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## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ATTITUDE: A STUDY ON PERCEPTION AMONG PRIVATE & PUBLIC HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS STUDENT IN MALAYSIA**

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### **Abstract**

*The importance of sustainable development can be seen in many universities in Malaysia in establishing the syllabus and also an awareness on the concept itself among their students. The purposes of this study is to evaluate student's perception on sustainable development concept and knowledge. The quantitative method has been choose where there are 300 numbers of questionnaire has been distributed and test to the respondents which actually there were comes*

*from selected private and also public higher institutions. The overall findings reveal that even they are come from two different types of intuition but they are actually having the same perception towards sustainable development concept practising in their intuition. The weaknesses found in this study is a challenge to their intuition to provide clear picture on sustainable development concept and how they can react to achieve and well-implemented this concept in their institutions.*

### **Keywords**

Sustainable Development, Higher Institutions, Sustainable Concept, Insight

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## **1. Introduction**

Sustainable Development can be define as a development that have to cater for the current demand without compromising with the future generation's need by balancing the concept itself which are environmental, social and economic factors (M.Z. Abd-Razaka, N.K.F Mustafab, A.I. Che-Ania, N.A.G. Abdullah, & M.F.I Mohd-Nor, 2011; Sohif Mat, Kamaruzzaman Sopian, Mazlin Mokhtar, Baharuddin Ali, Halimaton Saadiah Hashim, Abdul Khalim Abdul Rashid, Muhammad Fauzi Mohd Zain & Nurakmal Goh Abdullah, 2009); & Brutland Report, 1987). According to Collier (2004) and Sterling (2009), sustainable development which in the education institution perspective calling as sustainable education, which they are believe that this concept become crucial to give better understanding of the concept to the public or community. However, to make sure this conceptual knowledge to be delivered successfully to the community, it have to start from education institution and need to embrace clearly the holistic notion on the responsibility towards ecological, and also social justice (Astrid de Leeuw, Pierre Valois & Rita Seixas, 2014 & Bajaj & Chiu, 2009). Academician need to recognize the transmission of sustainable development's knowledge in simple way it's not enough (Astrid de Leeuw et.al, 2014 & Sterling, 2009)

The importance of sustainable development can be found in many campuses where many of them starting to established and promoting the green campus, promoting the implementation and making the sustainable development as a priority to be practicing as well as in campus planning and development (M.Z. Abd-Razaka et.al, 2011; Isiaka, A. & Ho Chin Siong, 2008; Ryan, A., Tilbury, D., Corcoran, P. B., Abe, O., & Nomura, K, 2010; & Alfieri, T., Damon, D., dan Smith, Z., 2009)

An involvement from administrative and academic staff to play their role to make sustainable development can be in placed in their management it's one of the major important to make sure this concept can be successfully implementing among students because these two categories of involvement, they are dealing with the stakeholders in their policy and implementation of sustainability (Norfadillah Derahima, Halimaton Saadiah Hashim, Noraziah Ali & Sarah Aziz Abdul Ghani Aziz, 2012 & Dyball, 2010).

According to Dahle & Neumayer (2001), the misconceptions of the meaning of sustainable development can affect the environmental interest among students and staff, university conservatism, and the extensive costs associated with implementing green initiatives. Davis, G., O'Callaghan, F. & Knox, K. (2009), in their research found that beliefs and attitudes towards sustainability reflect the individual's perception of social or institutional pressure towards sustainable development behavior at work and may impact on the culture of a university. Many people do not have the clear understanding of the green university, because there is no universally accepted definition for it (Jian Zuo, Ruimin Mu, Ping Liu, Yuntao Song, Dayong Cao, Liwei Zhan, Rujian Ma, Xuliang Yuan (2015). Not even sustainable development attitude should practices among student. According to Lukman and Glavič (2007), the key elements of green university should include policies, operations, evaluations and optimizations that need to be considered interactively. According to Mohd Zulhanif Abd Razak et. al (2011), universities are centers of innovation and idea development and are the perfect place to cultivate ideas for sustainability. In addition, they are able to create public awareness of how sustainability can be integrated into everyday life (Jain & Pant 2010).

Where, the key elements of sustainability attitude it's a basic conceptual understanding for student to implementing the sustainable development attitude in their campus. Therefore, this paper will focus on the students perception towards sustainable development concept has been implemented in their university and also to investigate the level of their understanding on this concept as well.

## **2. Background of Study**

This study is a quantitative, questionnaire-based study. A questionnaire with two sections where first section comprise of 5 questions to test of respondent's competence towards sustainable development concept and the second section comprise of 15 statements. The

questionnaires were distributed among students to three different backgrounds of institution and program. The three institutions are University College of Technology Sarawak (UCTS), University Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) and University Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP). The selections of the respondents based on a random sampling method. Where all the respondents come from varies background of program in their institution. Each institution having 300 numbers of respondents respond to the questionnaire. The objective of this study is to investigate student's knowledge and awareness towards sustainable development concept and implementation in their institution.

