



UKM Teaching and Learning Congress 2011

## Industrial training: a survey on its effectiveness among undergraduates from the Faculty of the Islamic Studies

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### Abstract

Industrial Training or (IT) is one of the compulsory courses for students at the Faculty of Islamic Studies. The objective of the course is to enhance the quality of graduates by exposing them early to the reality of the working world. After a number of years of its implementation the course needs to be reviewed in order to make room for further improvements as it has proven itself as having a great impact. The research was carried out with the main objective of determining the effectiveness of IT programme among students of the Faculty of Islamic Studies (FIS) of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) as well as to understand the principle underlying the concept of IT. For this purpose 110 questionnaires were distributed to third year students of various departments in FIS. The selected group of students comprised of those who have gone through their IT at the end of their fourth semester of studies. The research is further supported by a series of interviews with a number of stake holders and a comprehensive reference work at the library to gather supporting materials on the concept and the philosophical basis of IT. Data collected from the questionnaire survey was analyzed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, (SPSS). The research findings show that IT has been very positive in terms of re-shaping the attitude of students from FIS. Suggestions made by students involved in the survey were also taken into account to further improve the implementation of IT. The suggestions will definitely help in minimizing future problems related to IT.

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*Keywords:* Islamic; industry; islamic education; missionary; student affair; training and teaching

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### 1. Introduction

IT is one of the compulsory courses at the Faculty of Islamic Studies (FIS) in UKM that is offered to all students. The course is expected to produce quality graduates by exposing them to a work experience while still studying at the university. Industrial attachment is an exercise that was implemented by the university to ensure that students are exposed to a brief work experience before they graduate and enter the competitive job market. By familiarizing

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themselves with the industry students will have a better understanding of the work situation apart from making early contact and establishing valuable network with their future employers (*Student Handbook Faculty of Islamic Studies*, 2005).

Through IT students are also exposed to the details of an organizational set-up and its internal management, a valuable asset that will assist them in finding better placement with their future employers. The exercise shows that the relationship between “theory and practice” has the potential to re-shape students in terms of their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. On this initiative the course was introduced to the faculty (*Student Handbook Faculty of Islamic Studies*, 2008). Specifically the objectives of the course are to produce graduates who are: Capable of applying their basic and specific knowledge they acquired at the university to the real work situation; Capable of discharging their work and responsibilities efficiently; Capable of working in a group and of assuming leadership; Capable of doing administrative work and management with a keen interest to learn something new continuously; Capable of effective communication and Endowed with good professional ethics and a sense of responsibility.

## 2. Literature Review

It is undeniable fact that industrial training is very important in accessing the ability of the student particularly with respect to the variations in training practices and attitudes across national cultures. (Abderrahman Hassi, Giovanna Storti, 2011) The value of diversity training to promoting inclusivity, equality and fairness in organisations is underlined as is the importance of the human resource development community adopting a more proactive role in addressing the issue of diversity through research and course curricula. (David McGuire, Mammed Bagher, 2010).

In order to ensure that the above objectives are realized it is therefore necessary for the course to be reviewed in terms of its implementation and its effectiveness. However, no studies have yet been done to this effect at the faculty, whether in terms of its effectiveness and field monitoring, apart from perceptions and feedback from the employers. Hence a closer look need to be done not only in the areas suggested, but also in terms of students preparedness prior to their going to the field. It seems that initial studies done before this seems to deal with a general evaluation of students on pre-placement briefings conducted by the faculty. These briefings basically provide the students with information on how to apply for the placement and the process they have to go through during the attachment period (Azizi Bin Yahya, Saari Yazit, 2010). The present study goes beyond that; it aims at looking more closely at the concept itself, its implementation and its effectiveness in re-moulding student participants (Juliana Abd Rahman and Yahya Buntat, 2006).

## 3. Methodology

Specifically the objectives of the research are as follows:

- 1) To understand the basic concept underlying IT as practiced at the Faculty of Islamic Studies;
- 2) To evaluate the implementation and activities related to IT;
- 3) To examine the effectiveness of IT.

Data collection for the research comprised the use of a questionnaire and a series of interviews with a number of informants. The quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 18.

The questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 110 students that were selected from all the departments in the faculty covering both male and female, the origin of the students and IT agencies they have chosen. The second part of the questionnaire deals with the perception of students regarding the implementation and effectiveness of IT programme.

The structured questionnaire is self-administered in the sense that the respondents are required to answer the questions on their own. The answer for each question is to be given in the form of Likert scale with the range of 1 to 5 (most agreeable to most disagreeable).

Table 1 below shows the demography of the respondents according to the respective academic departments in the faculty.

Table 1. Distribution of Repondents by Academic Department

Department	Number
Syariah	30
Usuluddin	20
Arabic Studies	20
Dakwah	30
Quran and Sunnah	20
Total	110

Based on the table above, the majority of the repondents come from the Department of Syariah (n=30). This number tallies with the fact that student ratio is much higher in the that particular department compared to others. However, the rest of the departments are well distributed in the sample. Table 2 shows the number of respondents according to their state of origin.

