



**FACULTY OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

ASPIRATIONS OF STUDENTS IN THE DIPLOMA MUSIC PROGRAM

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Abstract

Students aspirations is a term commonly used in education, yet there is little agreement of what it means and even less understanding about its motivation. It is a purpose of this paper to trace the students' aspirations for their enrolment in the Diploma in Music program at UiTM. Sample for this study were 185 diploma students. Questionnaires were distributed to students which consisted of questions that sought to investigate the reasons why they had chosen to study music at UiTM and their aspirations posterior to the completion of their course at UiTM. Findings indicate that most of the students plan to further their study to improve themselves. Bachelors degrees in Music Education and Music Performance are two most chosen programs for further study. Interestingly, female students choose to further in the Music Education while male students prefer the Music Performance program. Interest in music, wanting to make music as a career, the Bumiputera policy and low fees are some of the main reasons why the students chose to pursue their studies in music at UiTM.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Most parents believed that education is the ticket to good jobs and higher income. We know that, each year, secondary school students throughout the country act upon their interests and desires to enter colleges and pursue their dreams in different fields and choose diploma programmes as the minimum level of tertiary education. According to Norziha (2006) a university is an institution of higher learning, where teaching and research at the undergraduate and postgraduate level is the core business.

Each year, there are a growing number of students in higher education institutions. As stated by Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin (2009), "Institusi Pengajian Tinggi (IPT) seluruh negara menawarkan 260,700 tempat untuk tahun 2009 termasuk 83,700 tempat di universiti awam yang mencatat peningkatan hampir 18 peratus berbanding 70,941 ambilan tahun lalu" (Bernama, Sunday, January 18, 2009). In Malaysia solely, there are 21 universities that are owned by the government and more than 500 private institutions which offers an array of courses in various fields. He adds that "ketika ini, terdapat 21 universiti awam (IPTA), 41 universiti dan kolej universiti swasta (IPTS), 21 politeknik, 37 kolej komuniti dan 485 kolej swasta di seluruh Negara" (Bernama, Sunday, January 18, 2009)

One of the courses that are rarely offered by higher institution is music at the diploma level. Universiti Teknologi Mara Malaysia (UiTM) is one of the Higher Institutions that offer the music course at the diploma level. It is a three-year (now two and a half years) preparatory programme in music where the learning structure of the program provides both practical and theoretical components in music. The programme introduces students the fundamentals of music theory, aural training, history, vocal or instrumental studies, as well as providing students with opportunities to perform in a group setting. Interestingly, the program offers Entrepreneurship subject in the course to develop independent and creative thinking ability among students. Generally, the standard prerequisite requirements to undertake a diploma program in music is a minimum grade 3 of any external music examination certificate or an equivalent standard performance. Being an institution that caters for the Bumiputera, lenient requirements have been laid out for the

program. However, interviews and auditions are made compulsory by the Faculty of Music for these students. Therefore, UiTM accepts students who may not have an extensive experience, knowledge or background in music.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Music helps us to explore our emotions and imagination as well as encourages creative thinking outside of music. It also indirectly develops self confidence by involvement in music making activities. The influence of music develops progressively throughout childhood and on to adolescence. During adolescence, individuals begin to plan for their future career by considering a number of occupational choices. Counselors, parents, and educators may assist them to explore the occupational options by providing career information, and giving support for their career plans by developing a greater understanding of their occupational aspirations. “Early adolescents make early career decisions in the form of curriculum choices for high school, and these choices can influence future postsecondary education and career paths” (Akos, Lambie, Milsom, & Gilbert, 2007, p.58).

Besides diploma programs, Faculty of Music UiTM also offers 3 degree programs. There are the Bachelor of Music Education (Hons.), Bachelor of Composition (Hons.) and Bachelor of Performance (Hons.). Rationally, each institution which offers several levels of tertiary education hopes that their diploma students will be the feeder for the next level. It is the same thing with UiTM where the hope is that the diploma level graduates will be the feeder for the degree programs. The intakes of students in the Faculty of Music in UiTM fluctuate each year. However, the numbers of students who pursue to the degree level in music are not consistent with the number of graduates in the diploma program. The table below shows the number of intake for the Diploma in Music at the Faculty of Music for the past 4 semesters.

Table 1: Student intake for the Diploma and the Degree programme for the past 4 semesters

Intake	Student intakes in Diploma Music	Diploma students who continue to the Degree
July08	104	11
Dec08	52	17
July09	78	11
Dec09	57	19

Concern for the fact that not all diploma graduates continue on to the degree programme has led to this study. There is a need to understand students' interest to continue their studies. Intentions and aspirations to pursue higher educational qualification among music students will include students' academic ability, their aspirations and personal goals in the future.

