

**EFFECTIVENESS OF FINISHING SCHOOL
PROGRAMME IN ENHANCING GRADUATES
EMPLOYABILITY**

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EFFECTIVENESS OF FINISHING SCHOOL PROGRAMME IN ENHANCING
GRADUATES EMPLOYABILITY

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By

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ABSTRACT

Lack of soft skills among graduates in Malaysia is said as one of the reasons why they are unemployed although they have excellent academic results. To address this problem the Ministry of Higher Education has directed the institution of higher learning in Malaysia to establish a program called Finishing School, purposely to equip graduate with the soft skills to ensure their employability. Hence this study was conducted to identify the effectiveness of this program in enhancing employability of graduates in Malaysia. To assess the effectiveness of this program, a total of 892 graduates from four universities namely USM, UUM, UniMAP and UIAM have been selected as respondent. Effectiveness of this program is measured through the perspective of respondents on the ability of Finishing School programs in improving their soft skills and opportunities to obtain employment. In addition, Multinomial Logit model is also used because the various labour market outcome of graduates. In addition this study also utilizes information from interviews conducted on several private companies to obtain information related to the soft skills that need to be possessed by the graduates to increase their employability. Result from stocktaking shows that institutions of higher learning have offered various soft skills that have been outlined by the ministry of higher education. Therefore, institutions of higher education must find a way on how to make Finishing School program more attractive in order to increase the participation among graduating students.

ABSTRAK

Kekurangan kemahiran insaniah di kalangan graduan di Malaysia dikatakan sebagai salah satu punca mengapa mereka menganggur, walaupun mereka memiliki keputusan yang cemerlang. Bagi menangani masalah ini Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi telah mengarahkan institusi pengajian tinggi di Malaysia untuk mewujudkan program yang diberi nama Finishing School. Ini bertujuan untuk melengkapkan graduan dengan kemahiran insaniah yang diperlukan oleh industri sebelum mereka melangkah ke alam kerjaya. Maka kajian ini dilaksanakan bagi mengenal pasti sejauh mana program ini dapat membantu meningkat kebolehgunaan tenaga di kalangan graduan di Malaysia. Bagi mengukur keberkesanan program ini, seramai 892 graduan daripada empat buah universiti iaitu USM, UUM, UniMAP dan UIAM telah dipilih sebagai respondent. Keberkesanan program ini diukur melalui perspektif responden terhadap keupayaan program Finishing School dalam meningkatkan kemahiran insaniah dan peluang memperolehi pekerjaan. Selain itu, model Multinomial Logit turut digunakan, disebabkan terdapat pelbagai kesudahan dalam persaingan siswazah dalam pasaran buruh. Selain itu kajian ini turut menggunakan maklumat daripada temuduga yang dilakukan terhadap beberapa syarikat swasta bagi memperolehi maklumat berkaitan dengan kemahiran insaniah yang perlu dimiliki oleh graduan, bagi meningkatkan kebolehpasaran mereka. Hasil 'stocktaking' menunjukkan institusi pengajian tinggi menerapkan kemahiran insaniah yang telah digariskan oleh kementerian pengajian tinggi. Oleh itu, institusi pengajian tinggi haruslah mencari satu kaedah untuk menjadikan program Finishing School mereka lebih menarik, supaya mendapat sambutan yang lebih menggalakkan dari kalangan graduan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The employability issue among local graduates is not a new issue in Malaysia. It was not only appeared as the news headline but also hit the parliament, especially after the Asian Financial Crisis incident in late 1997. This issue has been seriously debated due to the increasing trend of graduate unemployment after the Asian Financial Crisis.

According to Jamiah Shukri (2002) there were 38,800 unemployed graduates in Malaysia for the year 2001 and 45,400 in 2002. The majority of the unemployed graduates were found to be Bumiputras with 94.7%, while Chinese and Indians have lower percentages of 3.7% and 1.6%, respectively.

While in 2003, there was no update number of unemployed graduates. However, in 2003, 4.6% of the female graduates were unemployed compared to the male graduates at 3.5%. According to the statistics released by the Labour Department, unemployment seems to be more severe among the female graduates than the male graduates due to the higher female student enrolment rate in tertiary education as compared to male students (Nor Hartini, 2007).

The Berita Harian (2008, June 16), a local newspaper, reported that local higher learning institutions in Malaysia has churned out almost 60,000 graduates each year, both from public and private higher learning institutions. However, there were 20,217 (30.7%) job less graduates registered themselves with the Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia in June 2006 (Norshima, 2008).

This high rate of unemployment among graduates by universities and courses in Malaysia for the year 2006 is presented in Tables 1.1 and 1.2 below.

Table 1.1: Unemployment among Graduates by Universities

University	Unemployed	%
Universiti Teknologi Mara	3,278	16.2
Universiti Utara Malaysia	1,532	7.6
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	1,147	5.7
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	971	4.8
Universiti Pertanian Malaysia	919	4.5
Universiti Malaya	531	2.6
Universiti Sains Malaysia	505	2.5
Universiti Malaysia Sabah	371	1.8
Universiti Islam Antarabangsa	358	1.8
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak	174	0.9
Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris	39	0.2
Other Public Universities	840	4.2
Private Universities & College	1,559	7.7
Other University*	7,993	39.5
Total	20,217	100.00

Notes: *‘Other university’ includes other public universities and foreign graduates.

Source: The Sun (2006, July 04)

From the Table 1.1, graduates from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) have the highest rate of unemployment (16.2%). It is followed by graduates from private universities and colleges (7.7%) and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) with 7.6% unemployed graduates. The lowest number of unemployed graduates was from Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) with only 0.2% rate of unemployment.

Table 1.2: Unemployment among Graduates by Courses

Course/Subjects	Unemployed	%
Computer Science	3,942	19.5
Business Administration/Management	3,736	18.5
Engineering	3,096	15.3
Accountancy	1,923	9.5
Literature & Social Science	1,283	6.3
Pure Science & Applied Sciences	1,303	6.4
Architecture & Building Management	540	2.7
Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry	401	2.0
Others	3,993	19.8
Total	20,217	100.00
Source: The Sun (2006, July 04)		

Table 1.2 indicates the number of unemployed graduates by courses. It shows that, graduates from Computer Science course (19.5%) contributed the most to the number of unemployed graduates in Malaysia. It is followed by graduates of Business Administration or Management (18.5%) and engineering graduates with 15.3% from the whole total.

Several factors have been identified as causes of the increment in the unemployment rate among university graduates in Malaysia. One of the principal causes of unemployed graduates is the skill mismatch between the requirements of the industry and the knowledge equipped for the graduates during their tertiary education. Such a mismatch may be partially due to the changes in the economic structure and technological advancement, which make the labor market now become more competitive and volatile (Tan, 2007). As a result, graduates face difficulties in getting jobs because they are not ready for the industry.

Besides, students who are academically outstanding often develop strong egos that they build the notion 'we know everything' in mind. Due to this attitude, poor performance may result during the employment interview. Many of the firms indicated that the expectations of graduates, particularly universities graduates, are also too high. Pauw, Oosthuizen and Westhuizen (2008) stated that graduates expect their qualifications to open doors at the middle management level and are often unwilling to start at entry level. It is necessary for graduates to have a more realistic view of what they can offer and what they can expect from their first jobs, given their limited experiential training.

Depending on the nature of vacancies, firms often require people with some working experience as been highlighted by Mlatsheni (2005), work experience is an important factor that influences employability at all levels. Shamsuddin (2009) revealed that most firms expect fresh graduates to be able to start and contribute to the firm immediately after they take up the job.

Feng (2008), on the other hand, stated that part of the high unemployment rate for graduates can be attributed to the higher education expansion policy, whereby, new colleges and universities were encouraged to establish and accommodate as many high school graduates as possible. Greater enrolments in colleges and universities have led to less qualified students and the degradation of education quality, which in turn contributes to the high rate of unemployed graduates.

On the other hand, a survey conducted on 3300 human resource personnel and bosses by JobStreet.com, a Malaysian employment agency, deciphers the factors relating to graduate unemployment. Graduates' low proficiency in English

language contributes 56% of the factors. Others would be the appalling social etiquette of the graduates (36%), graduates' demand of high wages (32%), irrelevant degree possessed (30%), choosy job seeker among graduates (23%) and job unavailability (14%), (Guvinder Kaur and Sharan Kaur, 2008). Graduates' low proficiency in English and bad social etiquette are the top reasons for graduates being unemployed. These findings show that Malaysian graduates are unemployed not because they are unintelligent but rather because most of them lack of soft-skills.

Due to this matter, Ministry of Higher Education has embarked on several programs and initiatives to mitigate the problems of deficiency of soft skills among fresh graduates. These initiatives among others are introduction of soft skills modules to embed communication skills, leadership and team buildings as well as reporting skills, into the student's curriculum of studies, basic entrepreneurship modules, Internship or Industrial Training Program, and collaborative programs with relevant industries.

Ministry of Malaysia Higher Education had directed all public higher learning institutions to establish Finishing School programme as to meet the requirements of the industries. The development of Finishing School programme in local higher learning institution were aimed to train and prepare it's final semester students as well as unemployed graduates with industry-specific knowledge, skills and competencies to facilitate and improve their employability. Thus, this research will analyze on how far the Finishing School programme conducted by various local higher learning institutions really aid in improving the graduates' employability.

1.2 Problem Statement

Within the last five years, numerous articles have been written in Malaysian newspapers and academic journals on a prevalent matter of grave concern: the declining quality of Malaysian graduates today. There were allegations that our local Malaysian graduates were lacking of the basic skills and knowledge that they should be equipped when studying in their tertiary level. For instance, Ministry of Human Resource has collected sufficient feedback from employers to lodge public comments that these graduates are lacking in skills and more commonly, soft skills (Kwoo, 2006).

Further compounding the problem at hand is, in the current labor market, privates sectors today are not interested in recruiting local graduates because they lack several important skills (Nor Hartini, 2007). Thus, inadequacy of skills was identified as the cause of the increment of unemployment rate among Malaysian graduates.

As it is said that many employers do not only make academic achievement as the primary criterion upon recruiting employees, Minister of Higher Education has recommended all local higher learning institutions to carry out Finishing School programme or concept to conduct courses on soft skills for their graduates to enhance their employability (The Star, 2008, July 3) as the Higher Learning Institution is seen as an ideal place to polish students' soft skills.

Various steps have been taken by local higher learning institutions to conduct the Finishing School programme or concept as required by the Ministry of Higher Education. Many efforts have been carried out by local higher learning institution in identifying the essential skills, modules and programmes that they

need to focus and deliver in the Finishing School programme. This is necessary to ensure that their graduates are well equipped with the accurate soft skills demanded by the industrial sectors.

The dilemmas that arise now are, first, to what extent has the Finishing School programme implemented by local higher learning institutions effectively improved graduates' soft skills and graduates' employability? Second, is the implementation of Finishing School programme in USM, UniMAP, UUM and UIAM similar to others, conducted in other local and overseas higher learning institutions? Third, are the soft skills offered in the Finishing School programme coinciding with the employers' need? Therefore, it is necessary to measure the efficacy of the Finishing School program organized by local higher learning institutions in enhancing the graduates' employability.

1.3 Research Objectives

The general objective of this research study is to measure the effectiveness of the execution of Finishing School programme in local higher learning institutions to enhance graduates' employability. This research tries to evaluate the effectiveness of the soft skills delivered during the program in assisting the graduates to be more employable in job market, locally or internationally.

Whereas the specific objectives of this research study are to:

1. Determine respondents' perception on the effectiveness of Finishing School programme in improving graduates' employability and soft skills,
2. Analyze the strategy of public higher learning institutions in Malaysia and others countries on the implementation of Finishing School programme,

3. Analyze employers' perception, regarding the importance of soft skills required in their field that should be possessed by graduates to make them more employable.

1.4 Significance of Study

Numerous studies have been carried out to identify the effectiveness of Finishing School programme conducted by local higher learning institutions in improving its graduate's soft skills. However, no research has been undertaken to study the effectiveness of Finishing School programme in enhancing graduates employability.

Hence, this research measures the effectiveness of Finishing School programme in enhancing graduates employability. This research offered a variety of information including its implementation or concept in various higher learning institutions either in Malaysia or other countries, the date of implementation, the target participants and type of modules being enforced during the programme as to enhance their graduate's employability.

Besides, information gathered from the employers through focused group discussion will enable us to know which types of soft-skills are most demanded by employers. This information will be more useful for higher learning institutions as different types of job field and organization will expect different types of skills from their future employees. For instance, American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) has identified six categories of skills which are important to employability, while Ministry of Malaysia Higher Education has identified seven soft skills that should be possessed by all graduates to be more

employable. Thus this research is also aimed to help the higher learning institution to focus more on the soft skills that are really important as perceived by the employers in Malaysia.

