

*Higher Education and the Malaysian Public Employment*

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Abstract

Higher Education expanded rapidly in Malaysia. Shouldering the country's aspiration to achieve the goal of becoming a developed nation by 2020, higher education systems and institutions are under pressure to produce skilled and quality graduates to meet the nation's workforce and employers' needs. The Malaysian government is the major employer of the country. Although graduate manpower, which joins the Management and Professional Group, forms just over a fifth of the public employment, its importance is much larger than its proportion suggests. "This is the Group that is responsible for the administration and development of the country" (Abdullah Sanusi et al., 2003: 79). Through analyzing current situation and using a clustered-stratified random sample of 1,200 final year students of four public universities, this paper aims to examine the ability of the Malaysian public universities to produce sufficient graduates in terms of quantity, quality and representativeness to meet the government's graduate manpower need, and to identify factors affecting graduates' choice of public employment. Results show that the public universities are able to produce sufficient graduate manpower for public employment in terms of capacity but not representativeness. The pool of respondents who prefer public employment does not have enough high-CGPA Chinese for merit-based representative recruitment. Further analyses point to the declining quality of education including in teaching English, and the poorer academic performance of males compared to females. Factors which affecting graduates' choice of public employment including job security, pay, promotion prospects, working hours, job stress, challenging job, image and autonomy.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Higher education expanded rapidly in Malaysia. Shouldering the country's aspiration to achieve the status of developed nation by 2020, higher education institutions (HEIs) are under pressure to produce skilled and quality graduates to meet the nation's workforce's needs.

Over the years, enrollment and output of graduates in the Malaysian HEIs are increasing. While data show that the output of graduates is increasing annually, a large proportion of them remain unemployed. Issues concerning graduate employability have been raised in the context of continuing supply of quality graduate manpower against a changing economic structure of the country.

In its effort to address the skills mismatches that exist in the labor market and to create innovative and sustainable economies, the government has introduced entrepreneurship into conventional subject courses by revising the higher education curriculum to include small business management, analytical skills, team work and proficiency in English (Shafiq 2011). Despite the efforts, scarcity of skilled, competent employees continue to be one of the biggest policy concerns in Malaysia.

The Malaysian government is the major employer of the country. A number of researches on employability and meeting employers' needs has been conducted, however, the focus has been for the private sector (Mohamad Sattar and Puvanasvaran 2009; Latisha 2010; Mohd Noor and Ishak 2011; Nik Hairi et al. 2012). There is few, if any, research concerning meeting the government's graduate manpower needs. This paper aims to examine the ability of public universities to produce sufficient graduates to meet the government's manpower needs. Factors affecting graduates' choice of public employment would also be examined.

### **1.0 HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE MALAYSIAN CIVIL SERVICE**

Central to the performance of the civil service is its ability to secure needed manpower. Success in securing needed manpower for the civil service depends directly on personnel recruitment practices. However, it also depends, and no less importantly, the ability of the HEIs to produce quality graduates to meet the nation's workforce's needs.

This part examines the Malaysian HEIs and civil service, and identifies the specific questions that would be examined in the paper.

#### **1.1 The Malaysian Higher Education: Expansion and Manpower Supply**

The Malaysian government created the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE)<sup>1</sup> in 2004 to take charge of its higher education. The mission of MoHE is to create a higher education environment that will foster the development of academic and institutional excellence. This mission is in line with the vision of MoHE to establish Malaysia as a centre of excellence for higher education by the year 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> MoHE merged with the Ministry of Education in 2013.

In line with the requirements of economic growth, the government has linked the development of higher education to the country's workforce's needs. HEIs expanded rapidly in Malaysia. Enrollments at all levels of study in HEIs increased from 674,499 in 2005 to 1,134,134 in 2010, an increase of 68.15%. Every year, enormous number of graduates is entering the local employment market. The output of graduates with bachelor degrees has increased from 72,065 to 93,007 in 2005 – 2010, an increase of 29.10% (MoHE 2008 and 2011), and this trend shows no sign of slowing down.

While the above statistics show that the supply of graduate manpower is increasing, lack of employability skills is one of the problems which employers are facing with graduates or their future employees, however. The unemployment rates among graduates with bachelor degrees range from 24.7% to 36.4% in 2006 – 2009 (UNESCO 2012, p. 26). Nik Hairi et al. (2012) warn that graduate unemployment will continue to increase unless the HEIs and graduates are prepared to sharpen the soft skills.

