

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The topic of affirmative actions in higher education consists of two inter-related areas of inquiry which have long been discussed in many different contexts. This article gives accounts about affirmative action and its cases in higher education in Malaysia. Beginning with a summary of various aspects of affirmative action, the article highlights important milestones in the development of higher education in Malaysia, particularly those related to affirmative action. In the next part, it describes the metamorphosis of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) as a case study of the implementation of affirmative action in higher education in Malaysia.

Keywords: *Malaysia, bumiputra, affirmative action, higher education, Universiti Teknologi MARA.*

INTRODUCTION

Six decades after the development of Malaya as an independent nation, there is a need to re-examine the major policies that were introduced to ensure the development of the fledgling nation. This re-examination is necessary to ensure that the nation is headed towards the right direction as the political, economic and social situations in the Federation of Malaya sixty years ago were far different from what they are today. Therefore, it is the intention of this article to relook into one area of inquiry which has been discussed and debated: affirmative action policies in Malaysia. Affirmative action policies can encompass a wide area, such as in employment and education. Nonetheless, the focus of this article is on affirmative action policies in Malaysian higher education, with a closer look at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM).

Historically, affirmative action policies were introduced to battle the anxiety of Malay over their status in the land that they believed was theirs. Kuhonta (2011: 11), in his article stated that the problem of inequality has deep roots that goes back to the British colonial policy of “divide and rule.” Colonial authorities divided the economy along ethnic lines, relegating the Malays to traditional economic sectors. This ethnic division of labour became deeply entrenched in the Malaysian soil, aggravating Malays’ anxieties that their status in a land that they believed belonged to them was under grave threat. The anxiety of the Malays was moderated when an institutionalized ethnic party the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) formed in 1946, has forcefully sought to implement pragmatic social reforms along ethnic lines with collaboration from other parties in the Alliance Front and subsequently, the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition. Along with a capable bureaucracy, the coalition has advanced a battery of policies that have gradually reduced the uneven distribution of income between the Malays and Chinese. Consequently, the nation could tackle ethnic and class divisions through a combination of party organization, state intervention and moderate policies of redistribution. In this context, institutional resilience has been crucial to Malaysia’s ability to address social reforms without destabilizing the politics. Kuhonta’s (2011) views are echoed by a host of other scholars and commentators who have analyzed the history of affirmative action policies in Malaysia.

To provide a clearer picture of affirmative action policies in higher education and the role of UiTM, it is reasoned appropriate and relevant to highlight some key developments in higher education in Malaysia. Thus, this article discusses the following:

1. Definitions of Bumiputra
2. Issues of higher education in Malaysia
3. Issues of affirmative action
4. Affirmative action in UiTM

DEFINITIONS OF BUMIPUTRA

When discussing the affirmation action in Malaysia, among the word that keeps on appearing is the word ‘bumiputra’. It is necessary to define this word to help make the discussion in this article clearer. Faruqi (2016: p. 5) stated that the legal answer to the term “bumiputra” is more political rather than legal. When discussing about bumiputra, the Federal and State Constitutions would normally relate it to “Malays” and the “Natives of Sabah and Sarawak”, and Faruqi (2016) makes the following clarifications:

1. A “Malay” is defined in Article 160 (2) of the Federal Constitution to refer to a person who professes Islam, habitually speaks Malay, conforms to Malay custom, and was born in Malaya or Singapore before Aug 31, 1957, or born of parents or grandparents, one of whom was born or is domiciled in Malaya or Singapore on Merdeka Day. The definition is unique in that ethnicity is not emphasised. Religion, language, Malay custom and roots in Tanah Melayu/Singapore are critical factors. People of mixed parentage can qualify as Malays provided all the four qualifications are met. The law does not show gender bias but many public servants disregard the mother’s race and require descent from the male. This is unconstitutional.
2. Natives of Sabah are listed out in Article 161A (6) of the Federal Constitution and the Sabah Interpretation (Definition of Native) Ordinance 1952. Thirty-nine ethnic communities are included. A recurrent problem is that the law is gender-biased; the domicile of the father is regarded as relevant but not of the mother’s.

3. Natives of Sarawak, consisting of 28 groups are listed out in Article 161 (A) of the Federal Constitution. A recurring problem is that some applicants from Sarawak have one native and one non-native parent. Under Article 161A (6) (a) they are ineligible to be called “natives of Sarawak.” This raises the ire of many Sarawak politicians.