1.5 Organization of the Study

This research study is organized to measure the effectiveness of Finishing School programme as one of the pre-employment programmes conducted by various local higher learning institutions. The remaining chapters of this research study are organized as follows: (i) Chapter Two discusses the background of Finishing School programme executed in USM, UUM, and UniMAP, (ii) Chapter Three describes the literature review of related studies undertaken concerning the determiners of graduates' employability, concept of employability and the effectiveness of Finishing School programme, (iii) Chapter Four presents the methodologies that are being used to estimate the effectiveness of the Finishing School programme based on respondents' view. This chapter also describes the methods used in gathering the required information, in order to achieve the research objective of this study, (iv) Chapter Five presents the findings and results of the research study based on the survey and finally, (v) Chapter Six concludes this study, offering some recommendations and valuable suggestions to improve the Finishing School programme so as to make it more effective in enhancing graduates' employability.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

In general, the Finishing School programme is a pre-employment training programmes for graduating students, offering different specializations to cater the needs of different industries. It can be seen as a new brainchild in the curriculum developed for students as a means of preparing them in order to meet the requirements of industries (MOHE).

It was designed to help final semester students in local higher learning institutions to improve their soft skills including communication skills, writing skills, critical thinking, teamwork skills, ethic and professional value, entrepreneurial skills and leadership skills. All those skills are important as supported by Hanum, Razli and Azudin, (2008), employer tend to hire an employee who have various skills as they do not want to spend their money on in- house training.

In addition, the Finishing School programme refers to soft skills courses, which is not supposed to be isolated from the curriculum of the local public higher learning institutions. It is understood that although the soft skills courses had been offered by local higher learning institutions before, they were held on an adhoc basis. Moreover, attendance is not compulsory. Students who feel that they are lacking in soft skills area and want to enhance their marketability and employability will be given the option to attend this course.

Almost all local higher learning institutions had successfully organised the Finishing School programme. However, in this section, the discussion will be mainly on the implementation of Finishing School programme carried out by three local higher learning institutions in Malaysia namely, Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), and Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). Besides, this section also will discuss about the way they implement the programme, their focused area, their target participants as well as the effectiveness of the programme held so far.

2.2 Finishing School Programme in USM

2.2.1 Career Tune-up Programme

The Finishing School programme introduced in Universiti Sains Malaysia is known as The Career Tune-up programme. It was held in Pangkor Bay View Beach, for three days from 5 Mei 2009 to 8 Mei 2009. It was organised by the USM's Career Department, purposely to entrench students' readiness to venture into the working world, which is more competitive nowadays. This programme involved lecture sessions and experience-sharing sessions from the experts in the industry and entrepreneurship. This program was a compulsory for final semester students and were also opened to others, who had been shortlisted beforehand.

There were five modules being set up for this program. The first module focused on the resume writing, preparation for job interview and corporate communication. In this module, students learned a proper way to write an interesting resume which is simple and concise, interact amiably, and to learn the right procedure to be adhered during the interview session. In the second module,

students were exposed to the ethic of professional areas while in the third module, known as the Career Diversify, students were introduced to a range of jobs so that their choice will not be limited to a field only. Meanwhile, in the fourth module, known as the career development and entrepreneurship discussion, students were being explained about the advantages of entrepreneurship. The last module, Surviving in Pangkor, students will have chances in obtaining an experience in working and living in Pangkor.

The effectiveness of is program can be seen clearly as the students who participate become more confidence in facing with the challenges in working world.

2.2.2 Preparation for Industrial Training

The other Finishing School programme initiated by Universiti Sains Malaysia is known as The Preparation for Industrial Training Seminar. It was organized successfully by Universiti Sains Malaysia and Ministry of Higher Education, in collaboration with the Student Affair and Student Development Department of USM. It was held on 6 March 2008, at the Student Main Hall in USM main campus. This programme was launched by the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Student Affair and Student Development Department, Prof. Omar Osman.

This programme was established in order to expose their students the importance of grooming, ethics of the working world and procedure in jobs interview including the right appearance during the interview session. Besides, students will also be taught about self preparation either during the industrial training or in real job field.

There were five sessions throughout the seminar, conducted by the famous business ethic instructor, Puan Yasmin Sidik. The session comprised Image and You, Social Ethic, Business Ethic Simulation, and Dress and Appearance during the Job Interview.

There were 286 second year students from the main campus who would be participating in industrial training for 2008 session, which was after the respective seminar. Thus, this seminar was considered effective as it obtained good responses from students who participated.

2.3 Finishing School Program in UUM

2.3.1 Grooming and Resume writing courses

The Finishing School programme or concept applied in Universiti Utara Malaysia is known as the Grooming and Resume Writing courses. The grooming course was organized with the main objective of enhancing students' employability skills, particularly in building up their professional image. As according to the director of UUM's UIL, Assoc. Professor. Dr. Shahizan Hassan, professional image is vital to graduates' career as it is related to the set of qualities and characteristics that represent perceptions of our competence and character, as judged by people around us or people we work with. Therefore, graduates need to have the knowledge on how they can build up their professional image so as to bring the considerable gaps between their desired image and the perceived image.

Meanwhile, in the resume writing course, graduates will learn how to write a concise resume, prepare for an interview and also about professional image and ethic. Besides, this course will also help the students to write effective

letters of application. Not only this, students will learn the way to conduct themselves favourably as well as to be more confident during the interview session.

2.3.2 Graduate Excellence Assistance Training Programme (GREAT)

The Centre for University-Industry Link (UIL), is organizing the Graduate Excellence Assistance Training Programme or GREAT (Module 1) on 9 and 10 October 2009 which will be held in the Universiti Utara Malaysia at Muadzam Shah Hall. It is a new programme introduced in UUM with the main objective of nurturing students particularly the practicum students, with various practical skills and knowledge which would essentially help them to adapt themselves well to the working environment during their industrial training programme. This comprehensive programme will increase the employability of these future graduates in line with the strategy of the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia.

This programme consists of two modules. The first module is compulsory for all students who will undergo their practicum period during the A091 session (December 2009) while the second module is only compulsory for students who have obtained a CGPA of 3.0 and below and have passed MUET with Band 3 and below. Registration fee for the first module is RM15 for each student while the second module is RM20.

The module comprises of employability sessions such as career planning, psychology and psychometric test, resume presentation, interviewing skills, networking skills, teamwork skills, leadership skills, communication skills, as well as integrity and employer expectations towards graduating students.

This programme is compulsory for final semester students with CGPA less than 3.0, and is also opened to other UUM students who are keen to upgrade their employability skills.

2.4 Finishing School Program in UniMAP

The Apprenticeship Program and Finishing School Program in UniMAP were implemented in April 2009. There were 264 participants, who were the final semester students, since these courses were offered to those who will be graduating (Kamarudin, 2009).

The purpose of these programmes was to provide an early exposure and preparation to prospective graduates before they enter the real working environment. In other word, both programmes were conducted in order to help students to prepare for their transition from a life as a student to a life as an employee. This was to ensure that UniMAP's graduates possess all the relevant skills as required by industries, and indirectly make them more marketable in the job market, either local or international.

Both programmes focused on developing additional skills among graduates especially in improving their commands of English, soft skills, resume writing, interview skills and information communication technology (ICT) skills.

2.5 Conclusion

Even though the name of the Finishing School programme or concept organised in each of the local higher learning institution discussed above are vary from one another, they share the same objective which is to equip undergraduates with the

right soft skills element so as to enhance their graduates employability in job market either locally or internationally. Each local higher institution is identified to have their own way of conducting the Finishing School Programme or concepts with appropriate courses offered to their graduating students. The critical elements of soft skills emphasized by the universities are more on communication skills, English proficiency, resume writing and preparation for job interview.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Literature review is the documentation of the relevant studies indicating the author and year of study. It is a clear and logical arrangement of the related research work done in the area of investigation. The literature review can be gathered from journal articles, books, magazines, CDs, electronics journals, theses and dissertations, newspapers, government and corporate reports, and conference proceedings.

The purposes of literature review are to recognize and to highlight the vital variables, and to document the most important findings from earlier research. As being explained by Bruce (1994), literature review is an important chapter in a thesis whereby its purpose is to provide the background to and justification for the research undertaken.

Furthermore, the documentation of literature review is fundamental to convince that the researcher is knowledgeable about his/her research and has done the preliminary homework that is necessary to conduct a research. In addition, it is also important in order to persuade the reader that the methods carried out in the research are based on the work that has already being done and will further build a solid foundation to the existing knowledge.

Hence, in this research, most of the literature reviews are based on the articles released in newspapers and from the previous researches obtained from various journal articles, books and electronic journals. The literature review

focuses on exploring the various definitions of employability, the importance of soft skills as well as seeking practical case studies, examples and ‘tools’.

3.2 Determinants of Graduates Employability

The change in economic structure from the traditional production-based economy (P-economy) to knowledge-based economy (K-economy) has led to an increasing demand for employees with a certain form of human capital in Malaysia. It urges employers now to recruit people who do not only possess the right technical knowledge, but also possess the right soft skills. This is supported by a research done by Grayson (2004) where employers now demand that university graduates have soft skills and this is similarly to Masse, Roy, and Gingras (1998). A research done by Ramli *et. al.*, (2008) found that more big companies have now demanded quality graduates who possess skills, expertise and knowledgeable. According to a large-scale investigation, the Graduate Employability Survey, which was conducted by the National Youth Commission in 2006, it revealed that a majority of employers in Taiwan consider core employability skills, or soft skills, are comparatively more important than technical skills when carrying out an interview. Of course, solid technical skills are essential, but good academic grades do not guarantee job success (Feng, 2008). It is clearly seen now that having a degree alone and being a straight A’s student without appropriate soft skills are not enough to succeed in today’s competitive job market. Therefore, graduates in Malaysia should prepare themselves with various skills which are suitable and important as anticipated by the employers.

Bikson (1994); Bikson & Law (1995); Stasz, McArthur, Lewis & Ramsey (1990) refer important soft skills as comprising of cognitive abilities such as readiness to learn, analytic and problem solving skill and also the trait of being innovative. Manishankar (2009) in his research found communication skills, personality traits, self-discipline, and leadership approaches to be the main soft skills related to employability. It is consistent with Gallivan's et. al., (2004) by adding self-motivation, organization and creativity as the skills mentioned in online job advertisement. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Malaysia Higher Education has identified seven elements of soft skills namely communication, critical thinking and problem-solving; teamwork; lifelong learning and information literacy; entrepreneurship; professional ethics and morality; and leadership as the main aspect to ensure graduates employability (Mohd Zaki, Mohd Salleh & Wahid, 2008). In the finding, it is clearly shown that the important element of soft skills to ensure employability is different across countries and employers. This is because; different job fields may necessitate different type of skills and techniques from the employees.

There are numerous previous researches that have been carried out to verify factors that determine the graduates' employability. Studies on unemployed graduates indicate that proficiency in English language is vital in influencing graduates employability. Stromback (1986) found that having a good command in English increases the probability to be employed for Australian migrant. Similar result have also been found by Shamsuddin (2009), which read that employers are more attracted to hire fresh graduates who possess good communication skills in English. Nor Hartini (2007) stated that many female

graduates in Malaysia could not secure employment due to poor command and communication skill in English language and this finding is similar to what had been reported by Monash News (2004, May 3) that low English proficiency in South Africa hinders individuals from obtaining permanent or casual employment. It seems that proficiency in English is one of the main aspects to guarantee employability in today's job market.

The type of degree obtained is another important factor to ensure the employability of graduates. Smith *et. al.* (2000) found that graduates with vocational degrees, such as Medicine and Law, are more likely to have better labor market outcomes than graduates with less vocational degrees. In Malaysia, a survey conducted in 2002 on unemployment among graduates by the National Higher Education Research Institute of Universiti Sains Malaysia suggested that there were significant differences in graduate labor market outcomes across degrees obtained (Kasturi, 2004). Jamiah (2009) revealed that graduates in Arts and Social Science, followed by Technical Course, ICT and Education are highly employable compared to other related degrees.

However, Nor Hartini (2007) indicated that having a suitable degree programme is not the only mechanism to guarantee a good employment. This is consistent with the research undertaken by Hanum, Razli and Azudin (2008) that in the current labor market, there is a trend, whereby most organizations prefer to recruit those with experience as they do not need to provide in-house training.

Based on the previous research undertaken, we can conclude that having a good qualification is not enough to guarantee the employability among graduates in Malaysia. In the competitive world nowadays, graduates not only need to be

sturdy in academic but they also need to possess the relevant skills in order to be employed.