Table 2. Origin of Respondents

State	Number
Kelantan	31
Terengganu	11
Pahang	16
Perak	7
Kedah	7
Negeri Sembilan	4
Kuala Lumpur	6
Selangor	14
Johor	7
Sarawak	2
Sabah	3
Perlis	2
Total	110

The majority of respondents come from the east coast states, particularly Kelantan, Pahang and Terengganu (n=31, n=16, n=11 respectively). This number corresponds to the fact that comparatively a large number of students from the east coast states are enrolled in the faculty.

Table 3 below shows the distrobution of respondents according to the agency that they have chosen to be attached to in IT programme.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents According to IT Agency

Type of Agency	Number
Religious bodies	44
Private sector	20
Schools	30
Court offices	16
Total	110

The largest number of respondents have chosen to be attached to agencies that deal with religious administration and affairs. This choice is not surprising as religious bodies, both at state and national levels, are the most relevant to students of the faculty in terms of industrial and practical training. They also have the largest number of placements in their respective departments.

#### 4. Findings

##### 4.1 The Three-Month Implementation of IT

Respondents were asked on the three-month requirement for IT placement with various agencies. Table 4 summarises the score for general perceptions of respondents regarding this. The finding shows that 38.2% of the respondents “agree” that the attachment a period of 3 months is an exposure sufficient enough for graduating students. The score of 14.5% for the “most agreeable” category further supports the case that a three-month period is sufficient for IT attachment.

Nevertheless, there are a number of respondents which gave a negative feedback on the three-month implementation of IT. This is shown in the category with “most unagreeable” answer with a score of 10.9% (see Table 4 below).

Table 4. Perceptions on the Three-Month IT Requirements

The three-month requirement is sufficient	Frequency	Percentage
Most agreeable	16	14.5
Agreeable	42	38.2
Not sure	1	0.9
Not agreeable	39	35.5
Most unagreeable	12	10.9
Total	110	100

##### 4.2 Suitability of Time Frame for IT Attachment

Respondents were also asked to give their evaluation on the suitability of time frame allocated for IT placement, which takes place during the semester break. Table 5 shows the average score for students’ response to implementation of IT attachment during the semester break. The majority of the respondents (46.4%) agreed that the time frame chosen was most suitable. This is further supported by those in the “most agreeable” category with a percentage of 21.7%.

However, there are those who did not agree with IT attachment being done during the semester break. They represented 20% of the sample in the category of “not agreeable.” Perhaps they believe that the semester break should be used solely for resting and not for other puposes, including IT attachment exercise.

Table 5. Suitability of Semester Break for IT Exercise

The semester break is most suitable for IT placement	Frequency	Percentage
Most agreeable	24	21.7
Agreeable	51	46.4
Not sure	7	6.4
Not agreeable	6	20.0
Most unagreeable	12	5.5
Total	110	100

#### 4.3 The Role of IT Secretariat

Table 6 below shows the response with regard to the role of IT secretariat. The secretariat is responsible for finding suitable agencies for students' placement. A majority of the respondents (30%) agreed that the secretariat was a great help in the placement of students. This is further supported by those in the "most agreeable" category. They represented 6.4% of the respondents, making a total of 36.4%.

However, there were those who were not sure of the role of the secretariat (25.5%). Those who did not agree at all with the involvement of the secretariat totalled up to 25.5%, while those in the category of "most disagreeable" were 12.6%. This score is relatively high; but it may also reflect the readiness on the part of students to select the agency on their own rather than letting the secretariat do the job for them.

Table 6. The Role of IT Secretariat

IT Secretariat plays a positive role in choosing the agency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Most agreeable	7	6.4
Agreeable	33	30.0
Not sure	28	25.5
Not agreeable	28	25.5
Most unagreeable	14	12.6
Total	110	100

#### 4.4 Suitability of Agency Chosen by IT Secretariat

Respondents were asked to give their evaluation on whether the agency chosen by IT secretariat was compatible with their respective field of academic specialization. Majority of the respondents "agree" (45.4%), while those in the "most agreeable" category were 38.2%. This high score indicates that there is a good match between the agency chosen and academic specialization of the respondents. Hence students were exposed to work situation that is relevant to their discipline of studies at the university.

Table 7. Suitability of Agency Chosen by IT Secretariat

IT Secretariat plays a positive role in choosing the agency	Frequency	Percentage
Most agreeable	42	38.2
Agreeable	50	45.4
Not sure	9	8.2
Not agreeable	6	5.5
Most unagreeable	3	2.7
Total	110	100

#### 4.5 Effectiveness of IT Placement

Respondents were asked about their perceptions on the effectiveness of the placement exercise; specifically whether it has helped to expose them effectively to the reality of actual working situation. Of the number of respondents asked, 52.7% are in the "most agreeable" category that IT has definitely helped in exposing students to real-life situation of the working world. Those in the "agreeable" category was 37.4%, making a combined total of

90.1% for those who have positive view on its effectiveness. This extremely high score indicates that during their attachment at various agencies students were effectively exposed to a wide range of experiences that familiarise them with real-life work situation. IT placements are of great help to re-orientate students in readiness for their entry into the job market.

