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Effectiveness of Learning and Teaching the Appreciation of Ethics and Civilization Course from the Perspective of the Educators and Students in the University of Malaysia Kelantan (UMK)

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Abstract. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has introduced several courses classified as a General Subject [*Mata Pelajaran Umum*](MPU) to instil essential skills among Malaysian students. The Appreciation of Ethics and Civilization [*Penghayatan Etika dan Peradaban*], also known as PEP, was introduced in 2019. The course aims to educate students on the concept of good ethics in daily life and to help them appreciate the variety possible in society among Malaysians. However, there are some issues related to the PEP content which needs further review. This study tries to identify the elements that contribute to the effectiveness of the course, focusing on the content of the course from the university student and educators' perspectives. The study used a combined quantitative and qualitative method involving 1,837 bachelor's degree Malaysian students. For the qualitative study, a focus group discussion was conducted involving eight educators. For the respondents

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who were students, four groups who had learnt about the course were selected to participate. The study reveals that the PEP course is less effective compared to the Philosophy and Current Issues [*Falsafah dan Isu Semasa*] FIS course. It also shows that the redundant and vague sub-topics should be omitted so then the course can be precise. This shows that it is necessary to revise the content of the PEP course to ensure that the learning objective will be better digested by the university students. This study is significant in terms of analysing the quality of the learning content so then essential skills can be developed, particularly among university learners.

Keywords: ethics; effectiveness of learning; effectiveness of teaching; higher education; students perspective

1. Introduction

Education is a crucial part of producing high quality human wellbeing. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has introduced several related subjects such as Ethnic Relations [*Hubungan Etnik*] (HE) and Islamic and Asian Civilization [*Tamadun Islam dan Tamadun Asia*] (TITAS). Several years after introducing these courses, other related courses have been established as a replacement, specifically PEP and FIS. Since PEP has only just been introduced to Malaysian university students, there is scarcity of related research analysing the PEP content itself. Thus, this study is important to identify some of the issues that may require addressing to improve the course and make it relevant to learn from. In addition, this study also aims to identify the perceptions among the different ethnicities in Malaysia regarding the PEP course. This is to ensure that the learning content suits to all races, and this will reduce the issue of discrimination in society.

Globally, it is agreed that the component of ethics is a crucial element when seeking to form good human characteristics. In Kenya, it has been emphasised that ethical values should be taught at all levels of learning. "Ethical training has been one of the core functions of culture through proverbs, sayings, rituals and various practices. All this underscores the importance of ethical education in society, hence, the need to extend the same to institutions of higher learning" (Isaboke, 2021, p. 33). It is understood that ethics shape the identity of society so then they can practise a righteous character in life. In addition, society also consists of multiple ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds. It is proven that people should have good ethics in life and that this requires a good level of implementation at university.

Consequently, the PEP course is very relevant to be teach in universities in Malaysia. The sub-topics are organised based on a certain related theme. PEP discusses some of the issues related to the patriotic aspect as well as the values of ethics and civilization around the world. In addition, it emphasises the importance of tolerance in a diverse society to produce a harmonious relationship among the diverse ethnicities in Malaysia. For the FIS, it encourages the students to engage critical thinking and to develop essential skills in daily life. Other than

that, MPU has also been introduced to implement the concept of nation-race [*Konsep Negara Bangsa*] among the university students (Ng & Iswandi, 2017).

The course of PEP is acknowledged to instil the spirit of patriotism and practise good ethics in daily life. It is focused on university students in Malaysia. In addition, it also contains a similar concept that has been discussed in Ethnic Relations [*Hubungan Etnik*]. Several related issues such as ethnic conflicts also occur among Malaysians which influences the acceptance of diverse ethnicities, especially on this course. It also contains elements of virtues that are implemented in the course of TITAS.

However, there are some issues with the current content in PEP. It is argued that certain themes and explanations are difficult for the students to understand. Other than that, it is understood that the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA) at the National University of Malaysia [*Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*] has introduced a digital module to assist the students in comprehending the content of PEP. Nevertheless, the students also face difficulty comprehending and relating it in a daily context. This is because the aspect of appreciation of ethics and civilization is too broad, making it hard to complete and practice within one semester. This required the researchers to conduct a study to identify the level of effectiveness of the PEP course. This study is also necessary to be conducted to avoid a similar phenomenon of what happened among some students who learned about civilization and mentioned that "the subject being too much" (Elban, 2017, p. 130).

