



The End of Academia? :
From *Cogito Ergo Sum* to *Consumo Ergo Sum*
Germany and Malaysia in Comparison

Kim-Hui, Lim

Institute of Occidental Studies (IKON)
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)
43600 UKM Bangi
Selangor, Malaysia
Email: limkimhui@yahoo.com

Wai-Mun, Har

Faculty of Accountancy and Management
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR)
Bandar Sungai Long
43000 Selangor, Malaysia
Email: harwm@mail.utar.edu.my

Abstract

The lack of academic and thinking culture is getting more worried and becomes a major challenge to our academia society this 21st century. Few directions that move academia from *cogito ergo sum* to *consumo ergo sum* are actually leading us to “the end of academia”. Those directions are: (1) the death of dialectic; (2) the surrender of culture to technology; (3) the slavery of market-driven education; (4) administrators’ hegemony and the syndrome of pseudo-professors; and (5) the bandwagon culture and wholesale purchase of ISO in education.

Keywords: Academia, education quality, commercialization of education and education industry.

1. Introduction

As Europe’s largest economy and most populous nation, Germany is well regarded as the centre of excellence not only in economic but in education. German invented the concept of “kindergarten”, which is a German word literally means “children’s garden”. They offer university students the best possible deal – a free education or *Bildung zum Nulltariff*. Many people not only in Germany but also around the world still uphold Wilhelm von-Humboldt’s idea on education. He is the founder of Humboldt Universität in Berlin while his published *On the Limits of State Action* in 1810 is considered as the boldest defence of liberties of the Enlightenment (Wikipedia 2005). *Habilitation* is the icon of highest level in education and the proud of German academicians. However, for many reason and development, Germany’s system of education has been in crisis for some time. Its education system has been criticized with the introduction of the post of Juniorprofessor. Flippo (2005a) highlighted the titles of two books that said it all: “Rotten to the Core?” (*Im Kern verrottet?*), and “Can the University Still Be Saved? (*Ist die Uni noch zu retten?*)”. Students’ protest and education reforms make education issues, especially higher education in Germany as an unexpectedly hot debate topic.

Education scenario in Malaysia shares the same spotlight as in Germany but is deemed much more “rotten” than its German counterpart. In the 1970s and 1980s, enrolment to university is biased to the elite group. After that, when local universities become more open, the elite group has become not interested and prefer overseas education, especially in the United States, Britain and Australia. As per Dr. Jomo Kwame Sundram (2005), a renowned academician locally and globally, when the number of local universities not enough to fulfil the need of education of the Malaysian society during the 1970s and 1980s, “who get the chance to go to university” is the question of debate. However, come the 1990s and new millennium, there are more than enough universities for the Malaysian. Thus, now, the question has

changed to “who get which university”, which included the issues of preferring foreign education institutions in Malaysia and overseas studies. These clearly illustrated the quality problems and prestige of Malaysian higher education. To sum it all, Jomo mentioned, “My hope for the students now has decline a lot”. Therefore, there are many challenges ahead for our academicians and educationists in this 21st century, be it in Germany, Malaysia or other countries and the biggest challenge that we are facing now as we foresee does not so much embed in the problems of infrastructures as some might have claimed. It is the lack of academic and thinking culture that we should worry. In this article, we would like to highlight a few directions or trends that will indeed lead us to “the end of academia.” Those directions, in which is moving academia from cogito ergo sum to consumo ergo sum are: (1) the death of dialectic; (2) the surrender of culture to technology; (3) the slavery of market-driven education; (4) administrators’ hegemony and the syndrome of pseudo-professors; and (5) the bandwagon culture and wholesale purchase of ISO in education.

2. Death of Academia: Its Reasons

Now, let’s go into the very basic etymological sense of the word “academia.” The words “academy”, “academic”, “academician” and the like have come into being through Plato (c.427-347 B.C.). Those words derived from the name of the school that Plato has founded, which he called “Academy,” the school where Aristotle studied. In Plato’s Academy, it is known that “Socratic questioning” was a teaching method, which was proposed by his teacher Socrates (469-399 B.C.) as the method of inquiry, method of seeking the truth by a series of questions and answers. However, this method of inquiry has been phased-out in today’s university, and there is hardly an environment of “Socratic questioning” which involved our university students and their mentors or teachers. Why the situation changes? What has happened? Here, we try to answer both the questions within the scope of those five directions mentioned earlier, starting from the death of dialectic.

2.1 The death of dialectic

Despite loud calls for lifelong learning in Malaysia, capitalist wave have transformed the fundamental of education from empowering the minds (thinking) for continues learning to manufacturing employees for contemporary labour usage. Therefore, Malaysian present education system has changed from the argumentative culture to indoctrination culture. Fortunately, this has yet seen in German education, most likely due to four reasons that are found in Malaysia but may be less in Germany. Those reasons are exam-oriented education system, suppression from government, parroting attitude and academic ignorance.

In Malaysia, exams act as a ‘quality control’ check on the potential employees, starting from seven year old primary students to the early twenties fresh graduates. Students’ academic achievement is continuously and constantly measured. In six year of primary education, students must went through a total of 13 examinations that are two internal school examinations per year, which are called the mid-term and final examination plus a public examination in the sixth year. Another 14 internal school examination plus 3 public examinations needed to pass if students wish to advance their education into the secondary level until end of “Form Upper 6th” level, which is the common entry level to public university. That figure already excluded the commonly practice of up to six monthly examinations per year from primary to secondary education. If included, another 78 examinations added bringing the total figure to an amazing 108 exams, which may scare the German students to death!

