12(1), 1-7.
- Ahmad Nabil bin Md Nasir, Dayana Farzeeha Ali, Muhammad Khair bin Noordin & Mohd Safarin bin Nordin. (2011). Technical skills and non-technical skills: predefinition concept. *Proceedings of the IETEC'11 Conference*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Albert, D. J. (2017). Affirmation, Validation, and Empowerment: Influences of a Composition Competition on Students' Self-concepts as Musicians. *Research Music in Education*, 39(1), 91-107.
- Alexandrova, M. (2004). Entrepreneurship in a Transition Economy: The Impact of Environment on Entrepreneurial Orientation. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 2, 140-148.
- Amira Aleza Azemi, Nurul Hafizah Hashim, Nur Fatin Nadiyah Nordin & Ahmad Esa. (2017). Leadership Soft Skills and Co-Curriculum Management for University Graduates. *Social Science*, 102, 44434-44436.
- Bank Negara Malaysia. (2016). Laporan Tahunan 2016. Pengangguran Belia di Malaysia: Perkembangan dan Pertimbangan Dasar. 109-117.
- Barlett, C. P. & Anderson, C. A. (2012). Direct and Indirect Relations between the Big 5 Personality Traits and Aggressive and violent behavior. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 52, 870-875.
- Bartos, P., Kljucnikov, A., Popesko, B. & Machacek, J. (2015). Are Men More Innovative and Aggressive in Business? Case Study from the Czech Republic. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Knowledge*, 2(3), 29-39.
- Becker, G. (1994). *Human Capital : A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special References to Education*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Beenen, G., Pichler, S. & Davoudpour, S. (2017). Interpersonal Skills in MBA Admissions: How Are They Conceptualized and Assessed? *Journal of Management Education*: 1-21.
- Colbert, A. E., Barrick, M. R. & Bradley, B. H. (2014). Personality and Leadership Composition in Top Management Teams: Implications for Organizational Effectiveness. *Personnel Psychology*, 67, 351-387.
- Comeig, I., Jaramillo-Gutierrez, A. & Ramirez, F. (2017). Toward Value Co-Creation: Increasing Women's Presence in Management Positions through Competition against a Set Target. *Sustainability*, 9, 1-10.

- Fatoki, O. (2014). Final Year Undergraduate Students' Perception of their Non-Technical Skills. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(7), 43-47.
- Fitzsimons, P. (2015). Human Capital Theory and Education. *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 1-4.
- Fletcher, E. C. & Tyson, W. (2017). Bridging Technical Skills Gaps between High School Students and Local Employers. *Journal of Research in Technical Career*, 1(1), 20-31.
- Hairuzila Idrus. (2014). Developing Well-grounded Graduates Through Integration of Soft Skills in The Teaching of Engineering Courses. *Frontiers in Education Conference*, 835-843.
- Hamzah Bin Zakaria, Saidatul Nizan Bt. Nasroddin & ZulHilmy Bin Hashim. (2015). Softskills-Kepentingannya Dalam Memenuhi Kebolehpasaran Pekerjaan Terhadap Graduan Politeknik Johor Bahru. *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Essentials (THE)*, 5(2), 921.
- Hasnah Ali, Luqman Ahmad, Sanep Ahmad & Noraziah Ali. (2009). Keperluan, Kepentingan dan Sumbangan Perancangan Pendidikan dalam Pembangunan Ekonomi Malaysia. 4(1), 13-29.
- Haryati Shafii, Syarifah Meryam Shareh Musa, Zalika Abd Rahman. (2009). Pembangunan Modal Insan ke Arah Meningkatkan Kualiti Hidup Masyarakat. *International Conference on Human Capital Development*, 1-8.
- Hatch, N. W. & Dyer, J. H. (2004). Human Capital and Learning as a Source of Sustainable Competitive Advantage. *Strategic Management Journal*, 25, 1155-1178.
- Hibbard, D. R. & Buhrmester, D. (2010). Competitiveness, Gender, and Adjustment Among Adolescents. *Sex Roles*, 63, 412-424.
- Hinsz, V. B., & Jundt, D. K. (2005). Exploring Individual Differences in a Goal-Setting Situation Using the Motivational Trait Questionnaire. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 35(3), 551-571.
- Hurrell, S. A. 2016. Rethinking the Soft Skills Deficit Blame Game: Employers, Skills Withdrawal and the Reporting of Soft Skills Gaps. *Human Relation*, 69 (3), 605-628.
- Jackson, D. (2009). Profiling Industry-relevant Management Graduate Competencies: The Need for a Fresh Approach. *International Journal of Management Education*, 8(1), 85-98.
- Jisun, J. & Soo, J. L. (2016). Influence of University Prestige on Graduate Wage and Job Satisfaction: The Case of South Korea. *Journal of Higher Education and Policy Management*, 38(3), 297-315.
- Junior, A. B. O. (2015). The Aggressive Competitiveness Influence on the Retailer Company Performance. *Future Studies Research Journal: Trends and Strategies*, 7(1), 156-183.
- Ken, T. T. S. & Ying, C. Y. (2012). Business Graduates' Competencies in the Eyes of Employers: An Exploratory Study in Malaysia. *World Review of Business Research*, 2(2), 176-190.
- Knight, P. and Yorke, M. (2004). *Learning, Curriculum and Employability in Higher Education*. London: Routledge.
- Laila Wati Madlan, Chua Bee Seok, Murnizam Hj. Halik, Ferlis Hj. BahariJasmine Adela Mutang. (2015). Peningkatan Kualiti Diri Melalui Intervensi Interpersonal. *Jurnal Psikologi Malaysia*, 29 (2), 123-134.
- Martz, B., Hughes, J. & Braun, F. (2016). Creativity and Problem-Solving: Closing the Skills Gap. *International Association for Computer Information Systems*: 1-11.
- Mincer, J. (1958). Investment in Human Capital and Personal Income Distribution. *The Journal of Political Economy*, 65(4), 281- 302.
- Mohamad Kamil Hj. Abd. Hamid, Rahimin Affandi Abd Rahim & Muhammed Yusof. (2014). Pembangunan Modal Insan di Malaysia: Analisis Terhadap Pendekatan Islam Selepas Negara Merdeka. *Jurnal Hadhari*, 6(2), 15-34.
- Mohd Fauzi Hamat & Mohd Khairul Naim Che Nordin. (2012). Tinjauan Kepentingan Pembangunan Modal Insan di Malaysia. *Jurnal Al-Tamaddun*, 7(1), 75-89.
- Muhammad Hazrul Ismail. (2012). Kajian Mengenai Kebolehpasaran Siswazah di Malaysia: Tinjauan dari Perspektif Majikan. *Prosiding Perkem VII 2*, 906-913.
- Nasyitah Nasir, Siti Balkish Adam, Nur Najihah Rosli, Mai Shihah Abdullah & Mohamed Nor Azhari Azman. (2017). Kompetensi Pembimbing daalam Sistem Latihan Kemahiran Dua Hala: Satu Sorotan Literatur. *Sains Humanika*, 9, 1-5.