1.1. An overview of the content in the PEP course

PEP has nine main topics altogether and it is arranged based on several components. It has also been written about. One example is the book written by Mohd Azhar et al. (2020) which contains the main components of ethics and civilization. It also includes some related theories of ethics which can help students to deepen their comprehension of the element of ethics in daily life. The book is good and well-written. However, it is proposed for the main theme to be simplified so then it can be digested and applied at the university student level.

The first topic introduces the concept of ethics and civilization generally, while the second topic explains the theoretical concept of ethics based on both Western and Eastern perspectives. The third topic describes the diversity of ethics and civilization and the existence of plurality in Malaysian society. Topic four discusses the concept of unity and it classifies the level of unity process in Malaysia. For topic five, it clarifies the concept of strengthening national unity [*majmuk*]. It also describes the formation of the nation-race [*Negara bangsa*] as well as a brief concept of the Malay Archipelago [*Melayu Nusantara*] history. Topic six interprets the formation of integration and the principles of the Malaysia Federal Constitution.

Topic seven encourages the students to apply good ethics when using social media. In addition, it also introduces a functional method for communication and the cultural context. Topic eight analyses the element of social responsibility and

the role of ethics and civilization when practicing the concept of social responsibility. Topic nine discusses the challenges of sustainability regarding ethics and civilization to date and it also provides some examples of the crises in Malaysian society.

The division of the topic shows the variety contexts in the discussion. This course helps the students identify several related concepts of ethics and civilization. However, some vague terms also need to be revised because they result in difficulty when it comes to understanding, especially for first-year university students. In addition, the sub-topics should be arranged to make sure that they are discussed in a more precise and practical way. This is because the syllabus needs to identify other important elements so then the students will apply the concept of ethics in their daily life.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to analyse whether the content of the PEP course provides an effective learning outcome among university students. In addition, it also identifies several of the issues faced by educators as well as the learners when dealing with the PEP course. Regarding the nine topics, it shows that the main topic is relevant to be taught at university level. However, the subtopic is seen of as unfriendly because of the unsystematic sub-topic arrangement. This study will determine the predicaments present, if any, so then the applicability of this course will provide a huge benefit for the students.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The functions of ethics and civilization in a university students' life

The framework of ethics and civilization are related to each other. Ethics is obviously attached to spirituality, society, and culture (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1991). In terms of the concept of civilization, this refers to the refinement of social culture, well-governed justice, and authority in life (al-Attas, 1978).

The related theoretical framework for building ethics in society and instilling a spiritual concept has been discussed in previous studies. For example, a concept of mutual respect among society was introduced by El-Awaisi (2014). It contains several components that are necessary to be applied in society for there to be proper ethics including the implementation of mutual respect, the preservation of human dignity, and fostering diversity and plurality. These aspects will boost the use of ethics and application of civilization among society and this content is necessary to be implemented among university students.

Ethics have been discussed in detail many years back and it is still a crucial component today. It is a legion issue. This is because there are thousands of crises related to human ethics. For example, it includes the issues of corruption, bad governance, abuse of public trust, value-less lifestyles, unethical behaviour, conflicts of interest, and insider dealings, nepotism and mediocrity (Singh & Stückelberger, 2017). This urges the necessity of educating people in practising good ethics as a part of regular activities in society.

The component of civilization is related to ethics. This is because higher education needs to educate learners on the significance of ethics and provide examples from ancient civilizations for them to follow. This will guide the younger generation in forming better characteristics. In the same vein, it is stated that:

If young people are not taught about the past and tradition, they shall have a future without guidance and may grow up either unbalanced or sceptical. In educating the youth, the past is presented within the context of life where experience speaks for itself. For emphasis, therefore, education must be critical. The young student must be exposed to the past through the experience that can propose that past and justify it through life experience. This is what ethics in higher education seeks to achieve. (Singh & Stückelberger, 2017, p. 20)

The statement above proves that the influence of ethics and civilization are very powerful when it comes to shaping someone to have an honourable human character. Furthermore, the diverse society in Malaysia needs to be aware of the importance of good values such as tolerance, teamwork, a celebration of differences, and no hatred among them. This is because historically it has been proven that Malay-land has birthed a great warrior and that students should learn how they can be resilient and loyal when defending their country from any intruders.