Similarly, The Malaysian Higher Education Ministry (2007/2008) defined bumiputra as the following:

1. Peninsular Malaysia
 - “If one of the parents is Muslim Malay/Orang Asli as stated in Article 160 (2) Federal Constitution of Malaysia; thus the child is considered as a Bumiputra”
2. Sabah
 - “If the child was born in Sabah or the father was domiciled in Sabah at the time of birth, and one of the parents is indigenous natives of Sabah as stated in Article 161A (6)(b) Federal Constitution of Malaysia; thus, his child is considered as a Bumiputra”
3. Sarawak
 - “If both parents are indigenous natives of Sarawak as stated in Article 161A (6)(a) Federal Constitution of Malaysia; thus, their child is considered as a Bumiputra”

The three definitions of bumiputra are depending on the region of origin of the individual applicant as appeared in *Buku Panduan Kemasukan ke Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Awam, Program Pengajian Lulusan SPM/ Setaraf Sesi Akademik 2007/2008* (Guidebook for entry into public higher learning institutions for SPM/equivalent graduates for academic year 2007/2008),

ISSUES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

The development of higher education in Malaysia encompasses many aspects. Some of the pertinent aspects are to be explained in this section.

There are different types of higher education available in Malaysia. Table 1 shows the types and numbers of higher educational institutions in Malaysia in year 2013:

Table 1: Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia

Category	Type of Higher Institution	Number
Public / Government Institutions	University	31
	Polytechnic	30
	College / Institution	158
	Total	219
Private Institutions	University	72
	University College	35
	College / Institution	378
	Total	485
Grand Total		704

Source: Malaysian Qualification Register (MQR), _____

Comparatively speaking, there was no university in Malaya at the time of independence except for University of Malaya which was in Singapore. Since then, the total number of higher institutions has increased tremendously. In the present time, Malaysians have more access to higher education but the same could not be said during the period of independence.

From a historical point of view, Kuhonta, (2011: 75 – 76) observes that throughout Malaysia's history, the educational system has been heavily unequal, with the roots of such inequality going back to a policy of benign neglect under the British rule. The British allowed the private sectors to dictate the pace of education. Hence, the central issue in the politics of education during the period of independence was as much as the national unity as one of expanding access and opportunity for the population, especially the disadvantaged Malays. This proves to be pertinent in the following decades.

Education is a way out of the economic imbalance in Malaysia. Therefore, access to higher education is pertinent to correct the economic imbalance among the ethnic groups. Hence, an affirmative action of ethnic quota system for admission into public universities was introduced in 1979 which went on until 2002 (Lee, 2015). Some bumiputra students were selected for admission based on matriculation examination results, while some non-bumiputra students were selected based on STPM examination results. Critics on these two systems of admission into public universities have stated that the systems are unjust because the results of these examinations are not comparable. Furthermore, the Education Blueprint 2013-2025 has stated that every Malaysian child deserves equal access to an education that will enable that child to achieve his or her potential. In other words, there should not be any differences among the ethnic groups.

On the other hand, equity, another one of the aspirations is defined as having equal opportunity to enter schools as well as higher education regardless of whether the students are from rich or poor families and from urban or rural areas, Lee (2015) notes that the issues related to equity is that not only the disadvantaged groups can gain access to education, but also to ensure that they have a certain degree of success after gaining admission. For example, special schools and colleges have been established to nurture outstanding bumiputra students, and a matriculation examination has been designed mainly to select bumiputra students for admission to universities.

According to Lee (2015), another increasing concern is related to qualifications level and fields of study. Currently, there are more students studying for degrees than engaged in non-degree studies, with the ratio being 2:3. The imbalance is more obvious in the public higher educational institutions (HEIs), where the ratio is 1:3. The government policy target ratio is to have more non-degree course, i.e. with a ratio of 2:1. This concern is particularly relevant to the growth and development of UiTM, as the case study of this article.

In view of the discussion based on the aspirations, Lee (2015) recommends that special attention needs to be given to the following issues:

1. social cohesion and national identity;
2. language policy, especially with regards to the use of English;
3. admission policy to higher educational institutions;
4. quality of the teaching force;
5. the shift away from rote learning to the development of higher-order thinking skills;
6. employability of graduates;
7. return on investment in research and development
8. Delegation of authority in the administration of the educational system.