First institution is University College of Technology Sarawak (UCTS), located in Sibuluan Sarawak. Consider as private higher learning institution but they are fully funded by Sarawak's state government on their operational. It was established in 2013, and the soft-launching ceremony was made on 2014 by then Chief Minister of Sarawak, Pehin Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud. University College of Technology Sarawak (UCTS) aims to be the very First University in Malaysia to achieve a GBI "Platinum Index" rating through its futuristically designed campus and state-of-the-art facilities. UCTS' campus incorporates planning, design and green architecture simultaneously and effectively to create a fully integrated, comfortable, user-friendly and conducive teaching and learning environment.

Second institution was University Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP) is a Malaysian public institution of higher learning located in Perlis. It was previously known as *Kolej Universiti Kejuruteraan Utara Malaysia* (English: Northern Malaysia University College of Engineering). It was established as the 17th Public Institution of Higher Learning in Malaysia on 25 July 2001. The others higher learning institution has been chosen it's Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Tunku Abdul Rahman University) is a non-profit private university in Malaysia. The university is also known by the acronym UTAR, which is part of the university's emblem. It was established under a foundation called UTAR Education Foundation, a non-profit organisation. This university operates two campuses, Sungai Long Campus, which is located within the Klang Valley while the other is Kampar Campus located in the state of Perak.

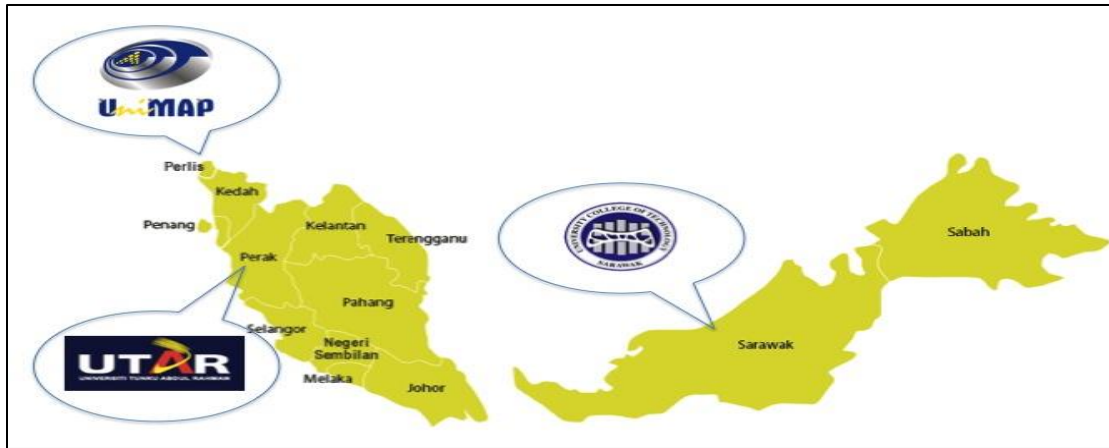


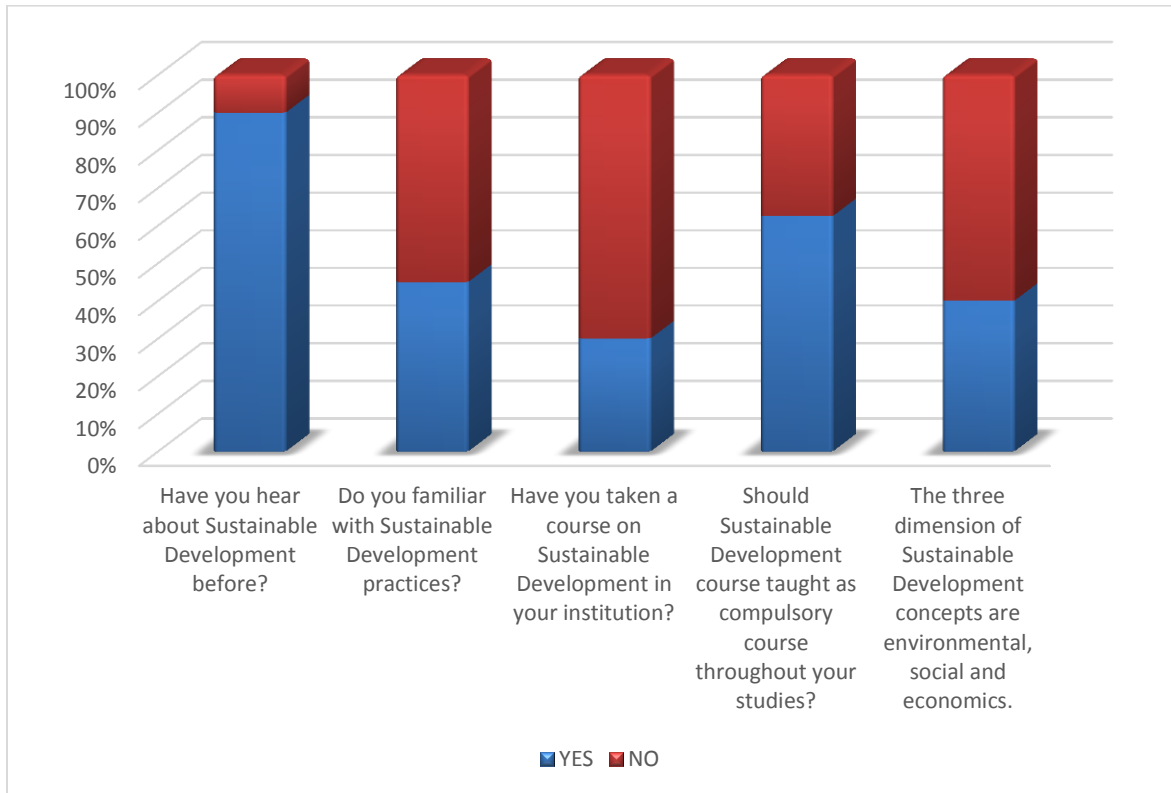
Figure 1: Location of UCTS, UniMAP and UTAR Kampus Campus