2.2. Exploration of past studies relating to the PEP course

Regarding the related research analysing the learning outcomes of the PEP course, several related studies have been conducted in terms of ethics and civilization such as the effectiveness of the PEP course organised online. It was reported that even though the objectives of the study were attained, online learning regarding the PEP course is less effective than the physical lessons (Esa et al., 2021). This is due to the fact that online learning also requires several components that should be addressed such as the interactions that are student-content, teacher-content, and student-teacher (Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021). Thus, it is proven that virtual and physical learning should be given balanced attention to obtain the more comprehensive and effective learning goals.

Then, a study was conducted to identify the level of unity among the university students after learning the PEP course. It has been shown that the sense of unity is at a moderate level yet they still have the spirit of patriotism among them (Nor Hayati et al., 2021). This shows that even though the values of patriotism and unity can be felt through this course, other elements should be revised to make sure that this course is more impactful compared to other subjects such as Islamic and Asian Civilization (IITAS) as well as Ethnic Relations (HE).

Other than that, the study has been organised to identify the challenges and strategy of empowerment regarding the values and appreciation of ethics and civilization. It is proven that the values can be obtained from the culture of knowledge, spirituality, and social activism (Norhaslina & Aiezzatul, 2022). This

can guarantee the sustainability of a righteous life and the respectfulness for civilization in human morality. Based on the studies, it indicates that there are some gaps that require further investigations in the PEP course. It is agreed that the concept of Malaysia's history, the significance of the federal institution has been included, but it should be polished so then it will become more relevant to practise without having a conflict of interest with any of the institutions.

2.3. The role of effective learning and teaching to obtain the lesson goals

The effectiveness of learning is an important factor when identifying whether the learning objective is attained or not. This component is vital to be practised during physical and virtual learning environments. For example, the components such as e-learning facilities, materials, technical equipment, the educator's attention, and good interactions with the students will boost the effectiveness during the learning process (Sankar et al., 2011). It shows that these elements will assist the students in grasping the learning objectives and the interactions between educators and students. This, in turn, will create constructive feedback on certain courses.

It is also agreed that the concept of e-learning also should be taken into account in order to reach effectiveness during the lessons (Fatoni et al., 2020). A good network, active interaction in e-learning, and organising face-to-face classes for practical activities are included. Thus, it is understood that the participation of the students also contributes to the effectiveness of the learning process. This process requires good content on the subject so then they can practise and perform well either virtually or physically. This is because the impactful content also leads to the encouragement of active learning and enhances various skills as well as the adoption of desirable values and attitudes in the students (Bušljeta, 2013).

To create effectiveness when learning a certain subject, it is also suggested to improve the activities of learning and teaching. This will also increase their self-esteem and help to build a better social attitude among them (Xu et al., 2021). In addition, the concept of it being student-centred should be combined with the teacher-centred approach so then the effectiveness of the learning process will be obtained. Furthermore, the readiness among the teachers and students also influences the effectiveness of the learning process. Other than that, the passion for teaching among the educators plays an important role in helping the teachers become effective facilitators (Bidabadi et al., 2016).

Regarding the discourse on effectiveness in learning and teaching, it is shown that several components should be considered to obtain the learning objectives whether during online teaching or as part of the physical learning process. Obviously, the content of certain courses has become a main component to be emphasised. In addition, it also contributes to satisfaction and the students also can reflect on themselves after learning a certain course. The current study focuses on the component of ethics and civilization which is crucial part to impart on the students. This is because this course will train the essential skills that can be practised among the learners throughout their life.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Questions

This study employed a mixed method approach as part of a combined quantitative and qualitative design. The qualitative study answered the research question: “How can the content and the method of assessment of PEP be improved to achieve the learning objectives and provide more effective lessons to the learners?” The nature of qualitative methods assists researchers in comprehending the respondents’ feelings, thoughts, values, and beliefs (Abu Hassan Shaari & Waller, 2022). For the quantitative method, this study applied a questionnaire to allow the researchers to analyse the relationships present and compare the data (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). The quantitative aspect was used to answer the research question: “After completing the PEP and FIS courses, do they give a highly effective lesson to you?”