Therefore this research is to examine the aspirations of students undertaking Diploma in Music at UiTM and to uncover and identify the issues why a large number of diploma students prefer not to further their studies to the Degree level after graduating from the Diploma in Music programme.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of this research are:

1. To investigate the reasons why students in the Diploma in Music program at UiTM chose to pursue the course.
2. To examine the expectations of diploma students towards their studies in UiTM.
3. To investigate the aspirations of diploma students upon completion of their course at UiTM.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The main contribution of this research is the understanding of the diploma students' plans towards achieving their goals in the field of music. Findings from this study can provide information to the faculty regarding what the diploma students intend to do after graduating and if they plan to further their studies if they want to continue on to the degree. In addition, it can help the faculty to understand which degree courses are favored among the diploma students. It can be an important measurement of the demand of music courses at the Faculty of Music.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is focused on students in the Diploma in Music program at UiTM Malaysia in Shah Alam and does not aim to look at other diploma in music students at other institutions of higher learning or colleges.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the reasons for choosing to study music at UiTM?
2. What do diploma students aspire to do upon graduating from this course?
3. Which degree programs offered by the Faculty of Music would diploma students be most interested in?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adolescence is a phase when individuals are more concerned about their future rather than any of other developmental phases. According to Erikson, adolescence is the phase during which individuals prepare for their adult lives. This is when they start to develop their plans for the future. Their aspirations will be occupied with factors that will assist them in defining their desired path. Future aspirations are expounded as an expression of the desire to achieve and improve. Parents and adults surrounding these adolescents have the opportunity to help them to achieve their goals.

Definition of aspiration

Aspiration has been defined by Sirin, Diemer, Jackson, Gonsalves, and Howell (2004, p. 438) as the "educational and vocational 'dreams'" that students have for their future. Quaqlia and Cobb (1996), on the other hand explained, "aspirations can be defined as a

student's ability to identify and set goals for the future, while being inspire in the present to work toward these goals".

Kasser and Ryan (1993, 1996) suggested that there are two types of aspirations namely intrinsic aspirations which provide relatively direct satisfaction of basic needs, and extrinsic aspirations which are more related to obtaining external signs of worth and are less likely to provide direct satisfaction. Both intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations relate positively to the achievement of goals. Figure 1 shows the types of aspirations and examples:

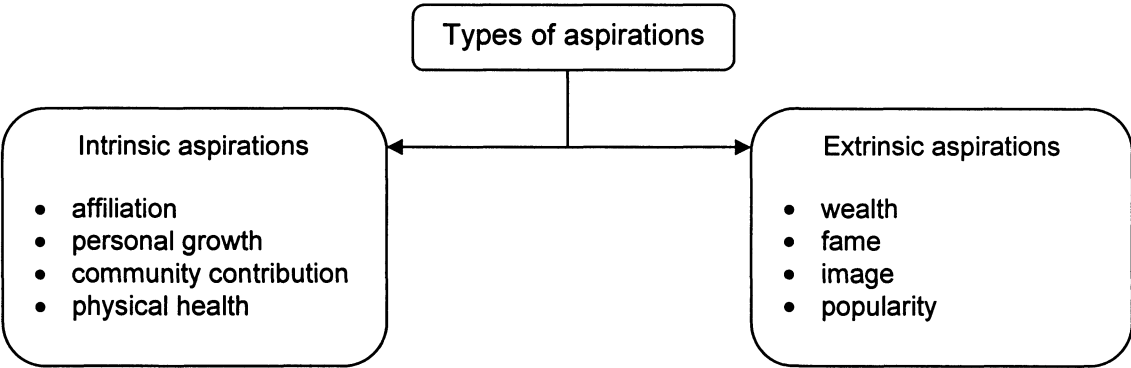


Figure 1: Types of aspirations and example

Factors that influence students' aspirations

Family and Parental Influences

The relationship between parents and children is a most important relationship. Different parenting styles may guide children in different ways through interaction between parents and their children. This is an important component that shapes children's view about themselves. In a study of educational aspirations in 12 countries, Buchman and Dalton (2002) reported on significance of parents in shaping, guiding, and supporting this process. According to Laming (2007), anxiety has made families worry about their children's future especially regarding their children's qualifications will can help secure employment. From research by Abbott-Chapman (2000), 88% of respondents indicated that their mother's advice and 76% their father's was important in making them study.

However, a research by Brooks, Milne, Paterson, Johansson and Hart (1997) revealed that family conflicts or breakdown can have an extremely negative effect on young people's schooling aspirations. It can often explain why people leave school, and why they do not aspire to go on to higher education. Thus, family factors have been identified as influences in the aspirations of their children's include the family as a source of encouragement and family members as role models.

Individual Influences

Studies have been conducted on the factors of personal influence on academic and career aspirations. From the findings by Gottfredson (2002), career and academic aspirations are clearly influenced by multiple intrapersonal and systemic factors. Other studies done by Marjoribanks (2002) and Sirin et al. (2004) found that some individual factors related to students' aspirations include their level of interpersonal skills, self-reliance, self-control, self-concept, and level of maturity and responsibility.