## 1.2 The Malaysian Civil Service: Size and Performance

The introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) after the racial violence on May 13, 1969 marked a sharp increase in the re-structuring role of the Malaysian government. The NEP was “public sector-driven” and many “new instruments of government were created” with “generous allocation of resources to carry out their tasks”. The intake of civil servants as well as training programmes for them were vastly expanded to “increase the capability of the civil service and to increase the number of qualified or trained *bumiputra* (i.e., native) in the government service” (Abdullah Sanusi, Norma and Abdul Kuddus 2003, p. 226). The number of civil servants increased rapidly during the 1970s, at an annual rate of 5% to 6%. When Mahathir Mohamad became Prime Minister in 1981, he was concerned with the size of the civil service and took steps to curb its growth. From 1982 until Mahathir Mohamad relinquished office in 2003, the number of civil servants increased at an average annual rate of only about 1% (Lim 2006, p. 14; Public Service Department 2008). However, civil servants still account for over 10% of the country's labor force and over 4% of the country's population, as indicated in Table 1.

Is public employment in Malaysia high by international standards? Determining the right size of the civil service is a complex matter and precise comparisons among countries are difficult due to different definitions adopted. However, Lucas and Verry, the chief technical advisers in manpower planning to the Economic Planning Unit of the federal government during the preparation of the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991 - 1995), present revealing international comparisons. By comparing (a) the total government employment relative to total population; (b) the total Malaysian public employment relative to total non-agricultural employment; (c) the total public sector (including public enterprise) employment relative to non-agricultural employment, Lucas and Verry (1999, p. 229) concludes: “By whichever measure, it seems that Malaysia indeed had a fairly large public sector by Asian standards as of 1987.”

Two more recent reports lend support to Lucas and Verry's conclusion. In 2003, Malaysia ranked first among six Asian countries in total public employment relative to total population. In 2009, Malaysia's civil servants-to-population ratio was the highest in Asia Pacific (*Sin Chew Daily* 2006; *Rightways* 2011). These comparisons

suffice to show the large size and role of the civil service and to underline the importance of its performance.

**Table 1: Malaysian Population, Labor Force (Employed Persons) and Civil Servants, 2000 – 2010**

Year	Population <sup>a</sup>	Labor Force <sup>b</sup>	Civil Servants <sup>c</sup>	C. Servants as % of Population	Civil Servants as % of Labor Force
2000	23 494 900	9 269 200	979 464	4.2	10.6
2001	24 123 400	9 357 000	994 548	4.1	10.6
2002	24 727 100	9 542 600	1 026 143	4.2	10.8
2003	25 320 000	9 869 700	1 080 886	4.3	11.0
2004	25 905 100	9 979 500	1 098 638	4.2	11.0
2005	26 476 900	10 045 400	1 118 392	4.2	10.6
2006	26 831 500	10 275 400	1 152 467	4.3	11.2
2007	27 186 000	10 538 100	1 244 372	4.6	11.8
2008	27 540 500	10 659 600	-	-	-
2009	27 895 300	10 897 300	1 222 947 <sup>d</sup>	4.4	11.2
2010	28 334 100	11 899 500	1 290 000 <sup>d*</sup>	4.6	10.8

Sources: <sup>a</sup> Department of Statistics (2010)  
<sup>b</sup> Department of Statistics (2011b)  
<sup>c</sup> Public Service Department (2008)  
<sup>d</sup> *Sin Chew Daily* (2010a and 2010b)  
 \*The number of civil servants until 21 June 2010

Evaluating civil service performance also faces difficult problems of measurement and standards to be used. However, Lim (2009, p. 3) argues that it is both appropriate and feasible to evaluate civil service performance by looking at the satisfaction of stakeholders with the civil service because “meeting the expectations of stakeholders is the *raison d’être* of the public service.” The stakeholders here referred to the country’s citizens.

The public often regards corruption and unsatisfactory service delivery as significant performance deficits of the civil service. Government corruption has long been seen as worrisome in Malaysia. According to both rank and score in Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index, little improvement has been made in political and bureaucratic corruption for the country since 1995 (Lim 2009, p. 12; *Sin Chew Daily* 2009).