3.2. Sampling techniques

The current study used convenience-purposive sampling techniques to recruit the participants. This technique is suitable since the respondents are among the learners who have enrolled on the PEP courses. This is as well as the educators who have been teaching PEP subjects. In addition, this type of respondent can provide information related to a certain study (Nyumba et al., 2018). The first author, who had experience teaching PEP for more than three semesters, explained the objective of the study to the participants involved in both research methods, quantitative and qualitative. For the qualitative study, a focus group discussion was conducted to identify the perspectives of both educators and learners.

3.3. Participant selection criteria

For the participants involved in the qualitative methods, it encompasses the students who were divided into seven groups. They shared their experiences of learning the PEP course. The structured interviews were also conducted among some of the lecturers who had been teaching the PEP courses via Zoom meetings. They consisted of eight lecturers at the University of Malaysia Kelantan (UMK), Malaysia and they were willing to share their experiences and feelings while teaching the course.

For the quantitative method, the participants were among the students who have learnt the PEP and FIS courses, totalling 1,837 altogether. The respondents answered the related questions via a Google Form. The FIS students are selected to analyse the comparison of the level of effectiveness of learning those subjects.

Table 1. illustrates the information of participants in the currents study.

	Quantitative study	Qualitative study (students)	Qualitative study (educators)
Male	472	15	4
Female	1365	15	4
Age	21-24 years old	21-24 years old	35-50 years old
Level of education	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Doctor of Philosophy

Table 1 depicts the demographic background of the respondents. Most of the university students were between 21 - 24 years old and they were bachelor's degree students. Regarding the educators, they consisted of lecturers who held the degree of Doctor of Philosophy while all of the participants were from the University of Malaysia Kelantan.

3.4. Data collection

The qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions and interviews among selected participants. The online focus group method was applied because it was intended to trigger more casual interactions between the respondents and the hosts (Nyumba et al., 2018). The researchers led the focus group discussion which lasted about 120 minutes. During the discussions, every participant had a chance to share their experience. Their right to comment on each other was also observed. This enhanced the group interactions and the research exploration in detail (Abu Hassan Shaari & Willer, 2022).

The interviews were conducted through online to replace the face-to-face technique (Tümen-Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021). Moreover, this technique also provides a deeper understanding of society (Mohajan, 2018). The interviews were organised based on a certain schedule that had been arranged beforehand. After that, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in the Malay language since the participants used the Malay language during the interview.

As for the quantitative data, the researchers distributed the questionnaire via a Google Form. It took about 20 minutes for the respondents to complete the related items. After completing the form, the data was analysed using SPSS version 26 to obtain the t-test value of the data. An independent t-test was used to identify the comparison of the mean between certain groups (Kim, 2015). In this study, the t-test was specifically used to identify the comparison of the level of effectiveness of the PEP and FIS courses after they had been taught.

3.5. Ethical considerations

The current study as approved by The University's Institutional Review Board.

3.6. Rigor

The rigor technique in the quantitative study was used to determine the precision and accuracy of the quantitative technique (Marquart, 2017). For the qualitative study, it was mentioned that the rigor technique was used as a reflection and

experience for the researchers during and after conducting a certain study (Maher et al., 2018).

For the qualitative study, four techniques were applied. Firstly, the focus group discussions were video recorded. This assists the researchers in replaying the recordings during the translation and transcription process. This technique allows the researchers to identify the passive and dominant participants as well as the group agreement. Secondly, the thoughts and observations were recorded which included a systematic description of certain studies (Chowdhury & Shil, 2021). Thirdly, for the peer review, the researchers discussed the memos after the interviews. This was to identify reliability and avoid bias due to the use of one coder. Fourthly, the validation process has been conducted using member checking and this will assist the researchers in resolving any misunderstanding of the data.

For the quantitative study, the items used in the questionnaire were developed by the researchers. For the item's reliability, the items provided in Appendix 1 have been undergone testing for reliability. In addition, it has been validated by experts in the field of social science. After performing a pre-test of the items, the questionnaires were revised to obtain an acceptable range of reliability and validity. The real data collection was then conducted and the data was analysed using SPSS software version 26. Table 2 explains the values of reliability for all related items that have been used in this study.

