

# A Study of The Impact of Lifelong Learning Programmes Amongst Malaysian Students: A Comparative Study Between Public and Private Higher Educational Institution



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**ABSTRACT---** *The purpose of this study is to investigate experiences amongst Malaysian students, whom enrolled in a lifelong learning program at higher educational institution. The aim of the programme is supporting the development of educational and industrial quality of lifelong learning, particularly, on the impact of the programme in catering the industrial revolution 4.0. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were used to collect data from 15 selected students amongst the Malaysian public and private higher educational institutions. The findings indicate that undertaking a lifelong learning programme does bring impact towards education and industrial revolution 4.0 upon how real and virtual work implement and perceive the programme. The definition and conceptualization of a lifelong learning described by the respondents illustrate the understanding and perception of the programme offered. The results also revealed on how the students' perceptions of a lifelong learning education and industrial concept can impact their action to support or not to support the aim of the programme development and revolution in the local institution. In addition, the results also shared the comparative study between the organisation or institution strategies in implementing the aim of the lifelong learning programme in different setting environment and sectors. Thus, the context of the Malaysian cultural settings and organization culture were also discussed as to highlight the significant of the study's findings.*

**Keywords:** *lifelong learning, industrial revolution, higher education, Malaysia.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Lifelong Learning, which has gained global importance in the information era, is a process of gaining and updating all kinds of knowledge, skills and qualities, formally and informally from birth to death (1). Since the purpose of education is to draw out the treasure within individuals to be

applied to the community, Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) is a development area of study that is relevant in all educational fields. Many researchers have explored the importance of LLP in different areas in higher tertiary education including social science, business and management arena.

Determining the impact of LLP on the student's attitude or behaviour, particularly amongst higher educational students, is important for future business organisation. It is an important driver of organisational strategy and the Educational-Industrial development relationship in the Malaysian institution. Ensuring a student landed a position in both public and private educational institution are a requirement for educational and management development. Hence, a student position in the institute is vital towards educational development and management. On the other hand, LLP brings impact towards professional groups such as lecturers/academicians. However, the effects are variable and uncertain, because of struggle over articulations of what teaching, learning development and professionalism mean and how they interrelate (2). To date, there are handfuls of literature reviews on lifelong learning research from various perspectives. In which, the student, academician and educational institutional support are considered universal issued. There is some evidence to suggest that the institutional provision relates to lifelong learning programme offers and industrial revolution demands. Thus, this study explores the understanding of LLP and factors that impact the understanding of LLP in Malaysian higher education institutional environment.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Lifelong learning in Higher Education*

In today's society, the flow of information has gained speed with developing technology and globalising world order. Higher education level such as universities and colleges have been challenged to provide the best teaching and learning programme on par with society's requirement and reducing the gap between labour market skills' requirements and education courses. Universities and colleges should respond to new lifelong educational and training needs, clearly appealing to its social responsibility.

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According to Šmídová, Kyllingstad, & Karlsen (2017) in his paper that stated there are different approach and aims for LLP between national and higher education, benefitting individuals and organization in different ways (3). A number of literatures have evaluated on the successfulness of various kinds of LLP's in higher education level and the function of a responsible (badan) centres. ARSLAN (2008) stated that Turkey has opened their LLP centres in order to develop cooperation between the universities with public institutions, private sector and international institutions via offering continuing education programmes (4).

Moreover, Ambrósio, Sá, & Simões (2014) viewed the function of higher education in development of non-traditional adult students' plurilingual repertoires in Portugal (5). The result highlighted its contribution to the acquisition of new skills, the improvement of pre-acquired skills already possessed, the promotion of adaptation of skills and the development of self-esteem and a greater sense of responsibility for their own life. Majority of the students also believed it is important to learn languages, particularly due to business needs, personal development and globalization assuming that language learning is a dynamic process throughout life, marked by their respective lives and experiences. Hence, most students attend higher education due to the need for consulting the literature in foreign languages.

Furthermore, Onorati, d'Ovidio, & Antonucci (2017) studied the intercultural competences developed in students who have attended two consecutive International LLPs (6). The mobility-based LLP proved in building as an effective and appropriate sociolinguistics in complex social scenarios and assessing it as a transition of efficiency for different professional fields and essential for marketability, and mutual co-existence in the global world

The inconsistency of LLP in higher education derives from the fact that it should serve some conflicting objectives: as a medium of democratization, equality opportunities, and social unity and as a way to improve human resources development in response to the demands of globalization and economic competitiveness. However, this situation provides a wider opportunity to choose the exact and specific schools and fields appropriate to the skills and knowledge needs. Therefore, it is a challenge to investigate the understanding of factors and impacts of LLP in different sectors in Malaysia.