Public dissatisfaction with the delivery of public services is indicated by the volume of complaints received by the Public Complaints Bureau. Public complaints shot up to 14,700 cases in 2010 compared to 2,707 cases in 2005, suggesting increasing public dissatisfaction (Prime Minister’s Department 2013).

The ability of the police in ensuring a safe living environment has also been widely questioned. High crime rates are plaguing the daily lives of the public. Even the Malaysian Home Minister admitted that Malaysians have every reason to be worried over the rising crime rate and the people had a basis for such fear “because cases of shooting and killing are occurring almost every week.” (Lavendran 2013; *The Star Online* 2013c)

The above discussion indicates that the civil service has failed to meet the expectations of its stakeholders.

### 1.3 The Malaysian Public Employment: Attractiveness and Supply

Dissatisfaction with the performance of the Malaysian civil service has called into question the ability of the civil service to attract needed graduates manpower. Although graduate manpower forms only 21.4% of the public employment, its importance is much larger than its proportion suggests. University graduates join the Management and Professional Group in the civil service and “this is the Group that is responsible for the administration and development of the country.” (Abdullah Sanusi, Norma and Abdul Kudus 2003, pp. 79-80)

In this paper, the ability of the civil service to secure graduate manpower is assessed by examining the adequacy of the pool of respondents who prefer public employment (the pool of likely applicants for public employment, hereafter referred to as the pool).

#### 1.3.1 The pool of likely applicants: quantity

In order to examine the attractiveness of the Malaysian public employment, Woo (2011) uses a clustered-stratified random sample of 1,200 final year students of four public universities to examine the ability of the civil service to attract graduate manpower for ensuring capacity and representativeness.<sup>2</sup> Respectively, there are 49.8% and 50.2% respondents of the sample who prefer public employment and non-public employment. In other words, the pool consists of 597 respondents of the 1,200 respondents. The question is whether the 49.8% of respondents who prefer public employment is enough to meet the needs of the public sector. To answer it, we need to estimate the percentage that the public sector must attract in order to fill its graduate manpower needs. This is done in two steps below.

Table 2 shows the total labor force and civil servants with tertiary qualifications only. From the table, it can be said that the civil service needs to attract no more than 13% of graduates in the labor force.

**Table 2: Civil Servants in Labor Force with Tertiary Qualification**

Year	Labor Force (Employed Persons)	Civil Servants	Civil Servants as % of Labor Force
2000 <sup>a</sup>	1 288 419	137 817	10.7
2001 <sup>a</sup>	1 513 491	139 497	9.2
2002 <sup>a</sup>	1 584 072	159 265	10.1
2003 <sup>a</sup>	1 727 198	190 297	10.9
2004 <sup>a</sup>	1 817 561	220 948	12.2
2005 <sup>a</sup>	2 004 025	226 475	11.3
2006	1 975 200 <sup>b</sup>	255 773 <sup>c</sup>	12.9
2007	2 121 900 <sup>b</sup>	-	-
2008	2 244 700 <sup>b</sup>	-	-
2009	2 541 000 <sup>b</sup>	289 225 <sup>c</sup>	11.4
2010	2 788 600 <sup>b</sup>	282 907 <sup>c</sup>	10.2

<sup>2</sup> The study was conducted in 2005.



Sources: <sup>a</sup> Woo (2011, p. 169)  
<sup>b</sup> Department of Statistics (2011a)  
<sup>c</sup> Public Service Department (2006; 2009; 2010)

The graduate labor force consists of graduates from all Malaysian universities and foreign universities. The next step is to use the above 13% of all graduates to estimate the percentage that the civil service needs to attract from public universities for meeting its graduate manpower needs. This latter estimate is the appropriate standard for judging whether the pool of 49.8% of respondents from public universities is adequate. To arrive at this standard also requires knowing the proportion of total graduates that are accounted for by public universities as well as the proportion of graduate applicants to the civil service that are accounted for by public universities.

Table 3 shows that public universities account for an estimated 62.1% and 61.0% of total graduates in 2005 and 2010 respectively.