- Newby, J. L. & Klein, R. G. (2014). Competitiveness Reconceptualized: Psychometric Development of the Competitiveness Orientation Measure as a Unified Measure of Trait Competitiveness. *Psychological Resources*, 64, 879-895.
- Nilsson, S. (2010). Enhancing Individual Employability: The Perspective of Engineering Graduates. *Education & Training*, 52(6/7), 540-551.
- Norain Mat Lazim & Noorah Yusof. (2012). Universiti, Pembangunan Modal Insan dan Penumpuan Ruang Komuniti Berpendidikan Tinggi di Malaysia: Suatu Ulasan Kritis. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 7(2), 308-327.
- Noorah Yusof, Zakiah Jamaluddin & Norain Mat Lazim. (2013). Persepsi Pelajar Prasiswazah Terhadap Kebolehpasaran Graduan dan Persaingan dalam Pasaran Pekerjaan. *Journal Personalia Pelajar*, 16, 77-92.
- Norasmah Othman, Khairul Khairiyah Khasbullah & Hariyaty Ab Wahid. (2015). Tahap Daya Saing Pelajar Institusi Pengajian Tinggi di Semenanjung Malaysia. *Jurnal Pendidikan Malaysia*, 40(2), 139-149.
- Pandey, M. & Pandey, P. (2015). Global Employability of Unemployment Trough Soft Skills. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approach of Studies*, 2(2), 73-77.
- Pool, L. D. & Sewel, P. (2007). The Key to Employability: Developing A Practical Model of Graduate Employability. *Education & Training*, 49(4), 277-289.
- Rajwani Mohd Zain, Tee, C. P. & Md Zawawi Abu Bakar. (2006). Sikap Pelajar Terhadap Situasi Persaingan: Kajian di Universiti Utara Malaysia. eprint.utm.my
- Rampersad, G. & Patel, F. (2014). Creativity as a Desirable Graduate Attribute: Implications for Curriculum Design and Employability. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 15(1), 1-11.
- Ridzwan, C. R., S. Malik, Zaliza Hanapi, Suriani Mohamed, Mohd Azlan Hussain & Shafeeqa Shahrudin. (2017). Skills and Knowledge Competency of Technical and Vocational Education and Training Graduate. *Asian Social Science*, 13(4), 69-77.
- Robeyns, I. (2006). Three Models of Education: Rights, Capabilities and Human Capital. *Theory and Research in Education*, 4(1), 69-84.
- Robles, M.M. (2012). Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Soft Skills Needed in Today's Workplace. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 75(4), 453-465.
- Roulin, N. & Bangerter, A. (2011). Students' Use of Extra-Curricular Activities for Positional Advantage in Competitive Job Markets. *Journal of Education and Work*, 26(1), 21-47.
- Saleeb, M. & Fleming, T. (2016). How Competition Influence Students Academic Performance. Retrieved from <http://blogs.ubc.ca>
- Sauber, M. H., McSurely, H. B. & Tummala, V. M. Rao. (2008). Developing Supply Chain Management Program: A Competency Model. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 16(4), 375-391.
- Schultz, T. P. (2003). Human Capital, Schooling and Health. *Economic and Human Biology*, 1, 207-221.
- Schultz, T. W. (1971). *Investment in Human Capital: The Role of Education and of Research*, New York: The Free Press, 161.
- Selevich, T., Selevich, O. & Golubeza, E. 2015. The Problems of Assessing the Competitiveness of Russian Graduates. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 174: 3611-3618.
- Shimizu, M., Niiya, Y. & Shigemasu, E. (2015). Achievement Goals and Improvement Following Failure: Moderating Roles of Self-compassion and Contingency of Self-worth. *Self and Identity*, 1-9.
- Shin, Y., Sung, S. Y., Choi, J. N. & Kim, M. S. (2015). Top Management Ethical Leadership and Firm Performance: Mediating Role of Ethical and Procedural Justice Climate. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 129: 43-57.
- Suhaili Hanafi. (2015). Kesiediaan Pelajar dari Aspek Kemahiran Teknikal terhadap Pembentukan Kebolehpasaran di Kolej Vokasional Wilayah Selatan. Projek Ijazah Sarjana Pendidikan Vokasional, Universiti Tun Hussein On.