#### *Lifelong learning in Malaysia*

Malaysia, aiming to become a developed and high income nation by the year of 2020, provides LLP as an important education programme. Therefore, it is vital to have a firm grasp on understanding and reason of choosing LLP, as well as the impact of LLP itself. While in medical field, LLP is an ethical obligation for doctors to improve their skills and knowledge (7), while other professional fields requires improvements in parallel with industrialization and globalization. Literatures showed various reasons contributed for a participant to enrol in a LLP in Malaysia. These studies examined this issue by using a wide range of variables, and suggested future career advancement, salary increment, social support, financial support, knowledge and skills improvement among the factors or expected results of

LLP.

Furthermore, a research conducted by Erlane K Ghani, Jamaliah Said, & Noraini Mohd Nasir (2008) investigated reason of pursuing LLP on the first year students. The main reason is self-development. Most respondents stated that lack of learning opportunities in the past due to reasons such as lack of finance and poor motivation are their reasons (8). Other respondents want to acquire self-confidence by gaining higher qualification as well as performing a better job for community. Other reasons are having social interactions and control over study time.

More recent research by Kok (2014) investigated on reasons amongst educators or who are currently teaching in various educational settings in continuing their education (9). The reasons can be divided into two; career and social life. Some participants compared their salary and career level to others and also pursuing their long hidden dream. Meanwhile, in term of social circumstances, participants are dependent towards the availability of financial support by government as well as family support. Different reasons also contributed in the process of completing education. Salary and career is usually the main reason during reflecting and evaluating stage, meanwhile knowledge and skills acquires are the main reason of the last stage. These factors are also expected outcomes that of LLP.

Ghazalan, Abd. Samad, Ab Halim, Hamidon, & Ahmad Hariri, (2018)'s shared in the paper on the readiness of community college student, whom enrolled in LLP into entrepreneurship (10). As a result, students developed high motivation and interests into entrepreneurship as well as moderate abilities and knowledge. Besides, Kamarudin, Hassan, & Omar (2018) stated that students look into lifelong learning skills acquired and useful business knowledge that can contributed in their future career (11). However, all this studies focused on the impact towards the individual or participant's level, especially students. Therefore, this study aims at analysing the understanding and impact of LLP to both individual and organization.

### III. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The definition and understanding of the term Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) in this study which will be discussed in this paper is built from the conceptual foundation. In particular, the study aims to investigate the experiences and understanding of Malaysian students. For instance, students who had participated/enrolled or currently undertaking in LLP program under public or private educational institute.

By looking at one of the proven elements or factors involved, which is, the impact of the academic product. The element or factor of whether it will directly or indirectly impact the participants understanding are analysed based on the study's findings. Thus, the objectives of the study are:

- 1) To explore the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) implementation experiences in Malaysia.
- 2) To examine the LLP among higher educational students in Malaysian context.

3) To analyse LLP’s impact towards the Malaysian public and private higher educational institutions.

Given that the elements of institutional intention to participate in the action or to perform lifelong learning development in educational environment. The study was supported by Buntat et al., (2013) that explained: “Developing a culture of lifelong learning in an individual is an important aspect of livelihood” (12). That is to say, this study focuses on the impact of the LLP on student experiences. Furthermore, the research framework of this study is based principally on the extensive body of literature on the lifelong learning concept and industrial revolution studies. Thus, the aim of the study is to investigate whether there is a direct or indirect impact of LLP on individual experience amongst students.

IV. METHODOLOGY/MATERIALS

The understandings of research philosophy were based on the general philosophy of sociology of educations. In particular, the study concerns on establishing understanding of what people do in real-life contexts, specifically in social-economy perspective. The clarity of the objective helps the study to adopt a qualitative and quantitative approach. The “epistemology concerns on what it is possible to know, whereas ontology concerns on what there is to know in the world ‘out there’ which result in philosophical traditions that have answered research questions in different ways” (13). Moreover, the semi-structured interviews and questionnaire were carried out in the data collection of the study. It is mainly to observe the participants’ perspective. that is significant to direct their perspective on the matter discussed (14). In gathering data, the participants diversity including age, educational and social level within the selected student from public and private institutions were considered. Whereas the interview transcripts were analysed using the thematic analysis. Also, pseudonyms would be used to identify responses to ensure the respondent’s identities were not to be linked directly to the study.

V. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The following Table 1 are the results from data analysis.  
Table 1. Study results of the thematic analysis

Institutional Sector	Direct impact	Indirect impact
	Individual driver to undertake LLP	Institutional strategies to offer LLP
Public Institutional A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reward</li> <li>• Certificate recognition</li> <li>• Career break opportunity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower cost characteristic</li> <li>• New Academic Learning Innovation (NALI) in teaching and learning courses</li> </ul>

Private Institutional B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal satisfaction</li> <li>• Company’s requirement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitive offer on variety of courses and place</li> <li>• Fulfil job demand in certain industry</li> </ul>
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The results of the thematic analysis revealed the factors or driver on the impact of a lifelong learning programme (LLP) among students. There are two significant findings that clarified as the individual driver to undertake LLP and institutional strategies to offer LLP. The findings present the comparative study on student’s experiences undertaking LLP between Public (A) and Private (B) Higher Education Institutions. In the following sub topic, the findings are discussed in detailed based on the two main factors or drivers found in the study.