**Table 3: Number of Graduates by Type of University in 2005 and 2010**

Type of University	Year	N	%
Public	2005 <sup>a</sup>	51 771	62.1
Private		20 294	24.3
Foreign		11 322	13.6
	Total	83 387	100
Public	2010 <sup>b</sup>	66 445	61.0
Private		26 562	24.4
Foreign		15 851	14.6
	Total	108 858	100

Sources: <sup>a</sup> Woo (2011, p. 171)  
<sup>b</sup> MoHE (2011)

However, the civil service does not depend solely on public universities for its graduate manpower. Statistics show that 88.7% of applicants graduated from public universities (Abdullah Sanusi, Norma and Abdul Kuddus 2003, p. 93). It is therefore estimated that 90% of graduate applicants to the civil service come from public university graduates. With this 90% estimate, the proportion of the sample that the civil service must attract to meet its needs is calculated to be 18.8%.<sup>3</sup> This is rounded up and slightly increased to 20% in order to provide a strong test of the ability of the civil service to meet its graduate manpower needs. If the pool reaches 20% of the sample, then it would be safe to say that the civil service is able to attract the graduate manpower it needs, as far as quantity is concerned.

<sup>3</sup>The 18.8% of graduates from public universities needed by the civil service (X), is obtained by entering the estimated figures into the right hand side of the following equation:

$$\begin{aligned}
 X &= \frac{\% \text{ of total graduates needed by the civil service}}{\% \text{ of total graduates from public universities}} \times \% \text{ of applicants from public universities} \\
 &= \frac{13\%}{62.1\%} \times 90\% \\
 &= 18.8\%
 \end{aligned}$$

Comparing the size of the pool against this 20% standard, it is clear that, in 2005, the civil service is able to attract enough numbers of graduate employees. The pool comprising of 49.8% of the study's sample of graduating students greatly exceeds the estimated 20% needed by the civil service.

In short, public universities are able to supply sufficient graduate manpower for public employment and the civil service is capable of attracting its share of fresh local graduates in terms of quantity.

From Tables 2 and 3, in terms of percentages, the supply of graduate manpower by various universities and graduate manpower which the civil service needs to attract in 2005 and 2010 are quite similar. Therefore, it is argued that the 20% standard which developed by Woo is probably applicable in the Malaysian current situation. This is supported by the announcement recently made by the Malaysian Chief Secretary to the Government that "the 1.42 million civil servants are sufficient for the country at present" (*The Star* 2013a).

The above overall standard of 20% is also useful for constructing the standards for assessing the ability of the civil service to attract adequate graduate manpower in terms of the qualitative aspects of capacity and representativeness in the rest of the paper.

### **1.3.2 The pool of likely applicants: capacity**

This part examines the pool in terms of the following aspects that affect the capacity of the civil service: academic performance (CGPA) and English language proficiency. The importance of attracting good academic performers is obvious: The civil service needs brains in order to perform well. As English is the main international language, proficiency in the language is important for conducting international transactions and also for facilitating relations with the private sector that mainly uses English.

From Table 4, the 42.8% and 39.4% of Good and Very Good CGPA in the pool are greatly exceeding the 20% fair share of the civil service in these two stronger subgroups. It may become clearer by looking at actual numbers. Those with Good and Very Good CGPA in the pool add up to 263, while the fair share of the civil service amounts to only 125 (i.e. 20% of 627, the total number of Good and Very Good CGPA in the sample). More strikingly, the 263 of high CGPA in the pool even exceeds 20% of the sample (here 1,012) or the total of 202 graduates from the sample that are needed by the civil service.

**Table 4: Comparison of the Pool of Likely Applicants and the Sample by CGPA**

CGPA*	Pool	Sample	Pool as % of Sample
	N	N	
Very Weak	33	58	56.9
Weak	189	327	57.8
Good	200	467	42.8
Very Good	63	160	39.4
Total	485	1 012	47.9

Source: Woo (2011, p. 173)

\*CGPA: Very Weak = below 2.50      Good = 3.00 – 3.49  
 Weak = 2.50 – 2.99      Very Good = 3.50 – 4.00

Table 5 compares the pool with the sample in terms of proficiency in English. The pool contains 47.7% of respondents who are Good in English, more than double the fair share of 20%. The civil service is thus doing much better than the private sector as a whole in terms of attracting respondents who are Good in English.

**Table 5: Comparison of the Pool of Likely Applicants and the Sample by English Language Proficiency**

English Proficiency	Pool	Sample	Pool as % of Sample
	N	N	
Not Good	28	55	50.9
Moderate	385	765	50.3
Good	176	369	47.7
Total	589	1 189	49.5

Source: Woo (2011, p. 175)

In terms of numbers, the estimated 20% of the sample (here 1,189) needed by the civil service amounts to 238 graduates. However, the number of respondents who are Good in English in the pool is only 176. Even though the civil service fares much better than the private sector and attracts 47.7% of respondents who are Good in English, it is still unable to meet its estimated share of graduates entirely from those who are Good in English.