3.3 Concept of Employability

The concept of employability was first mentioned in 1998 in the Sorbonne Declaration, and it is a difficult concept to define succinctly and comprehensively (Dawn, 2002). As Hillage and Pollard (1998) stated, it is a term used in a variety of contexts with a range of meanings and can lack of clarity and precision as an operational concept. Hence, different people will have different view in defining the concept of employability.

Skimming (2007) in his research found that staff and students currently interpret employability as gaining employment, maintaining employment, and moving on in the workplace if required. Brown and Hesketh (2004) defined more comprehensively that employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market in realising potential through sustainable employment. It is similar to Morshide, *et. al* (2004) that employability is the outcome of a competition among graduates in labor market, which probability is use as the measurement of employability. Higher probability means that the graduate has a high level of employability, vise versa.

Mason, Williams and Cranmer (2006) revealed employers' perspective that employability refers to work readiness, which encompasses the possession of appropriate skills, knowledge, attitudes and commercial understanding that will enable new graduates to make productive contributions to organizational objectives soon after commencing employment.

The Department for Education and Skills defines employability as “the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realize potential through sustainable employment. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers and the context within which they work” (Hillage and Pollard, 1998). It is consistent to Ahmad Asrul, Azah and Amril (2008) that graduates employability is the skills or ability possessed by graduates that makes employers interested to offer a job to them. Employability, from the perspective of Higher Education Institutions is about producing graduates who are capable and able, and these impacts upon all areas of university life, in terms of the delivery of academic programmes and extra curricula activities. Thus, the roles of Higher Education Institutions in order to enhance graduate employability are embedded into two main components: curriculum and co-curriculum.

As there are many definitions of employability provided by various research carried out by past researchers, this research will use the definitions provided by Higher Education Institution, and Skimming and Morsidi, *et. al.* this further concludes that in this research paper, the concept of employability is about gaining commensurate employment through the capability that graduates possess from their tertiary education.

3.4 Measuring the Effectiveness of Finishing School

Measuring program effectiveness is important in order to show an outcome that demonstrates whether a programme has met or exceeded the objectives. It may also help to determine if the program needs to be improvised or changed as well

as to document the need for continued funding or program expansion (Chimezie, 1986). By assessing the effectiveness of the various programmes implemented so far, we can also identify the best practices by institutions and to use them as a model to be implemented by others. Therefore, the evaluation of Finishing School programme is needed as it serves to point out the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and the need for any changes in its operation.

Gibson (1985) identify that practicum have improve graduates' attitudes toward supervision, self-confidence, job knowledge and job seeking skills. While Au Yeung *et. al.* (1993) find the practicum programme which is one of the pre-employment programme offered by higher education have developed graduates interpersonal skills and enhancing employment prospect of graduates. A research conducted by Jerry (1979), on the other hand, finds that practicum programme implemented by higher education has increase the market value and marketability of its graduates. These findings indicate that, a practicum programme which is one of the pre-employment programme like Finishing School programme has improve graduates' soft skills and increase their employability.

Besides, according to the paper presented by Mohd Shatar (2009), his survey found that Finishing School had bring tremendous effect to Universiti Putra Malaysia's graduates since it has managed to channel good and new knowledge in doing presentation, exchange information, develop confidence in conversing in English, providing mock interview and information on how to find a job. It is similar to a finding by Abd Rahim, Ariza, Mohd Noor and Azizah (2007) in their research "Program Ketrampilan Graduan" which indicated that

most graduating students from diploma and degree level were satisfied with the program as it has given them a lot of benefits, knowledge, and most importantly, it has increased their self-confidence in communication, team work and leadership, critical thinking skill in problem solving, entrepreneurship and English usage. The success of the Finishing School programme can be seen clearly when students became more confidence to face the real working environment. Thus, these previous researches have proven that the effectiveness of the Finishing School programme can be seen through students' satisfaction towards the module implemented in the Finishing School programme, as it has successfully improved graduates' soft skills.

According to Fatimah (2007), the effectiveness of Skills Course Graduates can be seen through the increasing number of participants in the programme each semester. It is consistent with the survey conducted by Student Affair Department of USM, which clearly portrayed that the Finishing School programme organised by Career and Counseling Department of USM is effective as it receives a lot of encouraging feedbacks from its students. Based on these two surveys, it is indicated that the effectiveness of Finishing School programme can be measured through students' perceptions gathered from distributed questionnaires and verbal responses of students.

3.5 Conclusion

Even though extensive studies have been done to identify the critical skills relevant to current job market and various studies also have been carried out to measure the effectiveness of Finishing School programme, none of the previous

researches attempted to measure how far the Finishing School programme meets its ultimate objectives; to enhance graduates employability. The other overlooked aspect is whether the effectiveness of Finishing School programme can ensure a well correspondence between students' future employment and their qualification. Therefore, this research will study not only the effectiveness of Finishing School programme in improving graduates' soft skills but also it will analyze the implication of Finishing School programme on graduates' employability.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

Methodology refers to all steps or procedures used to achieve research objective(s). This chapter explains in details the methodology used in order to achieve the objectives as stated in the first chapter. This is vital to ensure appropriate methods are used to analyse all the data used in this research study. All processes of analyzing the effectiveness of Finishing School programme in enhancing graduates' employability were explained clearly so that research finding will be more reliable.

4.1 Measuring the Effectiveness of Finishing School Programme

There are many models or tests that can be done on a set of data containing one dependent variable and at least one independent variable. Among the popular models or test runs are log-linear, logit models, probit models, multiple linear regression model, normal regression model, t-tests, analysis of variance and analysis of co- variance Dobson and many more (Mohd Saifullah, Zalina & Ismail, 2007). However, tests or modelling are only appropriate depending on the type of dependent and independent variable whether it is a diversified binary or a continuous category.

Hence for the purpose of this study, Multinomial Logit model, paired t-test and chi-square have been identified as the appropriate model and test to measure

the effectiveness of Finishing School programme implemented by USM, UUM, UniMAP and UIAM.

4.1.1 Multinomial Logit Model

According to Ying & Warren, the term “Multinomial Logit Model” includes, in a broad sense, a variety of models. It is appropriate in cases by which the response is not ordinal in nature as in ordered logit.

Since there are several of graduates’ labour market outcomes such as employment commensurating with qualification and probability that employers went out of the labor market for the purpose of pursuing study, the estimated probability model for this study is Multinomial Logit (Morshidi, *et. al.*, 2004).

Based on utility maximization model, graduates who enter the labor market will try to maximize their utility subject to constraints (Lim *et. al.*, 2003) and will construct a Multinomial Logit model as follows:

$$U_{ij} = \beta' z_i + \Sigma_{ij}$$

Where:

U = utility

β = semi-independent variable coefficients vector

Z = independent variable vector

j = 1 if employment commensurates with major

2 if employment commensurates with qualification

3 if employers are furthering study

If Y is a random variable representing the labor market outcome that is obtained as in j and assumed errors scattered logistically, then the equations would be as follows:

$$\text{Prob (Y=j)} = \frac{\exp (\beta' _j z_i)}{1+ \sum_{j=1}^2 \exp (\beta' _j z_i)}$$

$$\text{Prob (Y=1)} = \frac{\exp (\beta' _1 z_i)}{1+ \sum_{j=1}^2 \exp (\beta' _j z_i)}$$

Given j = 1, 2, 3.

Prob (Y=1) is the probability to be employed commensurating with major, Prob (Y=2) is the probability to be employed commensurating with qualification and Prob (Y=3) is the probability to further study. Z vector is independent variable vector which influences probability.

This model will be estimated using the Maximum Likelihood method with the following function:

$$L(\beta_1, \beta_2 | y, z) = \prod_{i=1}^n P_i = \prod_{j=0}^2 \pi_{yi=j} \frac{\exp (\beta' _j z_i)}{1+ \sum_{j=0}^2 \exp (\beta' _j z_i)}$$

where:

n = sample size

P_i = probability to get the real value of Y for i observation

Multinomial Logit model, on the other hand will focus on the impact of Finishing School programme, which is on the probability to be employed.

4.1.2 Chi - Square Test

Chi Square test for independent is usually used to determine whether two categorical variables are related. It compares the frequency of cases found in the various categories of one variable across the different categories of another variable.

In this research, chi square test was used to measure the relation between two variables, whereby both were measured on nominal scale. The relationship between graduates who attended Finishing School programme or concept and graduates who did not attend Finishing School programme or concept in enhancing graduates' employability can be measured using the table produced through the Cross Tabulation method.

Chi - square steps:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

Where:

O_{ij} = observe frequency of the i^{th} cell

E_{ij} = expected frequency in each cell

4.1.3 Paired t-test

The paired t-test provides a hypothesis of the difference between population means for a pair of random samples which differences are approximately and normally distributed (Altman, 1991).

For this study, paired t-test has been selected to examine the differences in graduates' satisfaction on their soft skills before and after they attended the Finishing School programme.

The test statistic is calculated as:

$$t = \frac{\bar{d}}{\sqrt{s^2 / n}}$$

whereby:

\bar{d} = mean difference

s^2 = sample variance

n = sample size

4.2 Data Collection Method

Throughout completing this research, various specific sources and a variety of data collection methods were applied. Thus, two types of data were used for the purpose of this study including primary and secondary data. The primary data involves the information gathered through the returned questionnaire and focused group discussion. Meanwhile, the secondary data was mostly obtained from online newspapers and homepages of local and overseas higher learning institutions.

4.2.1 Graduates' Perception on Finishing School Programme

Questionnaires were used in this research to gather graduates' perception on the Finishing School programme attended. The distributed questionnaires were

constructed based on the Graduate Tracer Study formulated by the Ministry of Higher Education. However, only section A, E, F and with some additions in section H were used. Section A, featured the demographic information of the respondents. Section E captured respondents' current status. Section F was about respondents' occupational information and finally Section H required respondents to provide information about Finishing School programme they had attended. Most of the questions were open-ended and close-ended questions.

4.2.2 Employers' Perception on the Importance of Soft Skills

An interview was conducted with various private firms including Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad (BIMB), Malaysia Airlines Berhad (MAS), Telekom Malaysia Berhad (TM), OSK Investment, AVON, MIMOS and MISC. The questions during the interview session were focusing more on whether they employ economic or management graduates, what department they are placed, types of skills that the firm usually looks for when employing, the strengths and weaknesses of fresh graduates, comments on fresh graduates' performance, their comments towards the curriculum and syllabus of the Higher Learning Institutions (IPTA), their comments about local and overseas graduates, and what they foresee to be critical skills in the future.

The purpose of this interview is to gain as much information about the most important soft skills perceived by employers. By having this information, it would help local higher institutions to review their curriculum and syllabus indirectly, and directly it can be used to improve the module implemented in the Finishing School programme to ensure relevant skills were disseminated to

graduating students. In addition, this information can be used to strengthen the Finishing School programme in producing graduates who are not only good in academic qualification but also possess the right soft skills to further ensure their readiness to work.

4.2.3 Stocktaking of Finishing School Programme

Information regarding the implementation of Finishing School programme conducted by local higher learning institutions was gathered through the information released in university's homepage and articles featured in local newspapers. Cooperation from Research and Development Department also had been used in gathering details and information especially in terms of modules used in university's Finishing School programme, the duration of the programme, compulsory participants, and perceptions of graduating students who attended the Finishing School programme.

Information from the internet was also being used to obtain details about the Finishing School programme or concept that had been organized by overseas universities. Some of the information was found in the university's homepage and online articles released by electronic newspapers. More focuses were given to the implementation of the Finishing School programme, through the modules used in the programme and methods applied in the programme. This information will be used as the benchmark for the Finishing School programme in local universities.

4.3 Sampling Size

Sampling size is the exact number of subjects chosen as a sample to represent the population characteristic. Determining sample size is a very important issue because samples that are too large may induce time waste, resources and money, while samples that are too small may lead to inaccurate results. Hence, an adequate number of sample sizes are important to achieve desired level of precision and confidence in order to meet the objective of the research study.

Thus, one thousand two hundred questionnaires were distributed to the graduates (first degree graduates) who were attending the convocation ceremony. Due to time constraint, this research could only focus on four selected local higher learning institutions which implemented the Finishing School programme or concept namely USM, UniMAP, UUM and UIAM. The data was collected from August to October 2009.

Participation in the survey was based on voluntary. Although the population frame is not available, we can compare the sample and population distributed by the types of universities using the graduates' statistics provided by each of the university convocation homepage.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter views all the findings revealed in the survey conducted in four local higher institutions that had organised the Finishing School programme or concept for their graduating students. The descriptive analysis discussion is about the respondents' demographic backgrounds, the respondents' employment status, the Finishing School programme attended by respondents, the module used in Finishing School programme or concept attended by respondent, respondents' skills before and after attending the Finishing School programme or concept, and, finally, respondents' perception towards the effectiveness of the Finishing School programme or concept; either they have ever attended it or not.