In fact, the recommendations are in line with the blueprint for higher education which is mirrored in the ten shifts in the Malaysian Education Development Plan (Higher Education) as shown in Figure 1.

On a broader perspective, Malaysian higher education shares some similarities with its Asian counterparts. In their analysis, Altbach and Umakoshi (2004) noted that Asian universities have undergone some dramatic transformations, and there were changes in the contexts of both historical traditions of Asian academic systems and the challenges of contemporary realities. These transformations took place as most Asian countries experienced colonialism, and the colonizer's academic ideas had significantly influenced their contemporary academic systems.

With regard to Malaysia and her former status as a British colony, Altbach and Umakoshi (2004) averred that "the British academic model was imposed on all the countries that were under British colonial rule, and it remains a powerful force in these countries. ...Because of the extent of British colonial rule in Asia, the British model is probably the most important foreign academic influence in the whole region."

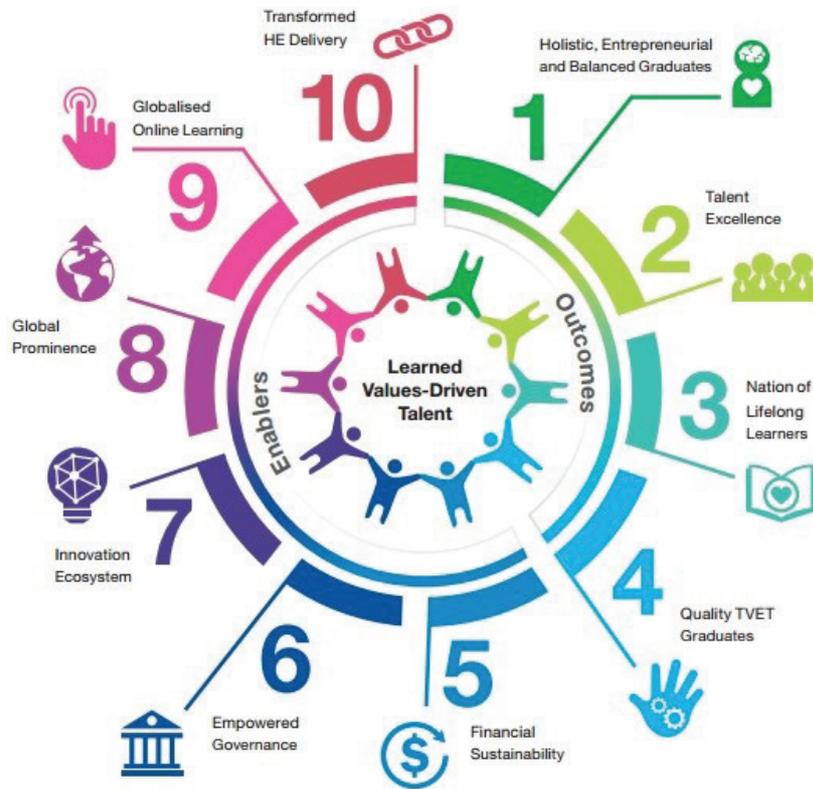


Figure 1: 10 Shifts in Malaysian Education Blueprint Plan 2015-2025 (Higher Education)

That was the case at the beginning of all levels of educational development. Nonetheless, as Asian academic systems have grown and matured, countries have not been inspired to develop new indigenous academic models. Rather, Asian countries have looked abroad for ways to expand and improve their universities (Altbach and Umakoshi, 2004). This is when changes began to take place in the Malaysian context. For the most part, the United States has provided ideas and forms for academic development, as the US academic system is the largest in the world – the first to cope with the challenge of enrolment expansion. It also has the largest and most advanced academic research system. Moreover, many Asian academic and political leaders studied in the US and absorbed American academic ideas during their student years. They further predicted that higher education will inevitably be more central as Asian economies become

more technology-based, more heavily dependent on informatics and more service-based. Many Asian countries (including Malaysia) have recognized the importance of higher education in the transformation of their countries to becoming post-industrial information-based societies. These countries are moving to ensure that the university system is adequately prepared to play an active part in building this new economy.