The preceding analysis has shown that the civil service is able to meet its estimated 20% of graduates from those who have high CGPA. Why is the situation different when it comes to proficiency in English? From Tables 4 and 5, it's obvious that this difference is not due to any difference in the attractiveness of the civil service. Rather, the reason lies in the relative scarcity of graduates who are Good in English. The sample has only 31.0% (369 of 1,189) respondents who are Good in English, compared to 62.0% (627 of 1,012) of respondents with high CGPA. The result suggests that public universities fail to produce sufficient graduates who are proficient in English.

The declining standard of English among graduates has become a serious issue in Malaysia. The deplorable state of affairs with regard to the proficiency of the English language in Malaysia is exemplified by the shocking admission by a top Education Ministry official recently that two-thirds of the 70,000 English language teachers in the country failed to reach a proficient English level, and, it is said that uplifting the English standard among students poses “the most acute challenge” of the Malaysia



Education Blueprint 2013-2025 which launched in September 2013 (Hariati and Lee 2011; Doss 2012; Azman 2013; *Declining English Standard* 2013).

### 1.3.3 The pool of likely applicants: representativeness

This part examines the adequacy of the pool for achieving representativeness in terms of race and gender. The question of interest is whether the pool is adequate for recruitment into the civil service to be representative of the country's population. To examine this question, it is not enough to compare the pool with the sample or even to see whether the pool has 20% of each racial or gender group in the sample. This is because the sample is not representative of the country's population. What is needed is to compare the pool with what is required for recruitment, i.e. of only 20% of the sample, to be representative of the country's population.

**Table 6: The Adequacy of the Pool for Racially Representative Recruitment**

Race	Pool	Sample	Pool as % of sample	C. Pop., 2005 (%)	N required for rep.
	N	N			
Malays	471	761	61.9	54.1	130
Chinese	79	354	22.3	25.3	61
Indians	37	68	54.4	7.5	18
Others <sup>4</sup>	10	17	58.8	13.1	31
Total	597	1 200	49.8	100	240

Source: Woo (2011, p. 179)

The numbers required for racially representative recruitment are computed as follows. The civil service needs to recruit 20% of the sample of 1,200 respondents or 240 graduates. In 2005, the year in which data was collected, the estimated population of the country consisted of 54.1% Malays, 25.3% Chinese, 7.5% Indians and 13.1% Others. Thus, to be racially representative of society in 2005, the 240 needed graduates should have 130 Malays, 61 Chinese, 18 Indians and 31 Others. The numbers required for racially representative recruitment in 2010 is similar to 2005.<sup>5</sup> From Table 6, generally, the pool has enough numbers of all races for representative recruitment. However, this examination of racial representativeness raises another question: Whether ensuring representative recruitment would compromise capacity. To check this, Table 7 provides breakdowns by CGPA for the various racial groups.

<sup>4</sup>The number of Others (mainly non-Malay *bumiptras*) in the pool falls far short of what is required for representative recruitment. This is probably because most other *bumiptras* in Sabah and Sarawak go to the universities in those two states that the study does not cover. Due to the number of Others in the sample is too few for meaningful analysis, analysis will only be done for the other racial groups.

<sup>5</sup> In 2010, the population of the country contained 54.6% Malays, 24.6% Chinese, 7.3% Indians and 13.5% Others, hence, the numbers required for racially representative recruitment are 131 Malays, 59 Chinese, 18 Indians and 32 Others.

**Table 7: Comparison of the Pool of Likely Applicants and the Sample by Race and High CGPA\***

Race	Pool			Sample			Pool as % of Sample		
	Good CGP A	V. Gd CGP A	Total	Good CGP A	V. Gd CGP A	Total	Good CGP A	V. Gd CGP A	Total
	Malays	151	40	191	267	59	326	56.6	67.8
Chinese	28	18	46	162	91	253	17.3	19.8	18.2
Indians	18	4	22	34	9	43	52.9	44.4	51.2
Others	3	1	4	4	1	5	75.0	100.0	80.0
Total	200	63	263	467	160	627	42.8	39.4	41.9

Source: Woo (2011, p. 182)