The other parts of the research findings will explain the implementation of the Finishing School programme organized by various higher learning institutions in Malaysia and also other countries. This chapter will also reveal the employers' perception on the importance of soft skills in their field.

5.2 Descriptive Statistics

In this research, descriptive statistics are used to describe the basic features of the data available in this study. It provides simple summaries about the sample and the measures. Together with simple graphics analysis, it forms the virtual basis of every quantitative analysis of the data.

5.2.1 Checking the Reliability of Measure

Consistency in reliability testing is analyzed by using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of several chosen variables. The closer the reliability coefficient gets to 1.0, the better. In general, reliabilities less than .60 are considered to be poor, those in the 0.70 range, acceptable, and those over .80 are considered good.

Table 2.1: Reliability Statistic for Types of Module

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.813	18

The reliability test on the 18 modules available in the Finishing School programme as stated in the questionnaire indicates how well the items in a set are positively correlated to one another. Thus, the value of Cronbach's Alpha of 0.813 shows that the internal consistency reliability of the measures used in the study is considered to be good as the value obtained is above 0.7.

Table 2.2: Reliability Statistic for Satisfaction of Soft Skills Before and After

Attending Finishing School Programme

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.996	38

As for the value of the reliability test for graduates' satisfaction on their soft skills acquired before and after attending the Finishing School

programme, it revealed that the 38 items used to measure the satisfaction of soft skills used in this study can be considered good since it is so closed to 1.0.

5.2.2 Respondents Demographic Background

Table 2.3 below shows the total number of valid respondents from four local higher institutions for this survey. There were more than 1200 questionnaires distributed to these four selected local higher institutions which have organised Finishing School programme or concept, namely, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Universiti Utara Malaysia and Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia. However, there were only 892 questionnaires that were filled completely. The table shows the valid respondents included in the research analysis.

Table 2.3: Number of Respondents by University

Variables	Detail of Variable	Frequency	%
Higher Learning Institution	USM	385	43.2
	UniMAP	28	3.1
	UUM	347	38.9
	UIAM	132	14.8
Total		892	100

From the frequencies obtained, it is indicated that majority of respondents were USM's graduates (43.2 percent). This was due to the greater number of graduating students in its 40th convocation ceremony with 5633 first degree graduates, as compared to the other three universities. With only 751 graduates in UniMAP 4th convocation ceremony, 3.7 percent were chosen as respondents in

this case study. 38.9 percent of respondents graduated from UUM while the remaining 14.8 percent of respondents graduated from UIAM.

As expected from a group of recent graduates, most respondents were between 21-25 years old (84.08 percent). This situation was due to the selected programme chosen for their first degree. In Malaysia, almost all of undergraduates first enter the higher learning institution as early as 18 years old for diploma undergraduates and 19 years old for the first degree undergraduates. Table 2.4; indicates the number of respondents by their range of age

Table 2.4: Number of Respondents by Range of Age

Variables	Detail of Variable	Frequency	%
Age Range	20 years old and below	0	0
	21 – 25 years old	750	84.08
	26 – 30 years old	50	5.61
	30 – 35 years old	24	2.69
	35 years old and above	54	6.05
Total		878	98.7

The range of respondents' age was traceable through the identity card number provided by respondents in the questionnaires distributed during the convocation ceremony. The above table reflects that the oldest respondents (6.05 percent) who graduated for his or her first degree were 35 years old and above. None of the graduates were at the age below than 20 years old. However, some of the respondents' age was untraceable due to the incomplete information provided by them.

2.5: Number of Respondents by Sex

Variable	Details of Variables	Frequency	%
Sex	Female	308	64.6
	Male	563	35.4
Total		871	100

According to the above table, it shows that more than half of the respondents in this research study are female graduates (64.6 percent). This situation is consistent with the higher enrolment of female students in local higher learning institution. As reported by The Star (2008, Nov 26) in July 2008, 60.39 percent of students in all local higher learning institution were female. Hence, only one third (35.4 percents) of the respondents of this research are male.

2.6: Number of Respondent by State of Born

Variable	Details of Variable	Frequency	%
State of born	Johor	73	8.4
	Kedah	129	14.9
	Kelantan	67	7.7
	Melaka	28	3.2
	Negeri Sembilan	21	2.4
	Pahang	44	5.1
	Penang	134	15.5
	Perak	118	13.6
	Perlis	18	2.1
	Selangor	57	6.6
	Terengganu	38	4.4
	Sabah	28	3.2
	Sarawak	41	4.7
	Kuala Lumpur	67	7.7
	Labuan	3	0.3
Total		866	100

Based on table above, 134 of the respondents were born in Penang by which, they represent the highest percentage of respondents with 15.5 percents. It is followed by respondents born in Kedah (14.9 percents), Perak (13.6 percents), Johor (8.4 percents), Kuala Lumpur and Kelantan (7.7 percents), Selangor (6.6 percents), Pahang (5.1 percents), Sarawak (4.7 percents), Terengganu (4.4 percents), Melaka and Sabah (3.2 percent). The remaining 0.3 percents are respondents who were born in Labuan.

Table 2.7: Number of Respondents According to Types of Degree

Variable	Detail of Variables	Frequency	%
Course	Bachelor of Laws (Hons)	5	0.6
	Bachelor of Architecture (Hons)	5	0.6
	Bachelor of Quantity Surveying (Hons)	4	0.5
	Bachelor of Economics (Hons)	26	3.0
	Bachelor of Accounting (Hons)	103	11.9
	Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons)	153	17.7
	Bachelor of Engineering (Materials) (Hons)	150	17.4
	Bachelor of Computer Science (Hons)	58	6.7
	Bachelor of Human Sciences (Hons)	39	4.5
	Bachelor of Islamic Revealed Knowledge & Heritage	27	3.1
	Bachelor of Pharmacy	11	1.3
	Bachelor of Communication (Hons)	16	1.9
	Bachelor of Hospitality Management (Hons)	9	1.0
	Bachelor of Human Resource Management (Hons)	5	0.6
	Bachelor of International Affairs Management (Hons)	1	0.1
	Bachelor Of Finance (Hons)	18	2.1
	Bachelor of Arts	65	7.5
	Bachelor of Housing	21	2.4
	Bachelor of Administration	41	4.8
	Bachelor of Music	2	0.2
	Sarjana Muda Seni Halus	10	1.2
	Bachelor of Health Science	18	2.1
	Bachelor of Applied Science	75	8.7
	Total	862	100

Respondents involved in this research study come from various types of degree available in the four respective local higher learning institutions. From the 50 types of bachelor degree programmes listed above, 17.7 percents of respondents were graduates from Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons), followed by Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) with 17.4 percents, Bachelor of Accounting (Hons) (11.9 percents), Bachelor of Applied Science (8.7 percents), Bachelor of Arts (7.5 percents), Bachelor of Computer Science (6.7 percents), Bachelor of Administration (4.7 percent), Bachelor of Human Science (4.5 percent), Bachelor of Economic (3 percent), Bachelor of Revealed Knowledge & Heritage (3.1 percents) Bachelor of Housing (2.4 percents), Bachelor of Health Science (2.1 percents), and Bachelor of Fine Arts (1.2 percent)

Meanwhile, the smaller percentages were contributed by respondents from other types of degree such as Bachelor of Hospitality Management (1.0 percents), Bachelor of Law (0.6 percent), Bachelor of Architecture (0.6 percent), Bachelor of Human Resource Management (0.6 percents), Bachelor of Quantity Surveying (0.5 percent), and Bachelor of Music (0.2 percents).

5.2.3 Characteristic of Finishing School Programme

Table 2.8: Number of Respondents Attending Finishing School Programme by University

Variables	Detail of Variable	Frequency	%
University	USM's graduates	28	32.9
	UniMAP's graduates	1	1.2
	UUM's graduates	49	57.7
	UIAM's graduates	7	8.2
Total		85	100

An analysis from 892 returned questionnaires points out only 9.5 percent of respondents had attended Finishing School programme or concept during their studies in their respective local higher learning institution.

From 85 respondents who had attended Finishing School programme or concept, UUM's graduates represent the highest number of respondents (5.5 percent) who have attended the one organised by their university. Only one respondent from UniMAP had attended Finishing School Programme or concept, as the Finishing School Programme in UniMAP is still new and was launched only in April 2009 (Kamarudin, 2009). Although USM's graduates represent the larger proportion of respondents, only 3.1 percent had attended Finishing School programme or concept.

**Table 2.9: Number of Respondents Attending Finishing School Programme
by Age**

Variables	Detail of Variables	Frequency	%
Age Range	20 years old and below	0	0
	21-25 years old	78	91.8
	26-30 years old	4	4.7
	30-35 years old	3	3.5
	35 years old and above	0	0
Total		85	100

Table 2.9 above indicates that from 85 respondents attended Finishing School programme or concept, 91.8 percent participants are between 21 – 25 years old. It is due to the higher enrolment of students between those ages in local higher institutions. There is no respondent whose age is below than 20 years old and more than 35 years old has attended any Finishing School programme organised by their university.

**Table 2.10: Name of Finishing School Programmes Attended by
Respondents**

Name of Finishing School	Frequency	%
Career Course	6	7.6
Job Finding	7	8.9
Graduate Employability Management Scheme	4	5.1
Grooming	29	36.7
Entrepreneurship	3	3.8
Resume Writing	7	8.9
Skills Course	5	6.3
Protocol & Etiquette	10	12.7
English Communication	2	2.5
Job Interview	1	1.3
Others	7	8.9
Total	79	100

According to the information available in returned questionnaires, there were more than 10 courses of Finishing School programme listed by the respondents. Based on the table, it indicates that majority of respondents (36.7 percent) from the four local higher learning institutions has attended grooming course organized by each of the institutions.

Meanwhile, 12.7 percent of respondents attended protocol and etiquette course, followed by job finding and resume writing, by which, each course represents 7 percent from the 79 respondents. 7.6 percent of the respondents has joined career course, 6.3 percent respondents has attended skill course programme, 5.1 percent has attended graduate employability management scheme programme, 3.8 percents of respondents has attended entrepreneurship programme, 2.5 percent of respondents has attended English communication course and 1.3 percent of respondents has attended job interview course. The remaining 7 percents of respondents has joined other course such as HST 34, PKPG, PHP, CCNA, UBS, and Insep.

From this finding, it shows that different local higher learning institutions in Malaysia offer different types of soft skills to its final semester students, as proved by their course title. This finding answered the second objective of this research, regarding the implementation of Finishing School programme in different higher learning institutions.

Table 2.11: Attendance of Finishing School Programme by Respondents

Variables	Details of Variable	Frequency	%
Compulsory to Attend Finishing School	Yes	43	50.6
Selected to Attend Finishing School	Yes	47	55.3
Attend Finishing School at Own Will	Yes	72	84.7
Fees of Finishing School	Yes	24	28.2

Notes: The percentage is based on the 85 respondents who attended Finishing School programme.

According to the table above, 50.6 percent of respondents were made compulsory to attend the Finishing School programme or concept. 55.3 percent of respondents agreed that they attended the course as they had been selected to attend the Finishing School programme or concept, while 84.7 percent of respondents stated that they attended Finishing School programme at their own will. From 85 respondents who had attended Finishing School Programme or concepts organized by their university, only 28.2 percent of the respondents pointed out that they needed to pay fees to attend the Finishing School programme or concept, while the remaining 71.8 percent indicated that no fees were required in order to attend it.

**Table 2.12: Modules Available in Finishing School Programme
Attended by Respondents**

Module of Finishing School	Frequency	%
Interpersonal Communication Module	56	12.07
English Language Proficiency	38	8.19
ICT Module	28	6.03
Job Search Module	42	9.05
Resume and Job Application Writing Module	60	12.93
Job Interview Skill Module	60	12.93
Entrepreneurship Module	42	9.05
Team Work Module	33	7.11
Leadership Module	45	9.70
Etiquette Module	32	6.90
Consultation Module	20	4.31
Others:		
Presentation Skills Module	2	0.43
Operation Management Module	1	0.22
Office Management Module	1	0.22
Professional Grooming Module	2	0.43
Business Communication Module	1	0.22
Public Speaking Module	1	0.22

Analysis of the descriptive data shows that the resume writing module and job interview module (12.93 percents) were the most favourable module applied in the Finishing School programme, followed by interpersonal communication module (12.07 percents), leadership module (9.7percents), job search module and entrepreneurship module (9.05 percents), English language proficiency module (8.19 percents), team work module (7.11 percents), etiquette module (6.9 percents), ICT module (6.03 percents), and consultation module (4.31 percents).

The data also shows that not so many Finishing School programme or concept executed presentation skill module, operation management module, office management module, business communication module, professional grooming module and public speaking module. This finding also had answered the second objective of this research.