### 3. Findings and Discussion

By referring to the Figure 2 shown about student's feedback on their level of competence towards sustainable development concept. This section to test the level of understanding of the respondent towards sustainable development concept in general and also to get their respond towards the importance by taking sustainable development course during their study as well as to get respondent's input on their background which is during their study is there any course offer in their institution specifically to learn on sustainable concept and application itself.

From five questions has been ask to the respondents, for question one, about respondents knowledge on sustainable development whether they has been heard about this term before – 90% respondents saying yes instead of 10% respondents saying no. Second question indicate on the level of familiarity on the sustainable development practices, most of respondents with 55% numbers of them saying they are not really familiar with the practices. Further to the conceptual of sustainable development, most of them with 72% numbers of respondents respond to no. From these three questions shows that, the students not really understand and with the low level of awareness on the sustainable development concept and practices. The next question tested to the student, about the course on sustainable development offer in their institution, most of them with 60% of them saying no. With 60% numbers of respondents respond that it is good if sustainable development has been offer as compulsory subject in their institution. It is clear shown that, on these there institution, there are not specific subject on sustainable development has been offer. But then, it is exemption to UCTS, as this institution it's actually having specific subject of green

technology, which the concept and theory of sustainable development has been discuss in this subject.



**Figure 2:** Student's feedback on their level of competence towards sustainable development concept

Figure 3, shown the results on student's insight towards an implementation of sustainable concept in their institution. There are 15 numbers of questions has been asking to the respective respondents towards 3 different institutions. For question one 55% respondents strongly agree that sustainable development helps to secure the wellbeing of future generations. 45% of them agree that strong expertise in sustainable development is vital in the working life. From the data collecting, its shows that strong background of a person to deliver the concept of sustainable development are needed so that it can be well diverse to student's level. Next, 37.5% of respondents agree that successful organization is the one who committed in practicing sustainable development. For question number 4, almost of respondents with 37.5% saying no idea on the concept of economical means efficient use of resources. 40% are strongly agree that it is difficult to clearly understand the concept of sustainable development. It is clear shows that,

most of the students really unclear on the sustainable development concept and principle especially on the three basic concepts of sustainable development; economic, social and environment. 50% of respondents agree that the concept of sustainable development has been discussed and taught in the course attended in their institution. 55% respond neutral when they have been asking on sufficient knowledge towards sustainable development concept offered in their respective institution. Most of them saying no idea with 32.5% weightage when they have been asking on the resources available in their institution.

Hence, 37.5% score neutral about the issues of sustainable development should be considering during practical training or internship. 45% of them agree that influencing values and attitudes towards Sustainable Development is a part of a university education. 52.5% respond strongly agree on the sustainable development issues should be communicated in versatile ways. 45% agree that their institution committed with environmental issues. Most of the weightage goes to no idea marked with 65% when they has been asking on whether their institution give an intention on sustainable development policy in institution's management. Furthermore, students are agreeing with 27.5% that they can influence the environmental issues in their institution. For the last question has been asked to the student, most of them say they have no idea either studying sustainable development can promote sustainability in daily routine.