\*CGPA: Good = 3.00 – 3.50; Very Good = 3.50 – 4.00

To examine the racial groups in the pool according to CGPA, the sample is reduced to 1,012 respondents because of missing values for CGPA. To enable recruitment of 20% of the sample or 202 graduates to be representative of the country's population, the pool should have at least 109 Malays, 51 Chinese and 15 Indians.<sup>6</sup> The main purpose of Table 7 is to examine whether representative intake could be achieved without compromising merit as measured by CGPA. A simple way to do this is by examining whether the racial totals of high CGPA applicants are adequate for representative recruitment. The pool contains 191 Malays, 46 Chinese and 22 Indians with high CGPA. Thus the 109 Malays and 15 Indians needed for representative recruitment can all be taken from those with high CGPA. For Chinese, however, the situation is not so favorable. The pool only has 46 high-CGPA Chinese, which is less than the 51 needed for representative recruitment.

The under-representative of Chinese in the Malaysian civil service is not something new. In 2010, there was only 6% Chinese out of the 1.22 million-strong civil service. In 2011, out of the total 1,121,692 applicants for government jobs, only 2% to 3% are Chinese and Indian applicants. Even the Chairman of the Public Service Department expressed his concerned over the increasingly mono-ethnic civil service in Malaysia (*Sin Chew Daily* 2010a; 2012a).

**Table 8: The Adequacy of the Pool for Gender Representative Recruitment**

Gender	Pool	Sample	Pool as % of Sample	C. Pop., 2005 (%)	N required for rep.
	N	N			
Male	178	396	45.0	50.9	122
Female	419	804	52.1	49.1	118
Total	597	1 200	49.8	100	240

Source: Woo (2011, p. 184)

The more than 2 to 1 gender imbalance in favor of females in the pool might suggest that males are not enough for gender-representative recruitment (Table 8). However, as in examining racial representativeness, this issue can be better examined by comparing the pool numbers with the numbers required for representative recruitment of 20% of the sample.

<sup>6</sup> In 2010, when the sample is reduced to 1,012, the numbers required for racially representative recruitment are 110 Malays, 50 Chinese, 15 Indians and 27 Others.

For recruitment to be representative of society in terms of gender, the pool should have at least 122 males and 118 females. This requirement is more than satisfied by the 178 males and 419 females in the pool. The numbers required for gender representative recruitment in 2010 is similar to 2005.<sup>7</sup>

The question, however, is whether gender representative recruitment would compromise capacity as measured by CGPA. To examine the two gender groups in the pool according to CGPA, the sample is reduced to 1,012 respondents because of missing values for CGPA. A total numbers of 103 males and 99 females are needed for recruitment of 20% of the sample.<sup>8</sup>

The 191 females with high CGPA in the pool greatly exceed the 99 females required for female-representative recruitment (Table 9). Ensuring representativeness for males, however, would require considerable compromise of merit as the pool only contains 72 males with high CGPA, which is significantly short of the 103 required. This analysis suffices to show that the pool does not have enough high-CGPA males for achieving gender representativeness under competitive recruitment.

**Table 9: Comparison of the Pool of Likely Applicants and the Sample by Gender and CGPA**

Gender	Pool			Sample			Pool as % of Sample		
	High CGP A	Low CGP A	Total	High CGP A	Low CGP A	Total	High CGP A	Low CGP A	Total
	Male	72	75	147	188	143	331	38.3	52.4
Female	191	147	338	439	242	681	43.5	60.7	49.6
Total	263	222	485	627	385	1 012	41.9	57.7	47.9

Source: Woo (2011, p. 186)

The reasons for the inadequate number of males with high CGPA in the pool can be explained using Table 9. The last column that compares the pool and sample shows that the pool contains 44.4% of males and 49.6% of females in the sample. Public employment is therefore not much less attractive to males than to females. The reasons are to be found in the sample column, which shows that females not only outnumber males by 681 to 331, but also do better academically, i.e. with a higher proportion earning high CGPA compared to males. The inadequate number of high-CGPA males in the pool is therefore due to their lower university enrolment and academic performance.

The relative importance of these two reasons can also be assessed from Table 9. The single change of raising high-CGPA males to the same proportion as for females in the sample would produce 82 high-CGPA males in the pool,<sup>9</sup> which is not enough to

<sup>7</sup>In 2010, the country's population contained 51.2% males and 48.8% females, hence, the numbers required for gender representative recruitment are 123 males and 117 females.