5.2.4 The Effectiveness of Finishing School Programme

Table 2.13: Skills Before and After Attending Finishing School Programme

Skills	Mean Before	Standard Deviation Before	Mean After	Standard Deviation After
Interpersonal communication skills	3.48	0.795	4.11	0.629
Creative and critical thinking skills	3.55	0.740	4.15	0.598
Problem solving skills	3.52	0.758	4.18	0.569
Analytical skills	3.52	0.741	4.16	0.601
Proficiency in English	3.50	0.548	4.25	0.957
Team work/group work	3.60	0.715	4.22	0.650
Inculcation and practicing of positive values	3.63	0.762	4.25	0.663
Exposure to general Knowledge and current issues	3.60	0.753	4.17	0.699
Job interview skills	3.52	0.823	4.19	0.614
Resume and job application letter writing	3.60	0.855	4.19	0.614
Job search	3.49	0.805	4.19	0.617
Demonstrate good image	3.66	0.757	4.20	0.603
Demonstrate self-confidence	3.65	0.726	4.12	0.655
ICT skills	3.64	0.730	4.20	0.641
EISQ (Emotional, Intellectual and Spiritual Intelligence) skills	3.65	0.709	4.15	0.677
Etiquette skills	3.56	0.704	4.15	0.650
Entrepreneurship skills	3.44	0.818	4.17	0.644
Negotiation	3.45	0.834	4.14	0.685
Leadership skills	3.52	0.776	4.16	0.719
OVERALL	3.56		4.19	

The descriptive study shows that all variables were tapped on a five-point scale. The minimum of one indicates that respondents were not at all satisfied with the possessed skills listed while five extremely satisfied with the skills possessed before attending the Finishing School programme or concept. From the results, it may seem that the mean on entrepreneurship skill owned by respondents before attending Finishing School programme or concept is rather low which is 3.44. More than half of the respondents were satisfied with the good image possessed by them before attending the Finishing School programme with the mean of 3.66.

Besides, through the output presented above, it indicates that only one respondent was not at all satisfied with the leadership skills he or she had obtained after attending the Finishing School programme or concept. There were also a minimum number of respondents who did not satisfy with interpersonal communication skills, analytical skills, exposure to general knowledge or current issues, ICT skills, EISQ skills and negotiation skills they possessed before, and even after attending the Finishing School programme or concept.

Majority of the respondents agreed that they were satisfied with the knowledge of all listed skills after attending Finishing School programme or concept, with mean greater than four and near to five. This concludes that the Finishing School programme or concept has successfully enhanced the soft skills acquired by respondents before.

Standard deviation is a widely used measure of the dispersion. In a simple term, it shows how much the variation is from the mean. It may be

thought of as the average difference of the scores from the mean of distribution, and how far they are away from the mean.

Hence, referring to the table above, it indicates that the value of standard deviation for all soft skills before students had attended the Finishing School programme is greater than after they attended the Finishing School programme, by which English proficiency programme is being excluded. It explains that graduates responses were spread out over a large range of value. Meanwhile, the value of standard deviation for soft skills after students attended the Finishing School program points out that the graduates' responses tend to be very close to the mean. In other word, majority of graduates agreed that they are satisfied with their soft skills after attending the Finishing School programme. This finding revealed that the Finishing School programme has improved graduates' soft skills and successfully answered the first research objective. Respondents, however, will need a longer time to improve their English proficiency as it needs to be practiced and used frequently.

Table 2.14: T-Test for Skills Before and After Attending Finishing School

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	After	Before
Mean	4.1784367	3.555836
Variance	0.0015702	0.005172
Pearson Correlation	0.2294535	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
t Stat	36.812562	
P(T<=t) one-tail	1.066E-18	
t Critical one-tail	1.7340631	

Referring to the finding, it shows that the mean for respondents' perceptions on their skills after attending Finishing School programme is greater than before attending it. This is consistence with the t-test, where the t-stat is greater than the t-critical one tail. Thus, we can conclude that there is a significant difference between skills acquired by respondents after and before attending the Finishing School programme.

Based on the value of variance, on the other hand, it depicts that the standard deviation for soft skills after students attended the Finishing School programme (0.03963) is less than before they attended the Finishing School programme (0.07191). Therefore, this result reveals that the Finishing School programme had improved graduates' soft skills. It is consistent with the findings in table 2.13 and it has managed to answer the first objective of this research.

The value of Pearson Correlation in the table above shows that there is a positive correlation between the respondents' perception on their skills before and after they attended the Finishing School programme.

2.15: Effectiveness of Finishing School Programme in Improving Graduates

Employability

Variables	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Effectiveness of FS from those who had attended	81	4.04	0.684
Effectiveness of FS from those who had not attended	761	3.60	0.776

Based on the output presented in the table above, it is indicated that all variables measuring the effectiveness of the Finishing School programme in improving graduates' employability either by respondents who attended or did not attend it, were tapped on a five point scale. The minimum of one indicates that the Finishing School programme organised by local higher institutions is not effective at all while five indicates otherwise. Of 85 respondents who had attended the Finishing School programme, only 81 of them responded to this question, while only 761 from 811 respondents who did not attend the Finishing School programme answered this question.

Comparing the mean from the table above, the mean of respondents attending Finishing School programme or concept (4.04) is greater than the mean of respondents not attending Finishing School programme or concept (3.60). Besides, the value of standard deviation for respondents attending this programme is also less than respondents who did not attend. This shows that the answer of respondents who attended the Finishing School programme is scatteringly close to the mean.

Thus, this summarizes that majority of the respondents who attended the Finishing School programme felt that the course was effective in improving graduates employability, as the programme had aided respondents to improve their soft skills (see table 2.13). The mean of respondents not attending Finishing School programme or concept, however, indicates that respondents were not sure either the course could really improve graduates' employability. This is logical as they did not experience it, and therefore, they cannot measure to what extent does the programme improve their soft skills in making them more employable in the

job market. This finding has successfully answered the first objective, which is to measure the effectiveness of the Finishing School programme in enhancing graduates' employability.

Table 2.16: Respondents' Feedbacks that Oppose/ Propose Finishing School Programme To Be Continued

Variables	Detail of Variable	Frequency	%
Continue Finishing	Yes	806	95.2
School	No	41	4.8
Total		847	100

From 892 respondents involved in this research study, more than three quarter of respondents (95.2 percents) recommended that this Finishing School programme or concept should be continued every year. The remaining of 4.8 percents of the respondents recommended that local higher learning institutions should put a stop to its implementation. This finding also reflects the effectiveness of the Finishing School programme in improving graduates' soft skills and employability, since respondents agreed that it should continue.

2. 17: Employment Status by Respondents Who Attended Finishing School

Programme or Concept			Employment Status				Total
			.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	
Finishing School	0	Count					
		% within	203	162	348	90	803
		Finishing School	25.3%	20.2%	43.3%	11.2%	100%
	1	Count					
		% within	27	18	31	9	85
		Finishing School	31.8%	21.2%	36.5%	10.6%	100%
Total		Count	203	180	379	99	888
		% within	25.9%	21.2%	42.7%	11.1%	100%
		Finishing School					

Notes: .00 unemployed, 1.00 employed commensurate with major, 2.00 employed commensurate with qualification, 3.00 others.

Table 2.17 represents the cross tabulation of employment status for both respondents who joined and did not join the Finishing School programme or concept organized by their local higher learning institution. According to the finding, it shows that the number of unemployed graduates among respondents who attended the Finishing School programme or concept is greater (31.8 percents) than those who did not attend the Finishing School programme. However, the proportion of respondents who attended the Finishing School programme and are now being employed in accordance to their major is greater than those who did not attend the Finishing School programme, with 21.2

percents. The percentage of respondents who are successfully employed, which employment commensurate with their qualification and had attended Finishing School programme or concepts is lower (36.5 percents) compared to respondents who did not attend Finishing School programme or concepts.

Table 2.18: Chi-Square Tests between Finishing School Programme or concept and Employment Status

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.162(a)	3	.540
Likelihood Ratio	2.126	3	.547
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.669	1	.196
N of Valid Cases	888		

a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.48.

In the finding presented in the table above, the significant value for Pearson Chi Square is 0.540. In this case, the value of 0.540 is larger than alpha value of 0.05. So, we can conclude that our result is insignificant as there is no relationship between the Finishing School programme or concept and employment status of respondents.

This phenomenon might be due to the lack of experience and the lower CGPA obtained by respondents who attended the Finishing School programme. According to AVON Company, before looking at the soft skills, the company will look into a person's academic qualification and working experience, rather

than focusing on specific skills, which they believe can be developed from time to time through training and coaching programme provided by the company itself (MISC Company). Besides, it is also may be due to the respondents itself; who are really weak in soft skills and received lower point of CGPA (UTM and UM), which had made them compulsory participants of the respective programme.

Table 2.19 Multinomial Logit on Employment Status of Respondents

Employment Status		Exp (B)	Significant
1.00	Fs_eff All	1.043	0.777*
	FS = 0	1.119	0.738*
	Age	1.192	0.000*
2.00	Fs_eff All	0.878	0.298*
	FS = 0	1.662	0.092*
	Age	1.171	0.000*
3.00	Fs_eff All	1.255	0.201*
	FS = 0	1.577	0.275*
	Age	0.824	0.000*

Notes:

1. 1.00 employment commensurate with major; 2.00 employment commensurate with qualification; 3.00 others
2. FS=0: do not attend finishing school, F=1: attended finishing school
3. * significant at 10 percent level of significant

The main focus of this study is about finding a correspondence between graduates' employment and their major or qualification. Odd ratio, which is greater than one indicates a positive implication of Finishing School programme towards graduates' employment status while odd ratio which is less than one indicates the negative implication of Finishing School towards graduates' employment status.

From table 2.19, it is discovered that age has a positive impact on the probability to be employed based on graduates' major. It means that the greater the age of the graduates, the greater the probability of being employed relevant to the major and qualification. This effect is at the 10 percent of significant level. It is also significant and has a positive impact on probability to get a job which corresponds with graduates' qualification. Since respondents of this research are between 21 years old to 35 years old, this result has been predicted as respondents' who exceeds 26 years old might have worked before they enter local higher learning institutions to pursue their studies.

The dummy variable of the Finishing School programme in the Multinomial logit model is built based on those who attended this programme as a comparison group. Hence, the odd ratio of 1,662 depicts that those who did not attend the Finishing School programme has a higher probability of getting employed according to their qualification, than those who have attended.

This situation occurs maybe due to the academic performance of graduates. As mentioned in chapter 2 (pg15), one of the Finishing School programmes (GREAT) organized by UUM is compulsory for final students with CGPA less than 3.0.

5.3 Stocktaking of Finishing School Programme or Concept

In this part, the stocktaking involves the implementation of Finishing School programme or concept available in local higher learning institutions in Malaysia and other countries. The table below indicates the information about the Finishing School programme in Malaysia' local higher learning institutions.

Table 2.20 Stocktaking of Finishing School in Local Higher Learning Institutions

University	Course's Name	Organiser	Module	Duration	Number of Participant	Fees	Speaker	Targeted Participant
UPM	Skill Course Graduates	Curriculum Department & Department of Students' Affair and UPM Alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ice Breaking • Group Communication • Presentation Skills • Guide to job application, writing resume and cover letter • Interview skills 	2 days, (Sat:7hrs) (Sun:7hrs)	4145 participant in the first session 2007/2008	No fees were charged	UPM's Academic staff (DS45)	students who will graduate and be in last semester
UM	Pre-Employment programme		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Communication Skills • Reading, Note taking & written it in the diary • Interview session 	4 weeks 9am-10pm Six days a week		Fees were charged	UM's Academic Staff	graduating students with cumulative grade point average (CGPA) below 3.0

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT • Entrepreneurship • Grooming 					
UTM	IMglad	SPACE UTM under Professional Development Unit collaboration with each faculty in UTM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job search strategies • Resume writing • Presenting positive attitudes during jobs interview • Handling interview session • Effective communication • Leadership development • Teamwork skills • Self development • Self-confident of development 	2 days Saturday & Sunday		RM40 & RM 70 for two days Course		Those who worked less than one year and fresh graduates who possess minimum 2.8 CGPA

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image implication • Grooming Essential • Social Graces and business etiquette 					students
USM	Career Tune Up	Students Affair Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume writing • Professional etiquette • Career Diversify • Career development & Entrepreneurship discussion • Surviving in Pangkor 	4 days for Career Tune Up programme One day for seminar	286 participants for seminar on industrial training preparation	No fees	Speakers are from private sectors	Graduating students and open to all (but only short listed will joint) the Career Tune Up.
UiTM	Finishing School	Student Development Department	TOPICS FOR TALK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing Mind Set : 	4 day 8am – 5pm		No fees	Speaker from UiTM's academic	All graduating students

		& Counseling Department	<p>Current Market Scenario</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branding Yourself • Trend in Effective Written and verbal Communication • Critical Thinking, Problem Analysis and developing Creative Solution • Stakeholder Focus/Review • Job Interview • Mock Interview <p>GROUP WORK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing Yourself Knowing Your career • Create Own Resume & 				staff and from private sector	
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			Portfolio <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work related problem /case study • Interview skill exercises & Role Play • Review of Personal Portfolio 					
USIM	XPLORE	Counseling Units & Personality Self Department, USIM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume writing • Emotional quality • Interview preparation • Communication skills • Grooming and professional • Etiquette & moral values in working place 	2 days 8am-6pm		RM 5	Speakers are experts from industries and Firm's Director	Open to all graduating students

UniMAP	Apprenticeship programme & Finishing School	Counseling & Career Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft skills module • Basic course acculturation entrepreneurship 		6 days	264 students	No fees	Speakers from industrial sectors	Graduating students
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According to the table above, almost all local higher learning institutions in Malaysia do organize Finishing School programme or concept, with aims to improve graduates' soft skills so as to enhance graduates' employability. But, different higher learning institutions use different names for their Finishing School programme or concept, such as UPM name its Finishing School programme as Skills Course Graduates, UM as Pre-employment Programme, USM as Career Tune-Up Programme, UUM as GREAT and Grooming Course, UTM as IMglad, UiTM as Finishing School Programme, USIM as XPLORE and UniMAP as Entrepreneurship Programme and Finishing School Programme.