Apart from the issue on the centrality of education in nation building, Altbach and Umakoshi (2004) also concocted the term “massification of education”, of which they make the following observations

1. Led by the World Bank and other international agencies, many countries increasingly argue that higher education is mainly a “private” good, serving the needs of the individual, and less of a “public” or social good. Therefore, the thinking is that the “user” – students and perhaps their families deserve to pay a significant part of the cost of higher education. This has led to the imposition of tuition and other fees.
2. Another central reality of massification is increased reliance on private higher education institutions. Private higher education is the fastest-growing segment of post-secondary education worldwide.
3. Most Asian private universities serve the mass higher education market and tend to be relatively non-selective in selecting students and in offering courses.
4. The main challenge is to allow the private sector the necessary autonomy and freedom to establish and manage institutions and to compete in a differentiated educational marketplace, while at the same time ensuring that the national interest is served.
5. Another challenge relates to the growth of distance learning. The potential for expansion of distance higher education is fueled by a variety of trends – rapid expansion of ICT, which is less expensive, and need of fewer facilities and personnel. However, there are concerns about the academic quality of distance learning programmes.

The above synopsis of views about the development of higher education and universities has raised some important concerns that are relevant not only for higher educational institutions in Asia but also for the development of higher education in Malaysia.

ISSUES OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTIONS

There are a few definitions to the term of affirmative actions. National partnership for women and families (NPWF) (2016) defined affirmative actions as “taking positive steps to end discrimination, to prevent its recurrence, and to create new opportunities that were previously denied to qualified women and people of colour” while American for a fair change group defined it as “Affirmative action is an important tool to provide qualified individuals with equal access to educational and professional opportunities they would otherwise have been denied despite their strong qualifications.” Crosby, Iyer and Sincharoen (2006) in their paper on understanding affirmative action as “Affirmative action occurs whenever an organization devotes resources (including time and money) to making sure that people are not discriminated against on the basis of their gender or their ethnic group.” Chamber and Wedel (2005) stated that affirmative action is “the policy of favoring members of a disadvantaged group who currently suffer or historically have suffered from discrimination within a culture.” The key concept in the four examples of definition on affirmative action appears to be dealing with the issue of fighting discrimination on the basis of gender and ethnic backgrounds. Nonetheless, the work on defining what exactly is affirmative action may take a while as the nature of this concept is quite subjective and open to interpretation. Figure 2 epitomizes the sentiment of defining affirmative action.



Figure 2: Sentiment of definition on Affirmative Actions
 Source: Mount Holyoke College

This is an important consideration in this article. Affirmative action concept is named differently in different countries, for example employment equity in Canada, reservation in India and Nepal, and positive discrimination in the UK.

Affirmative action in the US tends to focus on issues such as education and employment, specifically granting special consideration to racial minorities such as Hispanics, Native Americans, and women who have been historically excluded groups in America. It also includes preferential treatment for veterans, disabled and the elderly.

In the Malaysian context, the Malays viewed the independence of the country as restoring their proper place in their own country's socio-economic order. The New Economic Policy (NEP) serves as a form of affirmative action and it was first implemented in 1971. NEP provides affirmative action to the majority (bumiputra) because in general, the Malays, who formed part of the bumiputra group, have lower income than the Chinese who have traditionally been involved in businesses and industries. Nonetheless, some of the non-Malays were opposed to the government efforts to advance Malay political primacy and economic welfare.

The multi ethnicity of Malaysia can be better understood by looking at the 2016 current population estimates 2014 - 2016. Bumiputera makes up the majority with 68.6% of the population. 23.4% of the population are Malaysians of Chinese descent, while Malaysians of Indian descent comprise about 7% of the population. 1% is of others. This is shown in Figure 3. Historically, during more than 100 years of British colonization, the Malays were discriminated against employment even though they are the majority due to the British preferred to bring in migrant workers from China and India. The after effect of this can be exemplified in table below.