Table 2: The value of Cronbach's Alpha for the developed questionnaire

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.973	15

Table 2 illustrates the value of the reliability statistics according to the computation of the Cronbach's Alpha. It is proven that the values of Cronbach's alpha exceeded 0.7 as highlighted in table 2. Coherently, the value of Cronbach's alpha is in an acceptable valid range as recommended by Hair et al. (2017), thus the values are valid.

4. Findings

Seven groups of students and eight lecturers participated in the interviews in different sessions. Based on the data gathered from the interviews, the themes appear from the findings regarding the educators' perspectives as listed in Table 3.

Table 3: List of themes, sub-themes, and related quotes from the respondents

Themes	Sub-theme	Representative quotes
Syllabus arrangement	Redundant topics	It appears in two topics, which is topic four and six as well."
	Certain concepts are too broad – not focus-specific.	"For the first topic, it seems that in the first topic, it encompasses a lot of concepts of ethics."
Unsystematic terms	Complicated terms in the assessment	"After I got feedback from students, they asked me to revise the concept of theories and laws."
	Arduous historical concept	"It's quite hard for me to comprehend though because we need to identify all related components of historical chronology even during ancient times."

Table 3 shows the main themes that appeared following the qualitative study. It shows that the issue of the redundant topics as well as the broad concept of the sub-topics should be improvised to assist the learners in gaining more of an understanding of the PEP course. In addition, the complicated terms that have been used to explain the assessment hinder the student's ability to reach the quality learning goal. This proves that thorough revisions should be conducted in both aspects, either in the content itself or in the assessment procedures.

4.1 Syllabus Arrangement

Based on the results, the respondents mention that the redundant topic that has been provided in the sub-topics makes it difficult to explain to the students.

"Based on my experience of teaching PEP for about three semesters, actually it took a long time for me to understand what has been provided by MOHE. The slide is too long, and it is hard to digest before we impart it to students. Yes, we are provided with the PEP module, but it is still hard to fully understand because the module strictly follows the syllabus arranged in the MOHE slide" (Lecturer 1).

From the respondent above, it shows that the unfriendly slide results in too many difficulties in terms of the educators sharing the PEP content. In addition, the module also contains some problematic sub-topics that should be revised. This finding also is supported by the previous research conducted by Ruzaini et al (2021) who mentioned the issues of the PEP course among the university students. In addition, this is also in line with the statements made by the other respondents who identify similar problems.

“In terms of positive aspects, actually I am really interested in teaching PEP course. The concept of ethics is imperative to be included in syllabus in higher education level because it plays an important role in forming a harmonious society and nation” (Lecturer 2).

The respondents share the viewpoint that there is a positive impact due to the PEP course. It shows the relevance of introducing this course at the university level. As discussed before, the element of ethics is a crucial component to ensure that the students can survive in the real world today. However, it is suggested to revise the course so then the content and learning objectives will be taken on by the university students.

“However there are some improvements that should be taken into action for this course. For example, the discussion of ethics and civilization. It is better if there is a wider discourse of ethics. This is because, in terms of sub-topics, we can embed the aspect of ethics in every sub-topic. For example, the discussion of ethics in the component of science and economy. And I admit that the ethics in using science and technology is inserted in topic seven. But the more aspects of ethics in every sub-topic, the better, I think. Then, the first topic seems to encompass a lot of concepts of ethics. There are ethics, etiquette, ethos, morality, etc. So, it would be better if more space in another sub-topic is given to discuss those things related to the concept of ethics. So, we will be more creative to elaborate it based on our students’ backgrounds. So, I think this course will be more effective” (Lecturer 3).

From the interview, it is understood that the concept of ethics should focus on a more specific area of discussion. This is to obtain a comprehensive understanding among the students so then they can understand the concept well. Understanding the learning process is important to assist the students in developing new skills and changing their attitudes toward becoming better students (Sequeira, 2012).

“Then in terms of syllabus arrangement, if we refer to the slide, it looks like the redundant topic is discussed from different chapters. For example, the foundation of integration. It appears in two topics, which are topics four and six as well. So, I believe that it is better to compact it to only for one topic and no need to repeat the same thing in different topics” (Lecturer 4).