Skills Course Graduates in UPM is organised by Curriculum Department and Department of Students' Affair and UPM Alumni, IMglad programme in UTM is organized by SPACE UTM (under the Professional Development Unit) in collaboration with all the faculties in UTM, Career Tune-up programme in USM is organized by Students Affair Department, Finishing School programme in UiTM is organized by Student Development Department & Counseling Department, XPLORE in USIM is organized by Counseling Units & Personality Self Department and Entrepreneurship Programme and Finishing School in UniMAP is organized by Counseling and Career Department. Thus, we can conclude that most Finishing School programmes are organized by departments, which are related to counseling and students affair.

Based on the information gathered through each of local higher learning institution, it is indicated that most of the modules were quite similar, whereby, almost all modules available in the Finishing School programme in each of the local higher learning institutions provided students with communication skills in

English, presentation skills, a guide to job application, cover letter and resume writing, interview skills, presentation skills, team work and leadership skills, problem solving and critical thinking skills. However, Information Technology (IT) course is only available in UM's pre-employment programme while only USM, UM and UniMAP included the entrepreneurship course in their Finishing School programme or concept. Out of eight, only four local higher learning institutions offer grooming course including UM, USM, UUM, and USIM.

UTM is the only local higher learning institution which provided its students with self development and self-confidence development in their Finishing School programme.

Most higher learning institutions listed in the table above distributed questionnaires to the candidates during the programme to evaluate the programme's performance as well as the advantages that they attained from it. The duration of the Finishing School programme was one day for Grooming (UUM) and Career Seminar (USM), two days for Skill Course Graduates (UPM), IMglad (UTM), GREAT (UUM) and XPLORE (USIM), four days for Career Tune-Up (USM) and Finishing School (UiTM), six days for Apprenticeship and Finishing School (UniMAP) and four weeks for Pre-employment programme (UM).

Fees were charged to the students by four local higher learning institutions. RM40 and RM70 were charged for IMglad programme (UTM), RM15 for first module and RM20 for second module in GREAT (UUM), RM 5 for grooming in UUM and RM5 for XPLORE organized by USIM. Fees were also charged for Pre-employment programme organized by UM.

Majority of local higher learning institutions hired speakers from their owned academic staff and speakers from industrial sectors including directors from private sectors. The targeted participants were mostly graduating students, who were studying in their final semester. Only UM and UTM were focusing on graduating students with cumulative grade point average below 3.0 and 2.8. Conversely, grooming programme by UUM and Career Tune-Up by USM were opened to all students.

These results indicate that methods of Finishing School programme organized by local higher learning institutions were not being standardized. Different local higher learning institution offered different types of modules. Only certain types of soft skills were similar for each local higher learning institution discussed above. This finding has achieved the second research objective, which is to analyze the implementation of Finishing School programme executed in local higher learning institutions.

Table 2.21 Finishing School Programme or Concept in Overseas Higher Learning Institutions

University	Course's Name	Organiser	Module	Duration	Number of Participant	Fees	Speaker	Targeted Participant
KENT	Employability Skills		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written communication skills • Communication skills • Leadership skills 					
Southern Queensland	Beyond Education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - employer perspective when selecting staff • Career mentoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will be matched to a mentor who works in a similar 	6 month for career mentoring One day for Career Success	50 students in Career Success		Workshop :-employer s, seasoned executives, HR professional	Open to all graduates

			field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work culture - Building working relationships - Taking action - Getting the right job. - Communication skills - Team work 				& university staff	
NIT Tiruchirappalli, India	Finishing School Training Programme		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training in IT & ITES industries 	8 weeks 5 days per week		RS 5000	Experts from IT and ITES Industries	Engineering students of any discipline, selection candidates

								base on CGPA
Kalyani	Model Training	IT Department, Government of West Bengal, Department of Computer Science & Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversational English • Voice language training • Soft skills • General expects of BPO Companies • Computer fundamentals • Computer skills development technique • Campus interview 	3-4 days per week 2-3 hrs per day	30 participants		Speakers from private firms	Graduating students
Jawaharlal Nehru Technological	Finishing School		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VLSI design and embedded system • Java 	5 weeks	Limited to 50 participants	RS 5500	Guest lecture by experts	Final semester students who have good

University Hyderabad			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web 2.0 technologies • CAE tools in hyper mesh • Grooming • Communication skills • Presentation skills 				from industry and university	grade in their CGPA
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Similar to local higher learning institution in Malaysia, overseas local higher learning institutions do have their own specific name for their Finishing School Programme too. For examples, University of Kent named its Finishing School programme as Employability Skills, University of Southern Queensland named it as Beyond Education, NIT Tiruchirappali named it as Finishing School Training Programme, University of Kalyani as Model Training and Jawaharlal Nehru Technology University Hyderabad named it as Finishing School.

The skills taught during the programme are quite similar to the modules provided by Malaysia local higher learning institutions, whereby, the universities mentioned above also focused on communication skills, leadership skills, team work, ICT skills, interview skills, as well as grooming and presentation skills.

The longest duration for the Finishing School programme was six months for Career Mentoring implemented by University of Southern Queensland, eight weeks for Finishing School Training Programme organized by NIT Tiruchirappali, followed by Finishing School conducted by Jawaharlal Nehru Technology University which lasted for 5 weeks, Model Training by University of Kalyani which took three to four days per week and one day for Career Success by University of Southern Queensland.

Most local higher learning institutions in India limited its participants from only 30 to 50 per session. Information about the fees was only available for University of Jawaharlal Nehru Technology and NIT Tiruchappali, i.e. RS 5500 and RS 5000 for each participant. The guest lecturers for Finishing School programme mostly were from private firms including employers, seasoned executives, HR professional IT and ITES experts. University's staffs were also hired to give a talk in

Finishing School programme conducted by University of Southern Queensland and Jawaharlal Nehru Technology University.

The Finishing School programme conducted by Southern Queensland University was opened to all its students, while Kalyani University offered its Finishing School programme to its graduating students only. NIT Tiruchipalli opened this programme to its Engineering students of any discipline but the selection of the participants was based on their academic performance (CGPA). For Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, the selection criteria were based on aggregate percentage of marks. An aptitude test would also be conducted for the screening of the participants followed by an interview based on the requirement, hence limiting the number of qualified students for this programme.

5.4 Employers' Perception

Structured interview was conducted in a focused group basis with several employers from Affin Bank Berhad, Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad, OSK Investment Bank, Telekom Malaysia Berhad, Malaysia Airline System Berhad, Islamic International University Malaysia, AVON, MIMOS and MISC, to name a few.

The purpose of the interview was to gain information about employer's perspective on the weaknesses of employed graduates, the important skills employers look for when they are employing, the critical skills that employers foresee that should be possessed by graduates in future, their opinion towards curriculum available in local higher learning institutions and their view on local and overseas graduates. The main findings can be summarized as follows in table 2.22.

Table 2.22: Employers Perception on the Graduates' Weaknesses, the Important Skills, Critical Skills and Opinion toward University Curriculum and Syllabus

Companies	Weaknesses of fresh graduates	Important skills	Critical skills that should be possessed by graduates	University Curriculum and Syllabus
AVON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of experience • Not exposed to the internal working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical skill (CGPA above 3.0) • Working experience • Communication skills • Customer orientation skills • Presentation skills • English proficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable to the companies operating in Malaysia
BIMB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication skills • Lack of team spirits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifelong learning • Versatile & flexible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus & curriculum are

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to apply theory in job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logical & analytical skills • Problem solving • Willingness to learn • Flexibility & Ability to deal with change • Multitasking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable 	suitable
Affin Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to adapt to working environment • More theoretical rather than practical 	Multitasking skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surviving skills • Entrepreneurship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable but some are not really applicable in job • Should include practical training at the end of semester
OSK Bank Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication skills • Leadership skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some are relevant but need to focus more on

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiation skills • Leadership skills <p>Teamwork</p> <p>Good technical skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic ICT skills 	communication and leadership skills
TM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of problem solving skills • Lack of basic ICT • Unable to adapt with working environment • Lack of English proficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal communication skills • Positive attitudes • Working experience • Leadership skills • Teamwork • Proficient in English • Multitasking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written & oral communication skills • Analytical problem solving skills • Human relation skills • Business management skills • Leadership skills • ICT skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum & syllabus are much catering with company's need but to be revised to suites industries needs.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global perspective knowledge • Good personal characteristic 	
MAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of self-confident • Not up-to-date with current issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good analytical skills • Mature • Creative • Excellent human relation skills 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus must focus more on case studies that related to local scenario and problems.
MIMOS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication protocol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal communication skills • Non-verbal communication skills • Inner dimension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPTA curriculum & syllabus can be improved

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress management skills • Good technical skills 		
MISC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication skills • Lack of confident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge in shipping • Engineering background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking • Good communication skills • Analytical skills • Problem solving skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education syllabus should be reviewed and extra curriculum can be design to prepare the graduates
IIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication skills • unable to with stand mountain pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analytical skills • People skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analytical skills • Problem solving skills • Interpersonal communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be consistently review to reflect the changes according to the world economy • Lecturers need to have vast experience

5.5.1 Weaknesses of Fresh Graduates

AVON Company revealed that fresh graduates are lacking of experience needed by the industries and they do not have enough exposure to the internal working world. Most of the inexperience fresh graduates hired need to be molded from the beginning. This to them, is considered wasting as the industry needs to allot some time and money to train them.

An interview with Affin Bank staff found that, even they are satisfied with the performance of fresh graduates hired by Affin Bank, some of them, however, are unable to adapt themselves to the working environment, which is totally different from the environment they had lived in when they were still students. Some of the graduates are incapable to apply what they had learned as they entered their working world. It is also agreed by Bank Islam staff, whereby, most fresh graduates are incapable to apply theories learned to the real world situations and they lack the understanding on the requirements of employers. This indicates that most students are more theoretical rather than practical. Besides, graduates also lack of communication skills and this can be seen especially during the job interview. Bank Islam staff also foresees fresh graduates' lacking of team spirits as partially attributing to the lack of group work in many "traditional" degrees.

According to a MIMOS staff, they have experienced seeing some fresh graduates who are overconfident with their skills and that; they tend to expect a perfect working environment. However in reality, this will never happen. They are also lacked of communication protocol. Example, should there be issues arise, the first person that they should discuss with is their immediate supervisor, but most of the time, this do not happen.

Through MISC observation, it is found that fresh graduates are lacking in terms of soft skills especially when it comes to communication skills. They are not confident enough to present ideas in front of others. For young executives, they will be needed to have public speaking at least once in a month so that they are confident when talking to others especially customers.

Mohd Dromzi, a focused group from Malaysia Airline System Berhad (MAS) viewed the fresh graduates from local higher learning institutions as lacking of self-confidence. In addition, they are not up-to-date about the current issues and they have poor proficiency of English. The graduates are expected to know about the company's past and future planning so as to make the job interview more lively and interactive.

According to TM, weaknesses that graduates normally face are that they have problems in adapting themselves to the working environment and they lack of basic ICT skills especially in Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Power Point, which are critical in the company's daily operation. Graduates are also lacking of problem solving skills which has led some employers to perceive graduates as "childish thinker", since every solution needs to be provided by the company or senior staff.