Table 8. Effectiveness of IT Placement

IT placement help in preparing students for the real world	Frequency	Percentage
Most agreeable	58	52.7
Agreeable	41	37.4
Not sure	5	4.5
Not agreeable	5	4.5
Most unagreeable	1	0.9
Total	110	100

*4.6 IT Placement and the Level of Professionalism*

The experience of IT placement is supposed to enhance the level of professionalism in Islamic administration and management. The average score of “agreeable” is 53.6% while those who were “most agreeable” is 31.8%, making a combined total of 85.4%. This high percentage indicates that IT placement exercises do enhance the level of professionalism among graduating students that will eventually enter the job market.

Table 9. IT Placement and the Level of Professionalism

IT placement helps to enhance the level of professionalism	Frequency	Percentage
Most agreeable	35	31.8
Agreeable	59	53.6
Not sure	10	9.2
Not agreeable	5	4.5
Most unagreeable	1	0.9
Total	110	100

*4.7 Usefulness of Student Information System for Industrial Training (SISIT)*

The system was developed by IT secretariat to enable students gain access to information regarding their placement with the agency and other information regarding IT in general. The majority of respondents, i.e. 50% “agreed” that the system helped students very much in this respect, while another 38.3 % “most agreed” with the availability of the system. The combined high score is indicative of students’ satisfaction with this interactive system that makes full use of modern IT facilities. The system also makes it easier for supervisors to handle assessment and submission of student grades.

Table 10. Evaluation of SISIT

SMPLAI helps to simplify students in dealing with IT	Frequency	Percentage
Most agreeable	42	38.3
Agreeable	55	50.0
Not sure	5	4.5

Not agreeable	5	4.5
Most unagreeable	3	2.7
Total	110	100

#### 4.8 Effectiveness of IT Monitoring Procedure

Students involved in IT placements were monitored by UKM supervisors on regular basis. They were asked about their satisfaction on the quality of the supervision. On the whole the respondents “agreed” that they were satisfied with the supervision (48.2%) while another 40% “most agreeable” with it. The combined score indicates that the supervisors have discharged their responsibilities very well, despite time limitation for them to be in the field during the placement period.

Table 11. Effectiveness of IT Monitoring Procedure

Monitoring done by IT supervisors is satisfactory	Frequency	Percentage
Most agreeable	44	40.0
Agreeable	53	48.2
Not sure	6	5.5
Not agreeable	4	3.6
Most unagreeable	3	2.7
Total	110	100

Respondents have also given additional comments on IT programme. There should be more facilities made available for IT placements, including some form of basic day-to-day financial support or emolument for students doing the attachment, either paid by the employee or the university. Apart from that some respondents believe that the length of exposure should be increased to a longer period as the present three-month time frame is rather too short for them to acquire a much broader experience in the work situation (Ahmad Redzuwan Mohd Yunus, 2010). The frequency of supervision also needs to be increased from one single field visit to multiple visits so that supervisors can appreciate better the situation at the site and other problems related to student-employer relationship (Mohd Yazid Othman, 2010).

## 5. Conclusion

On the whole the research conducted has revealed the level of understanding on IT at the Faculty of Islamic Studies. The programme has the objective of producing students that are capable of applying their knowledge, acquired in various academic disciplines, to real-life work situation after they have left the university. By having an early exposure to the work situation students would be better equipped to face the challenge of a competitive job market as soon as they have graduated. The implementation of IT that covers several aspects of personality development and enhancement seems to be very satisfactory. The three-month period of attachment is sufficient and long enough to enable students gain early exposure to work situation. The placement period that takes place during the semester break does not put a heavy burden on the part of the students. Respondents were quite happy with the choice of agency made by IT secretariat as it is very relevant to their field of studies. The exposure has also enhanced the level of professionalism of the graduate as they enter the job market. The availability of Student Information System for Industrial Training also contribute a lot to the management of IT online while the level of supervision by UKM staff was satisfactory. Nevertheless, there are other areas that need to be re-examined more closely, such as the increase in the time period of IT placement and the frequency of field supervision. These are added values that can help to make IT programme more meaningful both to students and potential employers, but these are very much dependent on the availability of financial resources and other factors. So far IT programme has

been a success. However, if this added values can be incorporated in future IT exercise, graduating students would stand to reap more benefit in terms of personality development and career enhancement.

### Acknowledgment

We would like to thank Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for providing the research grant UKM-PTS 074-2010.

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