“Similar to the discussion of the concept of civilization. I know that we need to guide students to understand the process of the formation of civilization. We have Malay, the eastern as well as Western civilizations.

But the topic of civilization looks scattered all over every topic. The topic of civilization is included in topic 2, and then topics 4 and 5. Sometimes I wonder why I need to say the same thing to my students. So it is better to be compacted into one chapter. Consequently, the module arrangement also will be more systematic. This is because the issue in the PEP module is that we highlight the same thing in different topics. So we can also avoid the issue of long slides in certain topics, which is surprisingly 70 slides” (Lecturer 5).

From the view of the respondents, it also shows that the syllabus arrangement is obviously problematic in relation to the PEP course. It is understood that civilization is a broad topic. Thus, it is proposed that the content of the PEP course should be revised so then only the selected elements of civilization are inserted in certain topics. Moreover, the concept of ethics is already wide enough to be discussed in detail. Other than that, the revision will also help the educators to improvise certain related topics in the PEP module as edited by Ateerah et al., (2020). It is proven that the editors should take into consideration the feedback given by the respondents to make sure that the learning objective of the concept of ethics and civilization can be comprehended by the university students.

4.2 Unsystematic terms

For the second theme, it also relates to the assessment method that contributes to the confusion among the students. It is further mentioned that the term has been used in the assessment guidelines of the PEP course.

“For the assessment of the PEP course, I think the assessment is quite different from other universities who offer the PEP course. For me, I think I have problems with the essay assignment. After I got feedback from students, they asked me to revise the concept of theories and laws. This is because they don’t know how to write the theoretical concept. They don’t really understand, for example, the theory of positive psychology. Students actually face difficulty because they don’t have background knowledge in psychology and most of them are first-year students. For my students, they are from a pure science stream and they face problems dealing with this assessment. In terms of law, they still can relate with the Islamic perspective of certain ethics in the given assessment” (Lecturer 6).

From the interview statement above, it is proven that besides the syllabus arrangement, the assessment should be revised as well. The complicated terms used in the assessment should be simplified so then the students can achieve the objective of conducting the assignment. In addition, the course learning outcome (CLO) should also be improvised so then it suits all backgrounds at the university level. Additionally, it has been stated that there is a lack of understanding regarding the significance of assessment quality in relation to the teaching structure and the provision of systematic support during the learning period (Cheng et al., 2015).

"I think this subject is OK but it is quite hard to understand at the end of the topics. For example, when discussing the federal constitution in topic 6, it's quite hard for me to comprehend though because we need to identify all related components of historical chronology even during ancient times. Also, we need to memorise all sorts of historical dates based on certain memorable events in the context of Malaysia's history. So I think the end topic should be compressed so that the issue would not be too broad to be understood" (Student 1).

According to the interview statement above, this lengthy topic makes it difficult for the students to understand the PEP course. This is because the program learning outcome (PLO) is plotted in relation to PLO 11 which relates to ethics and professionalism. It is understood that the component of knowledge and understanding should be moderated and not be a burden for the students to memorise per se.

"In my opinion, it would be better if we could discuss the real political crisis in Malaysia so that the younger generation will realise what is happening around them and this will also guide students to learn the administration in the country" (Student 2).

This shows that the learners are also aware of the current political trouble in their country. In addition, the urgency to implement better morals and ethics among the political leaders is important to result in a better governance system (Kamal, 2021). In addition, the urgency to include morality and ethics in certain related courses will assist the educational organisation to better obtain improved learning and teaching quality in the future.

For the quantitative results, the independent t-test showed that there is a significant relationship between the mean score for the PEP and FIS course [df=834.48, t=(1836), (2.870), p=.004. The mean score of FIS was higher [6.14±0.82] compared to the PEP course [6.01±0.93] as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: The differences in the mean score of the PEP and FIS courses among 1,837 students

Courses	N	Mean	SD	t	df	sig.
Falsafah & Isu Semasa (FIS)	443	6.14	0.82	2.870	834.476	0.004
Penghayatan Etika & Peradaban (PEP)	1394	6.01	0.93			

From the figure shown in Table 4, it depicts that there are some flaws in the PEP course that require amendment. It can also be implied that the students experience a less effective impact due to the PEP course compared to the FIS course. This

urges a further analysis of the content and assessment method so then this problem can be solved. This is because the components of the ethics and civilization course are correlated with each other. However, said components should be simplified to become more friendly and flexible content.