- Tehrani, L. A., Majd, M. A. & Ghamari, M. (2014). Comparison of Self-efficacy, Test Anxiety and Competitiveness between Students of Top Private Schools and Public Schools. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(23), 2749-2754.
- Van der Heijden, B.I.J.M. (2002). Organizational influences upon the development of professional expertise in SME's. *Journal of Enterprising Culture* 9(4), 367-406.
- Velasco, M. S. (2014). Do Higher Education Institutions Make a Difference in Competence Development? A Model of Competence Production at University. *Higher Education*, 1-21.
- Weber, M. R., Crawford, A., Lee, J. & Dennison, D. (2013). An Exploratory Analysis of Soft Skill Competencies Needed for the Hospitality Industry. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 12, 313-332.
- Whiley, D., Witt, B., Colvin, R. M., Arrue, R. S. & Kotir, J. (2017). Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills in first year Environmental Management Students: A tale of Curriculum design, Application and Reflection. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 1-16.
- Wickramasinghe, V. & Perera, L. (2010). Graduates', University Lecturers' and Employers' Perceptions towards Employability Skills. *Education & Training*, 52(3), 226 – 244.
- Wu, D. (2015). Education of Starting Business and Employment of College Graduates. *Management & Engineering*, 21, 40-45.
- Unit Perancang Ekonomi. (2006). Rancangan Malaysia Ke-9, 2006-2010. Putrajaya: Percetakan Nasional Malaysia Berhad.
- Yahya, N. Rasul, M. S. & Yasin, R. M. (2015). Social Skills and Social Values in Malaysian Dual Training System Apprenticeship. *International Conference on Innovation in Engineering and Vocational Education*, 170-175.
- Yasmin Mohd Adnan, Md. Nasir Daud, Anuar Alias & Muhammad Najib Razali. (2012). Importance of Soft Skills in The Real Estates Programmes in Malaysia. *Journal of Survening, Construction & Property*, 3(2), 1-13.
- Yeoh, J. P. S. & Yeoh, P. A. (2015). Competitiveness between Ethnic Malays and Ethnic Chinese in Malaysia. *Journal of Psychology*, 2(1), 16-21.
- Zulkefli A. Hassan. (2007). Isu dan Strategi ke Arah Pembangunan Modal Insan Sektor Pengajian Tinggi. *Jurnal Pengurusan Awam*, 23-44.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MARFUNIZAH BINTI MA'DAN

School of Government,
College of Law, Government & International Studies (COLGIS),
Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), 06010 Sintok, Kedah
marfunizah@uum.edu.my

MUHAMAD TAKIYUDDIN BIN ISMAIL

Political Sciences Programme,
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FSSK),
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), 43650 Bangi, Selangor
taki@ukm.edu.my

SITY DAUD

Political Sciences Programme,
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FSSK),
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), 43650 Bangi, Selangor
sitydaud@ukm.edu.my