<sup>8</sup>In 2010, when the sample is reduced to 1,012, the numbers required for gender representative recruitment are 103 males and 99 females.

<sup>9</sup>From Table 9, the ratio of females with high-CGPA in the sample is 0.6446 (439/681). If males perform equally well and have the same ratio as females, the sample would consist of 213 (0.6446 x 331) males with high CGPA. Then, with the ratio of high-CGPA males entering the pool remaining at 0.3830 (72/188), the pool would consist of 82 (0.3830 x 213) high-CGPA males.

satisfy the required number of 103. However, the single change of increasing males in the sample to their population percentage would produce 112 high-CGPA males in the pool,<sup>10</sup> which is more than enough to satisfy the required number of 103. This clearly suggests that the lower enrolment of males in universities is the more serious reason for the shortage of high-CGPA males for representative recruitment.

Male students used to outnumber females in 1970s and 1980s. However, data show that a milestone was reached when females made up 50% in 1990, since then, females gradually exceed males in HEIs. The ratio of female to male students was 63: 37 by 2005. In 2011, the national average of enrolment of students into the public HEIs was 65: 35 in favour of females. According to the Education Ministry's Higher Education Department Director-General that 68.1% of those accepted into public universities in 2013 were females (Kapoor and Au 2011; *New Straits Times* 2013). From the trend, the shortage of high-CGPA males for representative recruitment is very likely to persist due to the lower enrolment of males in universities.

#### **1.4 Factor Affecting Graduates' Choice of Public Employment**

*Job security* (49.6%), *fringe benefits* (40.0%), *fixed working hours* (26.6%), *low job stress* (24.6%) and *sufficient pay* (18.4%) are the five main pull factors cited by choosers of public employment. These factors together account for 74.3% or close to three quarters of total cites. Other pull factors include *good promotion prospects*, *many holidays*, *serving the public*, *bonded*, and *good image*.

The main pull factors could be grouped into two broad categories. The first category is *material rewards*, which the factors of *job security*, *fringe benefits*, *sufficient pay* and *good promotion prospects* primarily relate to. These factors together account for 55.3% of total cites. The second category is *lower job demands*. This category consists of the three factors of *fixed working hours*, *low job stress* and *many holidays*, which together account for 28.4% of total cites. To date, *job security*, *fringe benefits*, *sufficient pay* and *fixed working hours* are still the main attractions to applicants to public employment (Tee 2009; *Sin Chew Daily* 2010b and 2012b; *Harian Metro* 2013; *Sinar Harian* 2013)

As for push factors, *unattractive pay* (68.7%), *poor promotion prospects* (47.6%), *not interesting and challenging job* (35.7%), *poor image* (15.4%) and *low autonomy* (14.3%) are the five most important factors that made respondents avoid government jobs. Together, these top five push factors make up 84.4% of total cites.

## **2.0 CONCLUSION**

As the labor market rapidly changes, HEIs need to play a stronger role in preparing sufficient and quality graduate manpower for the workforce. It is obvious that the Malaysian HEIs are under pressure not only making the country as a centre for the development of intellectual, but also to supply trained and skilled graduates

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<sup>10</sup>If the enrolment of males is increased to their population share of 0.509, there would be 515 (0.509 x 1,012) males in the sample. With the ratio of high-CGPA males remaining at 0.5680 (188/331), this would result in 293 (0.5680 x 515) high-CGPA males. Then, with the ratio of high-CGPA males entering the pool remaining at 0.3830 (72/188), the pool would have 112 (0.3830 x 293) high-CGPA males.

manpower for the labor market in order to keep pace with global competition and to meet the modern economy needs. Examinations of the paper show that the Malaysian public universities are able to produce sufficient graduates in terms of quantity and quality to meet the government's graduate manpower needs. However, ensuring representative recruitment for Chinese requires some compromise of merit as measured by CGPA and due to the much poorer academic performance of males compared to females, ensuring the representative recruitment of males requires some compromise of merit as measured by CGPA.

Material rewards are found to be most important to respondents and also the most important push factors to non-choosers of public employment. The general factor of work-life balance, which respondents see as next in importance to material rewards, is not a push factor to non-choosers and is already an important pull factor to choosers of public employment. It is also questionable whether the civil service should rely on lower job demands to attract job seekers or should try to attract job seekers looking for lower job demands.



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