The findings also identify that there are obvious different perceptions among the different ethnicities of the students. The results also show that the Chinese group specified that the PEP course is less important to learn in the university [DF 4,1832=13.559, $p < 0.05$] as illustrated in Table 5. This is followed by the perspective of other ethnicities, specifically Bumiputera [6.11±0.76], Indian [6.18±0.91], and Malay [6.08±0.88].

Table 5: The different perspectives on the level of importance of the PEP course among various ethnicities

Ethnicities	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Bumiputera Sabah / Sarawak	82	6.11	0.76	13.559	0.000
China	171	5.56	1.06		
India	101	6.18	0.91		
Others	22	6.07	1.00		
Malay	1461	6.08	0.88		
Total	1837	6.04	0.91		
DF=4,1832					

Table 5 depicts that Chinese students consider the PEP course to be less impactful compared to other ethnicities. It is understood that the content of PEP also discusses the element related to the concept of a social contract, for example. It describes the speciality of every ethnicity and this might contribute to the discomforting sense for certain ethnicities. It is also shown that there is a critical issue among different ethnicities in Malaysia because Malaysians are facing a plurality of religion, culture, and economic crisis (Alias et al., 2014). It is suggested that the PEP content should identify several elements that can reduce the issue due to ethnicity. It is further necessary to include the element of tolerance as the sub-topic. This study also proves that the perception of different ethnicities of this course provides a new agenda to improve the PEP course, especially among Malaysians.

5. Discussion

Referring to research question one, it is understood that the content of the PEP course should be improved to attain learning objectives. This study proves that the syllabus arrangement plays a vital role in guiding the students to

comprehending certain topics. This is because learning the content is not merely about choosing a particular syllabus type. It also requires selecting what suitable syllabi will work with the students (Joy, 2013). This study reveals that the redundant content and complicated terms in the PEP course should be altered to make sure that the students can discern the significant content of ethics and civilization in the PEP course.

Regarding the issue of political crisis as mentioned by the students, it is stated that the political crisis also influences the arrangement of the curriculum in the national educational system. It is argued that the political agenda should be avoided when developing certain learning material that could lead to student misconceptions. In addition, it is agreed that the issue of hypocrisy among politicians in Malaysia is well-understood by the people. In addition, it is also proven that "The political uncertainty engendered by rampant party hopping and the naked drive for power" (Tayeb, 2021, p. 105). This leads to a divergent impact among Malaysians. It is also shown that students need to have a new view of the political world. As revealed in the study, the relevance of the PEP syllabus discusses the real world of political administration in Malaysia.

In terms of research question two, the PEP course can be made more effective if the element of humane value is included. Furthermore, the normative value of ethics is a 'living' component that seeks to ensure that the students will know how they should be as human beings (Singh & Stückelberger, 2017). It would appear that the content of the PEP course should focus on the foundation component to form a righteous attitude that is suitable for the university students. On the other hand, the assessment method should also be considered. This is because it is used to evaluate whether the learners understand the content that they are learning. Moreover, it is also used to analyse whether a student has reached a certain level of competence in a certain learning period (Umar, 2018). It is also important to identify related components that should be highlighted in the assessment process such as the social, cognitive, and facilitatory elements (Rapanta et al., 2020). This can assist the students in developing skills that can be applied in their lifetime.

Another finding is that the inseparability of religion and ethics should be highlighted in the learning process. For example, it is stated that the learners' keenness when studying Islamic education contributed to the learning performance of Islamic education among the students (Ubale et al., 2015). Thus, it is proven that the religious element also leads to an impactful learning process and associated outcomes. It also should be in line with the rapid progression of e-learning which has become the main medium of the learning process. The embedded concept of foundation in religion should be suited to the strength of the students who use e-learning as a daily means for their reference.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be summarised that the learning content is imperative when seeking to obtain a quality learning outcome. In addition, this revision also contributes to a continuous quality improvement of the element of the learning and teaching process (Antoney et al., 2018). This study also identifies

that the findings are in line with the previous findings who mention the issue of less effective outcomes for the PEP course as stated by Ruzaini et al. (2021) and Ateerah et al. (2021). It also proves that the requirement of getting feedback from the students and educators is important to enhance the learning quality, especially for the MPU courses at the Malaysia university level.