Direct impact on individual experience to undertake LLP

The findings of the study showed that the first driver or factor that motivates the public institutional students to undertake LLP is the **self-reward**. Though Public Institution A is a well-known research university, which is listed amongst top ranking university to enter, the respondents specified that the LLP is a self-reward to them. For instance, student05 mentioned: “...updating and upgrading knowledge is an important component in the lifelong learning experience to me. In other words, it is life satisfaction that I considered as a self-reward for myself. It gives me another life experience, by exploring a new study environment, which later achieved through certificate upon completion”. The experience was shared in the interview session at Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Another supported agreement is from another respondent; student02 that described his preference in defining LLP as another chapter of education enhancement of life experience.

In further experienced LLP on individual factor is the **certificate recognition**. This experience shared by one of the respondents; student12, mentioned about certificate recognition which portrays the lifelong learning as important aspect of the programme and student preference. He explained that the LLP must focus that the program is time consuming, that may take up to 4 to 8 years to complete. Upon graduation, students are determined to hold a trusted certified and recognition certificate as a long-term investment in their career pathway. The third impact of LLP on individual experience is the **career break opportunity**. In detail, the respondent; student1 shares her experience by saying that: “it is worth to take a break from work life by taking study life on track. This is a life changing factor for me, especially the LLP is a career break opportunity that can be used to achieve my career advancement”.

Meanwhile, by conducting this study, similarities of the impact towards individual experience for both Private (B) and Public (A) institution were discovered through comparison between these two institutions. However, the term used gives different factor and meaning to describe the experience in undertaking the LLP.

The **personal satisfaction** and **company's requirement** are two significant drivers to pursue the LLP offered. Such example shared by student04: "my aim is to reach my career at the highest level of organization as I could achieve. My opinion by referring to the lifelong learning process is towards life satisfaction". The registered course is believed to increase the knowledge of a particular area of study. As a result, the respondents achieved the company's requirement in applying a higher position level in the organisation.

#### *Indirect impact on company strategies to undertake LLP*

Interviewed data analysed also revealed on the impact of LLP offered by higher institutions. Most of the respondents from Public (A) institution, mentioned **lower cost characteristic** is their priority criteria in considering the university selection. Another criteria shared by the respondent, student9 stated that the **New Academic Learning Innovation (NALI) model in teaching and learning** is an added value that helps them to explore and experience new study environment in the LLP.

On the other hand, the study found out that Private (B) institution respondents shared different impacts on the LLP undertaken experiences. The first impact is the competitive offer on a variety of courses and location. The details of the findings are as mentioned by the respondents, including student11, 13 and 14, where the location plays an important attraction followed by the course offered.

The study found the second factor that impacts the undertaken of LLP on the institution/company experiences is the **job fulfilment demand in a certain industry**. Based on the interviewed data, most of the respondents agreed that this factor is considered as one of the motivational drivers amongst students. In detailed, the industrial demand for the certificate qualification in a certain area. For instance, one of the respondents mentioned, in order to qualified as a senior engineer, one must hold a bachelor degree certificate with certain years of working experiences. Thus, the institution of higher education could consider the LLP courses that suit the job criteria needed by the industry as a strategy to attract more applicants.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study set with the aim of investigating the experiences of Malaysian students continuing their studies at higher educational institution of the lifelong learning programme. The study revealed the factors or drivers of the direct and indirect LLP undertaken experiences impact on individual and institutional. Therefore, the following sub-topic concludes the findings and discussion of the study:

6.1 The direct impact on individual experience of the study describes a significant understanding as to why students undertake LLP at higher educational level. Firstly, the study identified self-reward and personal satisfaction drivers by showing that the individual acceptance of LLP context within the public and private institutions. While the other significant impacts disclosed differentiation between the public and private institution respondents by showing the certificate recognition, career break opportunity, and the company's requirement as a driver to undertake LLP.

6.2 A better understanding of individual's LLP

experience indirectly reflects the company's benefit in terms of offered courses strategy. The significant findings revealed by the study through the company's strategy were to offer LLP in selected institutions. These referred to the lower cost characteristic and New Academic Learning Innovation (NALI) in teaching and learning courses by the public institution A. Meanwhile, private institution B strategy in offering LLP through competitive offers on variety of courses and place, and the fulfil job demand in certain industry.

Therefore, the study revealed two main drivers of the importance of LLP undertake amongst students at higher education level. Those include, direct impact on individual experiences (the students), and indirect impact on the company's strategy (the institutions).

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