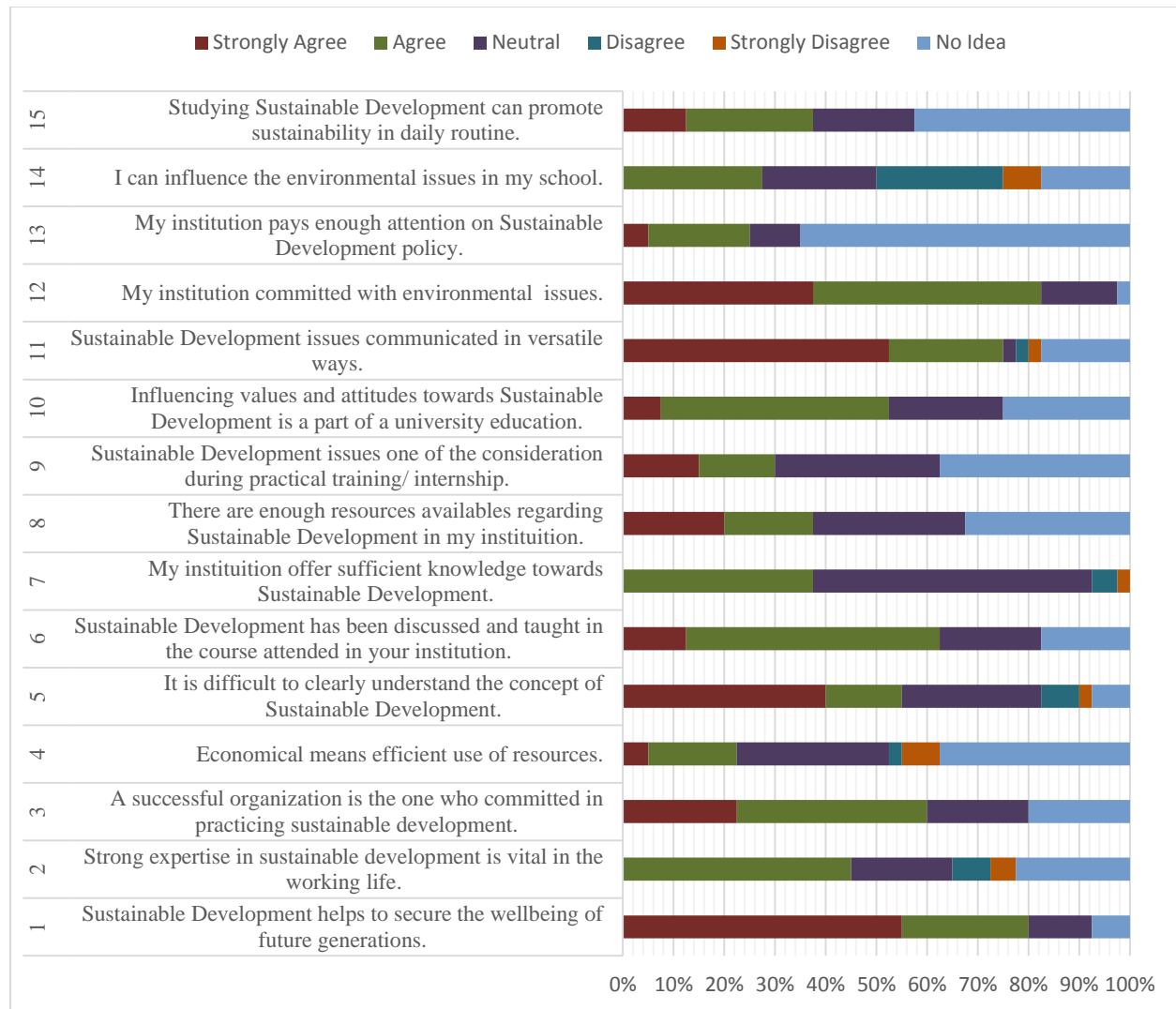


Figure 3: Student's insight towards an implementation of sustainable concept in their institution

#### 4. Conclusion

Nowadays, an awareness of students in sustainable development concept whom lead to practicing sustainable development attitude is obviously not in a good level. Most of them have a basic knowledge towards sustainable development concept but still this condition should be worried as the technology rapidly changes and upgrading. This research revealed that the university still has to play a major role on promoting the sustainable concept among their students. These efforts should including educating future professionals and enhancing students' skills and knowledge on sustainable development, increasing the university's social



responsibility on environmental protection, and broadening the visions, knowledge and opportunities for action on all environmental issues.

From the perspective of a sustainable development and green university and its external relations, higher institution should stress that they actively participates in the practice of social sustainable development, using his exemplary behavior directly promote the university's members especially student community to carry out the practice of sustainable development, and through their ability to develop research, spread the concept of sustainable development culture and promote the sustainable development. Students should be rewarded if they are able to practicing this concept in campus as a start for them to realize the benefits can be generated from this practice.

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