An interview with International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) found that some fresh graduates are easily cracked when being under pressure, which means their coping mechanism, is still at superficial level. They have a fear of failures and can easily be de-motivated. Thus, higher supervision must be addressed as they need attention. Fresh graduates are also said to be lacking of communication skills especially with regards to their English proficiency. Some of them even made some attempts to please their boss, but with lots of mistakes and cost involved.

5.5.2 The Important Skills Employers Look for When They Are Employing Fresh Graduates

According to UIAM, all divisions available in this university demand various skills as a job criterion. In order to maintain and uphold the organization quality especially in education sector, certain skills are required from the graduates such as analytical skills and people skills. The education sector can be considered as a customer-oriented sector as it involves dealing with people and papers. They are actually selling “knowledge papers” and the delivery will be made by the committed bunch of people.

During a job interview, OSK Investment Bank puts more focus on the technical skills possessed by each of the future employees. As OSK is an investment company, interviewees must have the interest in share market trading and that, they must have the basic technical knowledge in reading the technical chart of share. Besides, fresh graduates also need to acquire certain human skills such as interpersonal and communication skills, negotiation skills, leadership as well as teamwork skills.

Usually during a job interview, Bank Islam would look for graduates with effective communication skills, logical and analytical skills, problem solving skills, flexibility and ability to deal with changes as well as willingness to learn as they can make an impression on the way an organisation functions. Affin Bank, on the other hand, responds that graduates with multitasking skill will have a better chance to be employed.

As TM is the Malaysia’s number one provider of information and communication technologies, they are looking for future employees who possess a good interpersonal communication skill as they need to interact and communicate effectively with staff and customers of different level of education background. TM is more interested in hiring graduates who have good technical skills with positive attitude, and

with some working experience, possess leadership skills, teamwork spirit as well as proficient in English language and multitasking.

For AVON Company, before looking at those skills, the company will look into a person's academic qualification. Graduates must obtain a minimum CGPA of 3.0 and above. As for fresh graduates, AVON also views the relevance and the quality of the person's final year project paper. The next important thing that AVON always looks into is the working experience and other skills such as communication skills, customer orientation, presentation skills, English proficiency and other related abilities in a specific function.

MISC does not really focus on specific skills as it believes skills can be developed from time to time through training and coaching programme provided by the company (Nur Azlina). Thus, in hiring a future employee, MISC only look for graduates who possess knowledge in shipping and has an engineering background. Meanwhile, MAS requires a graduate with excellent analytical skills and human relation skills to be used among peers and subordinates. He or she must also be matured and creative.

In addition, MIMOS Company stated that they prefer hiring future employees that have a good blend of people skills and technical skills. This is because, in business and organizational human relations, more emphasis is placed on social and emotional awareness, self-presentation, management, amiability, negotiation skill, conflict resolution and decision making. Thus, MIMOS has identified five important elements of soft skills that they look for upon employing fresh graduates, including interpersonal communication, non-verbal communication, inner dimension, and stress management.

5.5.3 The Critical Skills That Employers Anticipate To Be Possessed By Graduates In Future

According to MAS, local higher learning institutions must develop an aviation management studies to produce more trained and talented aviators for the country. This is to support our national aspiration and mission to become a global player in air transportation.

Meanwhile, UIAM indicates that it is vital to have a good structured plan for graduates inculcated with analytical, problem solving, and interpersonal communication skills which are related to the awaiting potential jobs. This view is similar to MISC opinion, as according to them, critical thinking and good communication skills cannot be taught in class but it is a talent lays inside every one of us which need to be developed and brushed up.

For MIMOS, it foresees the advancement of ICT as the critical skill that should be possessed by each graduating student as the world nowadays involve more advanced technologies. This is parallel with AVON as the company believes that ICT skill is a compulsory skill for all levels and divisions. The employers always look at specialized skills in the current times.

An interview with Affin Bank staff revealed that the surviving skill is the most critical skills in the future, due to the current global economic downturn which is still under recovering process. Thus, the unemployed graduates should be encouraged to be self employed or to start their own business rather than working for others. Entrepreneurship development is a suitable subject to be learned before the university students graduated as a preparation for the future.

TM, on the other hand, foresees the written communication skills, oral communication skills, analytical and problem solving skills, personal characteristic,

human relation skills, business management skills, leadership skills, ICT skill and global perspective knowledge as the most critical ones for graduates in the future. An interview with OSK Company found that the important skills in the future are communication skills, leadership skills and basic ICT skills.

Meanwhile, for Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad, they foresee that the future graduates should be flexible and versatile and the most important thing is that; they need to be equipped with suitable knowledge. Thus, the lifelong learning should be the most important feature for each graduate in the future.

5.5.4 Employers' Opinion on Local Higher Institutions' Curriculum and Syllabus

AVON Company considered the curriculum and syllabus carried out in local higher institutions in Malaysia as suitable to the companies operating in Malaysia. However, students need to work hard to grasp the relevant topics and local higher learning institutions, on the other hand, should not be too lenient in passing their graduates. It is important that they produce a quality graduate.

Affin Bank Berhad viewed that some syllabus and curriculum in local higher learning institutions are suitable but some are not really applicable. The company added that the local higher learning institutions should also include practical training at the end of the semester just before the graduation in order to prepare the graduates when stepping into the real working environment.

OSK Investment Bank commented that some of the local higher learning's curriculum and syllabus are relevant but they also need to put focus on communication and leadership skills so as to produce more marketable graduates. This opinion is

similar to MAS Company which suggested that the higher learning institutes should focus on case studies that are related to local scenario and problems.

According to TM Berhad, curriculum and syllabus of higher learning institutions in Malaysia on the whole are pretty much tailoring to the company's need. However, our curriculum and syllabus are still incomparable with the ones in the western countries.

UIAM stated that the curriculum and syllabus at local higher learning institutions should be consistently reviewed so as to reflect the changes in the world economy as well as the business climate. In addition, students should be exposed to the current issues, explaining how and why, other than to solve complications using new approaches and techniques as an added value to the current curriculum and syllabus. Moreover, the lecturers need to have vast experience not only in teaching area but industrial development as well. This view is almost similar to MISC Company's, whereby, they suggested that local higher learning institutions should review their existing curriculum so that it would be more comprehensive for the graduates to survive in the real world.

Both MIMOS and Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad expressed their satisfaction towards local higher learning institution's curriculum and syllabus. In order for the graduating students to be more competent, they can apply and increase their knowledge by learning through experience with others.

This finding reveals that different jobs require different types of soft skills as perceived by each of the focused group discussion. This result has answered the second objective, which is to analyse employers' perceptions towards the importance of soft skills in their field.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

Numerous researches find that the insufficiency of soft skills among graduates in Malaysia is one of the main factors why they are unemployed. In the competitive world market nowadays, there is an urge that fresh graduates should possess both technical and soft skills. This is vital since most of the employers perceive soft skills as significant to make graduates remain competitive in the era of globalization. Government and local higher learning institutions, which have been putting constant concerns on this issue (employability issue), later has introduced the Finishing School programme or concept, which aim is mainly to enhance employability of graduates in Malaysia. Various modules and programmes have been developed by local higher learning institutions to equip their students with variety of skills demanded by the industries. Some of the Finishing School programmes organized by the higher learning institutions are made compulsory for final semester students while some programmes are opened to all. It is an excellent effort comes for the higher learning institutions to prepare its graduates with suitable soft skills needed by the industries as it can help to generate and improve graduate's soft skills, which can later reduce the rate of unemployment among graduates in Malaysia.

6.2 Policy Implication

Findings from the descriptive statistic obtained by using SPSS 14 have shown that there are more than 10 courses of Finishing School programmes listed by respondents of this study, including the career course, job finding, graduate employability

management scheme, grooming, entrepreneurship, resume writing skills course, protocol and etiquette, English communication, job interview, HST34, PKPG, PHP, CCNA, UBS and Insep. The finding also has made known that 50.6 percent of respondents were made compulsory to attend while 55.3 percent were selected to attend the Finishing School programme. This indicates that, different local higher learning institutions implement different types of Finishing School programme and they also focus on certain group of students to be participants such as GREAT, organized by UUM which was compulsory to those who obtained CGPA less than 3.0 in their examination.

Based on the respondents' perception, the mean for overall skills before attending Finishing School programme or concept reveals that most of the graduates were not sure either they felt satisfied with their own soft skills or not. This finding suggests that some of the graduates did not have a knowledge about soft skills which later make them unsure either they possess that skills or not.

The mean for overall skills after attending the Finishing School programme, however, has increased, as majority of graduates were contented with their soft skills. This is supported by the result of t-test, by which, the critical value indicates that there is a significant difference between skills before and after attending the Finishing School programme or concept. This scenario explains that the modules available in the 16 types of Finishing School programmes listed by respondents have successfully helped them in improving their soft skills and they have made them feel more confident about the skills they possess. This finding is consistent with the previous studies done by Shatar (2009), Abd. Rahim, Ariza, Mohd Noor and Azizah (2007) whereby, students are more confident with their soft skills ability after attending the Finishing School programme or concept. Therefore, there is a need for local higher

learning institutions to encourage graduates to attend the Finishing School programme to aid their students in improving their soft skills.

This study has also shown that majority of respondents who attended the Finishing School programme or concept agree that the course was effective in improving graduates' employability as the programme had assisted respondents to enhance their soft skills. Most respondents who did not attend the Finishing School programme or concept, on the other hand, were not sure either the course really improved graduates employability or not. This situation has been predicted as they could not measure to what extent does the Finishing School programme or concept improve their soft skills so as to make them more employable in the job market.

Measuring the effectiveness of Finishing School programme or concept by comparing the employment status among those who attended, and did not attend this programme, conversely shows that this programme has not effectively enhanced graduates' employability. The value of Pearson Chi Square also reflects that there is no correlation between the Finishing School programme or concept and employment status of respondents. This phenomenon might be due to the lack of experience and the lower CGPA obtained by respondents who attended the Finishing School programme or concept. As what had been revealed by AVON and MISC, some companies still rely on a person's academic qualification and working experience, when recruiting, rather than putting so much focus on specific skills as they believe skills can be developed from time to time through training and coaching programme. Furthermore, it may be possible that the respondents who participated in the Finishing School programme were those who really lack of soft skills, hence, perceived the programme as a failure in improving them. Therefore, students should make a

significant balance between improving their soft skills and their academic performance so as to make them more employable in the job market.

This is consistent with the Multinomial Logit result, which reveals that the Finishing School programme has a negative impact on employment status where qualifications are involved. So, it indicates that as the respondents attended the Finishing School programme, their chances to be employed according to their qualification is lessened. Age, on the other hand, has a positive impact on employment status. It means that as respondents' age increases, the higher is the probability of being employed. This is because; the eldest respondents in this research may have been working for several years before they pursue their study in local higher learning institutions. This finding is consistent with views from AVON; Nor Hartini (2007) and Hanum, *et. al.*(2008), whereby, in the current labor market, there is a trend that most organizations prefer to recruit those with experience as they do not need to provide in-house training.

The information from stock taking indicates that there were similarities of soft skills emphasized by local and overseas higher learning institutions in their own Finishing School programme. However, only local higher learning institutions highlighted the entrepreneurship skills in its module. This is parallel with the elements of employability skills outlined by the Ministry of Higher Education to encourage the involvement of graduates in entrepreneurship.

Based on the finding from interviewed companies, they foresee the ICT skills, communication skills, leadership skills, entrepreneurship skills, problem solving skills and human relation skills as vital for future graduates. Most of the skills listed have been emphasized by the local higher learning institutions in their Finishing School programmes. Hence, local higher learning institutions should find a way in

order to make the Finishing School programme more interesting in increasing maximum participations from graduating students.

The finding also shows that interviewed companies agreed that the syllabus and curriculum in local higher learning institutions is suitable for the company in Malaysia. However, it needs to be consistently reviewed so as to make it more comprehensive and to make sure that it is parallel with the changing of technology as well as business climate. Hence, it is suggested to local higher learning institutions should have a good relationship with industrial sectors, in order to get the most up-to-date information regarding the skills demanded by them.

6.3 Limitation

This research is limited to only four local higher learning institutions in Malaysia that had organised Finishing School programme for graduating students. This limitation has caused insufficient number of respondents who had attended the Finishing School programme. For future research, researchers need to consider expanding the scope of study, which is able to cover all the local higher learning institutions that had ever organised Finishing School programmes, for a more accurate result.