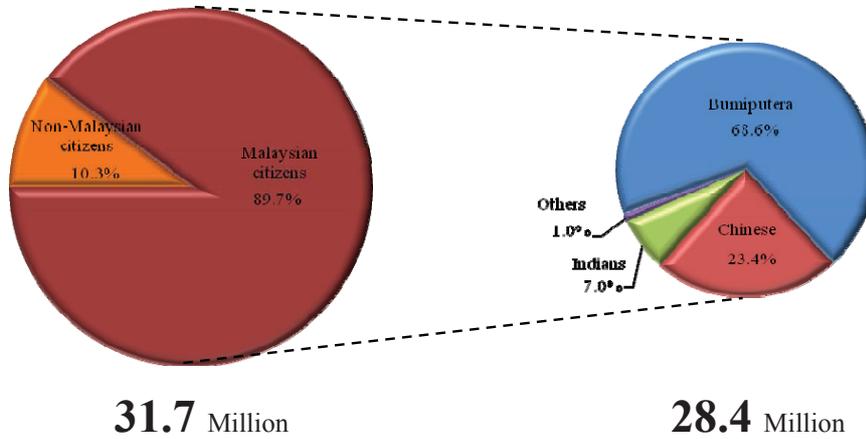


Figure 3: Population Distribution by Ethnic Group in Malaysia 2014-2016
 Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia (2015)

Table 2 shows the income inequality of the different ethnic groups in Malaysia between the years 1970 to 2000 (Yusof Saari, Dietzenbacher, and Los, 2015). The increase in per capita income for the Malay is the lowest as compared to other ethnic groups like Chinese and Indian (Malay 3136; Chinese 5598 and Indian 5000).

Table 2: Sources of Income Growth and Inequality across Ethnic Groups in Malaysia, 1970–2000

		Malays	Chinese	Indians	Others
A. Inequality of household income per capita (thousand MR)					
Per capita income 1970	(1)	2.455	4.394	3.455	1.110
Per capita income 1990	(2)	4.609	8.609	5.938	1.908
Per capita income 2000	(3)	5.591	9.992	8.433	2.948
<i>Average annual growth 1970-1990 (%)</i>					
Income	(4)	5.96	5.33	4.41	7.82
Population	(5)	2.77	1.86	1.58	18.88
<i>Average annual growth 1990-2000 (%)</i>					
Income	(6)	5.06	2.94	5.52	6.02
Population	(7)	2.88	1.42	1.88	1.50
<i>Average annual growth 1970-2000 (%)</i>					
Income	(8)	5.66	4.53	4.78	7.22
Population	(9)	2.81	1.71	1.68	12.78
B. Inequality of labor income per worker					
Labor income per worker 1970	(10)	5.939	10.027	8.379	37.158
Labor income per worker 1990	(11)	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Labor income per worker 2000	(12)	8.858	12.963	11.095	5.944
Average annual growth in labor income (1970-2000)	(13)	5.30	4.10	4.18	5.54
Average annual growth in employment (1970-2000)	(14)	3.93	3.25	3.24	12.22
C. Gini coefficient for household income					
Inequality 1970	(15)	0.466	0.455	0.463	0.667
Inequality 1990	(16)	0.428	0.423	0.394	0.404
Inequality 2000	(17)	0.433	0.434	0.413	0.393

Sources: Economic Planning Unit (various years), Pyatt and Round (1984) and Saari et al. (2014)

Notes: n.a. = not available

Obviously, NEP appeared to be the solution to this unsettling feeling among the Malays. The government decided to implement NEP with two objectives namely “poverty eradication regardless of race” and

“restructuring society to eliminate the identification of race with economic function” (Jomo, 2004). To exemplify this, Chua (2004: p. 270) stated that bumiputras, who represented about 62 per cent of the population in 1970 only owned 1.5 per cent of the country’s capital assets. This has created a certain uneasy feeling among the Malays. Chua (2004: pp. 271 - 272) also notes that even though in many respects, the results of the NEP have been impressive, however the NEP has not lifted the great majority of Malays (particularly in the rural areas) out of poverty. Undeniably, to some extent, this affirmative action has helped to create a substantial middle class. By creating small but visible economic elite, and by bringing Malays participation into important economic sectors, the NEP has helped to promote a sense among the bumiputras that a market economy can benefit indigenous Malays.

However, she cautions that at the same time, the accomplishments of the NEP should not be overstated, as it has failed to achieve some of its most ambitious objectives. Worse yet, there is always the danger that government’s affirmative action policies will exacerbate rather than ameliorate ethnic conflict by entrenching ethnic divisions. For all these reasons, it would be irresponsible to champion affirmative action as the one-size-fits-all solution.