Furthermore, this study is beneficial when it comes to improving the learning and teaching quality since it provides both the perception of the learners as well as that of the lecturers. The limitation of this study is that this study was conducted among UMK students only. This study was also conducted during an online learning period and therefore did not cover the learning and teaching of the PEP course during face-to face sessions.

6. Conclusion

The findings reveal that the quality of the PEP content is less effective and needs further improvement. It is important to revise the content of the PEP course to implement more focused themes in the course. This is to aid the students in getting more of an understanding of the course. It is proposed to restructure the vaguer terms and replace them with an understandable component. In addition, it is necessary to amend the reference book entitled *Penghayatan Etika dan Peradaban* edited by Ateerah et al. (2020), and rebuild the necessary components of ethics and unity in the course. It is also suggested that university leaders also should play a role in developing ethical values and virtues. In addition, the integrity and ethical character present in certain institutions, as well as the curricula of higher education, are both essential when it comes to shaping trustworthy and credible professionals.

It is proposed to approach other students who have taken the PEP course to identify whether there are similar issues to increase the quality of the teaching and learning, particularly at the university level. Furthermore, it is important to note that the factors of excellence and the success of educational institutions include choosing the right individual to become an educator and developing them to become effective instructors. This is as well as providing a system that is able to impart the most appropriate learning process for learners in the future (McKinsey, 2007). Thus, it is concluded that the study of ancient civilizations can enhance the human character because they can engage with the components related to great minds and humanity (Constantin & Baias, 2015).

7. References

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire on the student perspective of the PEP course

1. Aktiviti dan penyampaian kursus adalah menarik/ The activity and the delivery of the course is interesting.				
2. Kaedah pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang digunakan berkesan untuk membina peribadi saya/ The method of teaching and learning employed is effective at nurturing my personality.				
3. Kaedah penilaian dan tugas kursus mengukuhkan lagi kefahaman saya terhadap topik-topik yang diajar/ The method of assessment in this course consolidates the understanding of the topics taught in the course.				
4. Saya dapat mengamalkan apa yang dipelajari dalam menghadapi pelbagai situasi dan cabaran kehidupan/ I can practise the knowledge learned to face challenges in my life.				
5. Isu-isu yang dibincangkan dalam kursus sesuai dengan keperluan masyarakat dan negara/ The issues that have been discussed are relevant to society and the nation's needs.				
6. Kursus ini bermanfaat dan wajar diteruskan pada masa hadapan/ This course is beneficial and should be retained for use in the future.				
7. Kaedah penilaian dan tugas kursus mengukuhkan lagi kefahaman saya terhadap topik-topik yang diajar/ The assessment method and course assignment strengthens my understanding of the topics delivered.				
8. Kandungan kursus ini membincangkan perkara-perkara yang diperlukan dalam kehidupan saya/ The course content discusses the essential requirements of my life.				
9. Kandungan kursus ini sesuai dengan objektif yang ingin dicapai/ The course content is in line with its intended objective.				
10. Objektif kursus ini penting untuk membentuk keperibadian saya/ The course objectives are essential in shaping my personality.				
11. Saya memahami objektif kursus ini dengan jelas/ I understand the course objectives clearly.				

12. Pembelajaran dalam talian sepanjang tempoh pandemik berjaya mengekalkan kualiti pengajaran kursus ini/ Online learning during the pandemic successfully retained the quality of the course.				
13. Kursus ini memberi kesan positif kepada kehidupan saya/This course has a positive impact on my life.				
14. Kursus ini membentuk diri saya menjadi insan yang seimbang dalam aspek jasmani, emosi, rohani dan intelektual (JERI) serta mencintai negara/ This course shapes me by helping me to become a well-balanced person physically, emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually as well having love for the nation.				
15. Kursus ini berupaya memupuk semangat toleransi dan hormat menghormati antara pelbagai kaum dan agama / This course can encourage the spirit of tolerance and respect between diverse races and religions.				