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Appendix A

Characteristics of Respondents

University

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	USM	385	32.1	43.2	43.2
	UNIMAP	28	2.3	3.1	46.3
	UUM	347	28.9	38.9	85.2
	UIA	132	11.0	14.8	100.0
	Total	892	74.3	100.0	
Missing	System	308	25.7		
Total		1200	100.0		

Male

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	female	563	46.9	64.6	64.6
	male	308	25.7	35.4	100.0
	Total	871	72.6	100.0	
Missing	System	329	27.4		
Total		1200	100.0		

StateBorn

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	johor	73	6.1	8.4	8.4
	kedah	129	10.8	14.9	23.3
	kelantan	67	5.6	7.7	31.1
	melaka	28	2.3	3.2	34.3
	negeri sembilan	21	1.8	2.4	36.7
	pahang	44	3.7	5.1	41.8
	penang	134	11.2	15.5	57.3
	perak	118	9.8	13.6	70.9
	perlis	18	1.5	2.1	73.0
	selangor	57	4.8	6.6	79.6
	terengganu	38	3.2	4.4	83.9
	sabah	28	2.3	3.2	87.2
	sarawak	41	3.4	4.7	91.9
	kuala lumpur	67	5.6	7.7	99.7
	labuan	3	.3	.3	100.0
	Total	866	72.2	100.0	
Missing	System	334	27.8		
Total		1200	100.0		

Appendix B

Characteristic of Finishing School programme

Finishing school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	806	67.2	90.5	90.5
	1	85	7.1	9.5	100.0
	Total	891	74.3	100.0	
Missing	System	309	25.8		
Total		1200	100.0		

FS compulsory

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	35	2.9	44.9	44.9
	1	43	3.6	55.1	100.0
	Total	78	6.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1122	93.5		
Total		1200	100.0		

FS attend at own will

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	5	.4	6.4	6.4
	1	73	6.1	93.6	100.0
	Total	78	6.5	100.0	
Missing	System	1122	93.5		
Total		1200	100.0		

Appendix C

Effectiveness of Finishing School Based on Respondents' Perception

T-test for Skills Before and After Attending Finishing School

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	<i>After</i>	<i>Before</i>
Mean	4.1784367	3.555836
Variance	0.0015702	0.005172
Observations	19	19
Pearson Correlation	0.2294535	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	18	
t Stat	36.812562	
P(T<=t) one-tail	1.066E-18	
t Critical one-tail	1.7340631	
P(T<=t) two-tail	2.132E-18	
t Critical two-tail	2.1009237	

Effectiveness of FS for those attended

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	1	.1	1.2	1.2
	3	14	1.2	17.3	18.5
	4	47	3.9	58.0	76.5
	5	19	1.6	23.5	100.0
	Total	81	6.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1119	93.3		
Total		1200	100.0		

Effectiveness of FS for those not attended

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	7	.6	.9	.9
	2	15	1.3	2.0	2.9
	3	352	29.3	46.3	49.1
	4	296	24.7	38.9	88.0
	5	91	7.6	12.0	100.0
	Total	761	63.4	100.0	
Missing	System	439	36.6		
Total		1200	100.0		

Recommended FS to continue

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	41	3.4	4.8	4.8
	1	806	67.2	95.2	100.0
	Total	847	70.6	100.0	
Missing	System	353	29.4		
Total		1200	100.0		

Appendix D

Effectiveness of Finishing School: Probability for Being Employed

Finishing school * EmpStatus Crosstabulation

			EmpStatus				Total
			.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	
Finishing school	0	Count	203	162	348	90	803
		% within Finishing school	25.3%	20.2%	43.3%	11.2%	100.0%
	1	Count	27	18	31	9	85
		% within Finishing school	31.8%	21.2%	36.5%	10.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	230	180	379	99	888
		% within Finishing school	25.9%	20.3%	42.7%	11.1%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.162 ^a	3	.540
Likelihood Ratio	2.126	3	.547
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.669	1	.196
N of Valid Cases	888		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.48.

Parameter Estimates

EmpStatus ^a		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
								Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1.00	Intercept	-3.528	1.225	8.289	1	.004			
	Age	.176	.041	17.897	1	.000	1.192	1.099	1.293
	FS_effALL	.042	.148	.080	1	.777	1.043	.780	1.395
	Continues	-1.373	.560	6.011	1	.014	.253	.085	.759
	[FS=0]	.113	.336	.112	1	.738	1.119	.579	2.164
	[FS=1]	0 ^b	.	.	0	.	.	.	.
	[Male=.00]	.086	.235	.132	1	.716	1.089	.687	1.728
	[Male=1.00]	0 ^b	.	.	0	.	.	.	.
2.00	Intercept	-2.086	1.149	3.300	1	.069			
	Age	.158	.040	15.539	1	.000	1.171	1.083	1.267
	FS_effALL	-.132	.127	1.083	1	.298	.876	.683	1.124
	Continues	-.981	.521	3.546	1	.060	.375	.135	1.041
	[FS=0]	.508	.302	2.833	1	.092	1.662	.920	3.003
	[FS=1]	0 ^b	.	.	0	.	.	.	.
	[Male=.00]	-.441	.192	5.253	1	.022	.644	.441	.938
	[Male=1.00]	0 ^b	.	.	0	.	.	.	.
3.00	Intercept	2.100	2.816	.556	1	.456			
	Age	-.194	.109	3.137	1	.077	.824	.665	1.021
	FS_effALL	.227	.178	1.638	1	.201	1.255	.886	1.779
	Continues	.696	1.114	.390	1	.532	2.005	.226	17.791
	[FS=0]	.455	.417	1.193	1	.275	1.577	.697	3.569
	[FS=1]	0 ^b	.	.	0	.	.	.	.
	[Male=.00]	-.385	.266	2.093	1	.148	.680	.404	1.146
	[Male=1.00]	0 ^b	.	.	0	.	.	.	.

a. The reference category is: .00.

b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

Appendix E

Focus Group Discussion

1. Do you employ business and economics graduates in your company?
2. What sections are they placed?
3. What are their types of skills you are looking for when you employ?
4. What types of soft-skills you are looking for when you employ?
 - i. Interpersonal communication skills
 - ii Creative and critical thinking skills
 - iii Problem solving skills
 - iv Analytical skills
 - v Proficiency in English
 - vi Team work/group work
 - vii Inculcation and practicing of positive values
 - viii Exposure to general knowledge and current issues
 - ix Job interview skills
 - x Resume and job application letter writing
 - xi Job search
 - xii Demonstrate good image
 - xiii Demonstrate self-confidence
 - xiv ICT skills
 - xv EISQ (Emotional, Intellectual and Spiritual Intelligence) skills
 - xvi Etiquette skills
 - xvii Entrepreneurship skills
 - xviii Consultation skills
 - xix Leadership skills
5. What are their strengths?
6. What are their weaknesses?
7. Are you happy with their performance so far?
8. Do you think that the curriculum and syllabus of local IPTAs are suitable to produce such workforce in the future?
9. Any comments about graduates of local versus foreign universities?
10. Does your company offer scholarships to undergraduate students? How much do you spend on staff training?
11. What do you foresee to be the critical skills in the future?

Appendix F

Survey Instrument

QUESTIONNAIRE REGARDING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FINISHING SCHOOL PROGRAMME IN INCREASING GRADUATES' EMPLOYABILITY

Sir/Madam,

I am a Master Student of Economic Faculty from the College of Arts and Science, Universiti Utara Malaysia. I am now carrying out a study on the effectiveness of Finishing School programmes in improving the employability of graduates. You have been selected randomly as the respondent of this study. I believe that, information provided will help me to understand more about the effectiveness of Finishing School programme and its role in improving the employability of graduates.

I really hope that you can spend a little time answering questions stated in the questionnaire. All personal information will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes.

Please complete this questionnaire by circling the answers and fill up the spaces provided
using **CAPITAL LETTERS**.

INSTITUTION *

: _____

SECTION A : BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. IC No./Passport :

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

 (e.g. :
820926145997)

Matric No. :

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

2. a) Sex : Male ☐ Female ☐

b) Age :

--	--

3 a) Field of study : _____

b) Programme of study : _____

SECTION B : CURRENT STATUS

Please read the instruction given before you select your current status.

EMPLOYED

Graduates who are already working, self-employed, medical graduates in housemanship programme, tutorage for pharmacy graduates and have information on their occupation, employer and monthly income.

*** UNEMPLOYED**

Graduates who are not working or still looking for jobs. No information on occupation, employer and income.

*** OTHERS**

Graduates who are undergoing chambering/ Education graduates waiting for placement/ graduates undergoing unemployment attachment schemes (*SLSM/Skim Usahawan Tani (SUTKS)/ Skim Latihan Graduan/05 (SLG/05)/Program Peningkatan Kemahiran Industri (INSEP)*, etc.)

4. Your
current
status :

Employed
Unemployed
Others

SECTION C: FINISHING SCHOOL COURSE AND OTHERS

5. Name of your higher learning institution (please specify): _____

6. If **EMPLOYED**, do you think your current job commensurate with your qualification?

Yes ☐ No ☐

7. To increase graduate's employability, some higher learning institution have offered Finishing School/Grooming and other short-term courses.

Example: Ketrampilan course in UPM, Pre-Employment Course in UM, Grooming and resume writing in UUM.

Did you attend any of these Finishing School courses?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If **YES**, please answer the following questions (a,b,c, d and e):

a) Course information

Name of course:

Place of course:

Date of course (begin / end):

Fees (RM)

b) Course status

Is this course compulsory?

Yes

☐

No

☐

c) Type of module

Modules of course, please state: (please tick (/))(You may tick **more than one** answer)

i	Interpersonal comunication module	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii	English language proficiency module	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii	ICT module	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv	Job search skill module	<input type="checkbox"/>
v	Resume and job application writing module	<input type="checkbox"/>
vi	Job interview skill module	<input type="checkbox"/>
vii	Entrepreneuship module	<input type="checkbox"/>
viii	Team work module	<input type="checkbox"/>
ix	Leadership module	<input type="checkbox"/>
x	Etiquette module	<input type="checkbox"/>
xi	Consultation module	<input type="checkbox"/>
xii	Others	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Please specify :	

d) Skills before and after attending course

Using the scale below, please state to what extent do you satisfy with ALL the following skills :

Not at all satisfied		1	2	3	4	5	Extremely satisfied	
BEFORE you attend the course (please tick (/))								
i.	Interpersonal communication skills	1	2	3	4	5		
ii	Creative and critical thinking skills	1	2	3	4	5		
iii	Problem solving skills	1	2	3	4	5		
iv	Analytical skills	1	2	3	4	5		
v	Proficiency in English	1	2	3	4	5		
vi	Team work/group work	1	2	3	4	5		
vii	Inculcation and practicing of positive values	1	2	3	4	5		
viii	Exposure to general knowledge and current issues	1	2	3	4	5		
ix	Job interview skills	1	2	3	4	5		
x	Resume and job application letter writing	1	2	3	4	5		
xi	Job search	1	2	3	4	5		
xii	Demonstrate good image	1	2	3	4	5		
xiii	Demonstrate self-confidence	1	2	3	4	5		
xiv	ICT skills	1	2	3	4	5		
xv	EISQ (Emotional, Intellectual and Spiritual Intelligence) skills	1	2	3	4	5		
xvi	Etiquette skills	1	2	3	4	5		
xvii	Entrepreneurship skills	1	2	3	4	5		

xviii	Consultation skills	1	2	3	4	5
xix	Leadership skills	1	2	3	4	5

AFTER you attend the course (**please tick (/)**)

i.	Interpersonal communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
ii	Creative and critical thinking skills	1	2	3	4	5
iii	Problem solving skills	1	2	3	4	5
iv	Analytical skills	1	2	3	4	5
v	Proficiency in English	1	2	3	4	5
vi	Team work/group work	1	2	3	4	5
vii	Inculcation and practicing of positive values	1	2	3	4	5
viii	Exposure to general knowledge and current issues	1	2	3	4	5
ix	Job interview skills	1	2	3	4	5
x	Resume and job application letter writing	1	2	3	4	5
xi	Job search	1	2	3	4	5
xii	Demonstrate good image	1	2	3	4	5
xiii	Demonstrate self-confidence	1	2	3	4	5
xiv	ICT skills	1	2	3	4	5
xv	EISQ (Emotional, Intellectual and Spiritual Intelligence) skills	1	2	3	4	5
xvi	Etiquette skills	1	2	3	4	5
xvii	Entrepreneurship skills	1	2	3	4	5
xviii	Consultation skills	1	2	3	4	5
xix	Leadership skills	1	2	3	4	5

e) Course effectiveness

What is your opinion on the effectiveness of Finishing School course in improving graduate's employability?

Not effective at all

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Very effective

8. If you have **never attended** any Finishing School course, what is your perception on the effectiveness of the the course in improving graduate's employability?

Not effective at all

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Very effective

THANK YOU