Another form of affirmative action in Malaysia is in institutions of higher education which is discussed under the Higher education section. The 20 principles of pros and cons of affirmative action are presented in Table 3 (GreenGarrageBlog, 2015)

This table presents a summary of contentions related to affirmative action. It provides some guidelines on how to adopt and adapt affirmative action and in which context. Though this might not solve the contention, however the guidelines may help to lessen the contention.

Table 3: 20 Principles of Pros and Cons of Affirmative Actions

Pros	Cons
1. It ensures diversity is in place.	1. It can serve as a reverse discrimination.
2. It helps disadvantaged individuals with advancing.	2. It destroys the idea of a meritocracy.
3. It offers a boost to disadvantaged students.	3. It can still reinforce stereotypes and racism.
4. It promotes equality for all races.	4. It can generate unfavorable results for businesses and schools.
5. It breaks stereotypes regarding color.	5. It can lower the accountability standards that are needed to push employees and students to perform better.
6. It promotes more work and study	6. It has a flaw with regards to diversity
7. It is needed to compensate minorities for centuries of slavery or oppression.	7. It would help lead a truly color-blind society.
8. It lets minority students get into advanced education.	8. It demeans true minority achievement
9. It assures equality in the workplace.	9. It can be condescending to minorities.
10. It offers protection from hatred.	10. It is difficult to remove, even after discrimination issues have been eliminated.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN UITM

Apart from the economical context, affirmative action also takes place in educational setting. In the Malaysian context, the implementation of affirmative action takes place in the policy of quotas which stated that the main reason for this “affirmative policies in higher education [is] to correct the past distortions of ethnic imbalances. The affirmative action in UiTM is reflected in the university’s vision, mission and objectives as stated below (Source: <http://www.uitm.edu.my/index.php/en/about-uitm/university-profile/motto-vision-philosophy-objectives>):

Vision of UiTM

To establish UiTM as a premier university of outstanding scholarship and academic excellence capable of providing leadership to Bumiputeras's dynamic involvement in all professional fields of world-class standards in order to produce globally competitive graduates of sound ethical standing.

Mission of UiTM

To enhance the knowledge and expertise of Bumiputeras in all fields of study through professional programmes, research work and community service based on moral values and professional ethics

Objectives of UiTM

1. To provide maximum opportunities for bumiputeras to pursue professionally-recognised programmes of study in science, technology, industry, business, arts and humanities.
2. To provide quality and innovative programmes of study relevant to current market needs and customer demands, and in line with policies of national development.
3. To establish a human resource development programme as a tool for the assimilation of a value system within the university community.
4. To ensure that UiTM graduates are adequately prepared to join the local as well as the global workforce.
5. To establish UiTM as a centre of excellence that is accountable for the effective and efficient management of its human resources, finances and assets in order to achieve its educational objectives, while playing its role as a catalyst in community development.

The policy envisaged that the enrolment in each subject should correspond to the communal composition of the population as a whole." This policy works on the ground of providing equal access to education for those groups that have been historically excluded or underrepresented, such as

women and minorities. This is where Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) comes in to remedy the imbalances of bumiputra economic equity through educating more of them. Universiti Teknologi MARA, also commonly known as UiTM is the largest tertiary educational institution in Malaysia. It has campuses in all states in Malaysia as shown in Figure 4.

List of Campuses		
<p>Selangor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●UiTM Shah Alam ●UiTM Puncak Alam Campus ●UiTM Puncak Perdana Campus ●UiTM Jalan Othman Campus ●UiTM Selayang Campus ●UiTM Sungai Buloh Campus ●UiTM Section 17 Campus 	<p>Johor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●UiTM Johor Branch ●UiTM Johor Branch Pasir Gudang Campus ●UiTM Johor Branch Larkin Campus 	<p>Terengganu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●UiTM Terengganu ●UiTM Terengganu Kuala Terengganu Campus ●UiTM Terengganu Bukit Besi Campus
<p>Pulau Pinang</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●UiTM Pulau Pinang ●UiTM Pulau Pinang Bertam Campus ●UiTM Pulau Pinang Balik Pulau Campus 	<p>Melaka</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●UiTM Melaka ●UiTM Melaka Bandaraya Melaka Campus ●UiTM Melaka Jasin Campus 	<p>Negeri Sembilan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●UiTM Negeri Sembilan Branch ●UiTM Negeri Sembilan Branch Seremban Campus
<p>Pahang</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●UiTM Pahang ●UiTM Pahang Kuantan Campus ●UiTM Pahang Raub Campus 	<p>Perak</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●UiTM Perak ●UiTM Perak Tapah Campus ●UiTM Perak Teluk Intan Campus 	<p>Sarawak</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●UiTM Sarawak ●UiTM Sarawak Samarahan 2 Campus ●UiTM Sarawak Mukah Campus
<p>Kelantan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●UiTM Kelantan Branch ●UiTM Kelantan Branch Kota Bharu Campus 	<p>Sabah</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●UiTM Sabah Branch ●UiTM Sabah Branch Tawau Campus 	<p>Perlis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●UiTM Perlis <p>Kedah</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●UiTM Kedah Branch

Figure 4: UiTM Campuses across Malaysia

Though the number of campuses is many, UiTM has started off its humble beginning as a training centre. It was the brainchild of the British colonial administrators in 1951. This institute materialized in 1956 when

Dewan Latihan RIDA or Rural and Industrial Development Authority (RIDA) Training Centre was established.

RIDA was structured as an organization that could systematically help and train the rural indigenous people to improve their economic status. The centre underwent its first name change and became known as Maktab MARA (MARA College of Business Studies) in 1965. This is in relation to the formation of Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA). In MARA official website, it states that “*Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA), or the Council of Trust for the People, an agency under the purview of the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development, was established on 1 March 1966 as a statutory body by an Act of Parliament as a result of the first Bumiputera Economic Congress resolution in 1965.*”

Thus, Maktab MARA became the most important unit of the newly-created MARA Training Division. It provided a venue for the much-needed training of Bumiputra. This state of realization happened upon the analysis of a Manpower survey. In 1966, the Malaysian government sponsored a Manpower Survey with the help from the United Nations as a preparatory step in assessing the country’s manpower needs to formulate the First Malaysia Plan (1966 – 1970). The survey showed that there was a serious shortage of manpower at the professional level, a tendency especially prevalent among bumiputras, who were mostly enrolled in the arts and humanities. This pointed to the need to increase the insufficient opportunities for professional education in Malaysia (Fadzilah, 2000: p. 11).

The third name change took place when MARA College was again upgraded in October 1967 and became known as Institut Teknologi MARA (MARA Institute of Technology). The initial raison d’être for the existence of ITM has been succinctly stated by Arshad Ayub in ITM (1969: p. xiv)

“Education is the key to improved living conditions, improved prospects, a better and fuller life.... Human resource is of all resources entrusted to man, the most productive, the most versatile and the most resourceful. But the human resource has to be trained and developed to be productive, to be versatile. Without the necessary training, it cannot be put to the most efficient use.”

Finally, it shifted to its main campus in Shah Alam, and then underwent its fourth name change, when it was upgraded to university status. The fourth name change took place in 1999 with the name of Universiti Teknologi MARA, with its main campus situated in Shah Alam, Selangor. The synopsis of these name changes is shown in Figure 5.

DEVELOPMENT OF UiTM



History of UiTM

1956 – 1965
Dewan Latehan RIDA



1965 – 1967
Maktab MARA



1967 – 1999
Institut Teknologi MARA



26 August 1999
Universiti Teknologi MARA

Figure 5: Development of UiTM

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, the two inter-related areas of inquiry described in this article i.e. affirmative action and higher education in Malaysia, will continue to be discussed and debated. These two areas are indeed important areas of research and discussion, going back over the last six decades, as attested to by the literature. They are also issues that evoke varying sentiments from a wide spectrum of readers. Some people have opposed affirmative action, with the argument that affirmative action could stigmatize people and hurt a person's work environment. Others are in favour for it as it is a reverse discrimination process which could remedy the economic and education imbalance. The more pertinent issue presented is to do more with the question of permanence of affirmative action. The possibility of discontinuation of affirmative action in economic and education field may take place as diversity in type of economy, education and work force increases. This is exemplified when, a number of writers have questioned the "newness" of the NEP, given that it was introduced more than four decades ago, that perhaps it has outlived its usefulness and that there is a need for new and relevant policies to meet contemporary needs of Malaysian society (Aihara, 2009; Lee, 2015).

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