At university level (usually three years of two main semester per year), there are mid-semester and final semester examinations plus quizzes and grading assignments. Ignore the assignments and assume an average of three quizzes per semester per subject and just two semesters per year (sometimes, students take the optional 3rd semester), what will be the grand total of examinations a Malaysian graduate has to go through? Perhaps let leave this as a mathematical question for the readers to calculate but no reward for the correct answer. In Germany, primary education begins at age six and lasts four years. Secondary level generally starts at age 11 (grade 5) and it is divided into a less academic Hauptschule (to grade 10) leading to vocational education, an intermediate Realschule leading to a technical or business school and the academically oriented Gymnasium that leads to the Abitur or Matura diploma and a university education (Flippo 2005b). German university students can take a lot of time between required tests. Indeed, exams generally come at the end of the student’s career rather than at the end of courses or semesters (Flippo 2005a). However, recent effort to require students in many fields to demonstrate that they are making adequate progress by passing an exam midway through their study indicates that German education may sooner or later evolve into a heavily exam-oriented education system like in the Malaysian education scenario. As a result of heavy emphasise on examinations, the argumentative culture, which is needed for empowering thinking was being suppressed. Burniske (1998) claimed that, it was due to “the death of dialectics.” To Burniske, without dialectics, we will only produce students with sterile information or pernicious propaganda. Nonetheless, Burniske urged us, especially the critics not to blame the schools completely as the critics must also evaluate and judge the society, which preserves the system. In this case, the three other reasons are responsible. First, government suppresses the freedom of academic through policies and controlled media. Second, parroting attitude of students makes them passive and lack of critical mind and third, academic ignorance of both students and academician complete the key to unlock the death of dialectic for Malaysian education.

According to Burniske (1998) further, the cause of the death of dialectics in schools was due to the government suppression reason. Burniske elaborated, "In Malaysia, where I taught at an international school from 1992 to 1996, government censorship thwarted debate; in America, corporate brainwashing achieves much the same result." In general, the Malaysian state kept a tight rein on news and information through specific laws and broader rules relating to perceived sedition, internal security and official secrets. Some 47 pieces of legislation and ordinances effected mass media operations in the country. Some dated to the colonial era, such as the Printing Presses and Periodicals Act (1948) (Atkins 2002: 22). Specifically to education sector, there are various restrictions imposed on members of the academia through laws such as the Universities and Universities Colleges Act (UUCA) and Statutory Bodies Act (Manan 2005). Through the Malaysian Constitution, Article 10(1), the government controls the scope of freedom of speech and expression beyond oral speech or academic aspect. Shad Saleem Faruqi (1992) wrote that in Malaysia and Singapore, a wealth of prior restraints in the form of licence and permit requirements exist which enable the executive to determine whether, when and where the constitution freedom of speech, assembly and association are to be exercised. Therefore, do you think Malaysian education – institutions, teachers and lecturers – who need licence and permit to operate or teach dare to speak up their critical thought? Subsequent punitive measures could elicit comment that there is freedom of speech but often no freedom after speech. On the 2nd December 2007, Lisa Goh (2007) reported for The Star local Malaysian newspaper that about 100 young people made up mostly of undergraduates and post-graduate students gathered at the Preliminary National Youth Consultation Conference to seek certain paradigms included equal access to education and freedom from political interference in the universities. They also called for the abolishment of the UUCA and academic freedom. In the first Global Higher Education forum in Kuala Lumpur from 6th to 7th November, Fellow of the National Science Academy and National Physics Institute and former vice-chancellor of a local university, Professor Emeritus Dr. Zawawi Ismail urged Malaysia to be willing to make significant changes in university governance, policies, rules and regulations, as well as the UUCA. He believed that the freedom of professors in teaching, research, publication and classroom discussion must be assured while curtailing academic freedom and student activities can have serious implications on the creativity and dynamism of a learning institution (Chok 2007). In another aspect, political economy of electronic media in early 1990s causes equity ownership of media entities by political related companies and the growth of those companies. For example, Fleet Holdings grew to 'astronomical proportions' during the years of United Malays National Organization (UMNO, the most dominant political party in Malaysia) rule, having been initially set up in the 1970s to 'wrest control of the print media' from Malaysian-Chinese and foreign ownership (Atkins 2002: 22 – 23). At that time, Fleet controlled the Malaysian biggest private television channel, TV3, daily newspapers New Straits Times, Malay Mail, Berita Harian, Shin Min and three Sunday newspaper as well as extensive book publishing and industrial, transport and banking enterprises. Currently, the (political) investment arm of the government enlarged to including its agencies and government related fund. Among the government related organizations, agencies or funds are Ministry of Finance, Employees Provident Fund (EPF), Lembaga Tabung Haji, Khazanah Nasional, Valuecap Private Limited and Huaren Holdings Private Limited (MCA's investment arm; MCA is acronym for "Malaysian Chinese Association", the dominant Chinese political party that is part of the Malaysian ruling government lead by UMNO). With all these suppression, academic freedom is restricted in Malaysia. Thus, in this deem critical situation, Burniske's ideas should be pondered fairly and seriously not only by the government and the local media but the whole society as well. Meanwhile, the experience of John McPeck, a professor of education in Canada can be quoted from his article "What is Learned in Informal Logic Course?" (1991) to elaborate this uncritical mind of our current generation, which illustrated the parroting attitude reason responsible for the death of dialectics. Let us quote him in length: Most people have a tendency to believe what they read simply because it is "in print." I was reminded of this tendency recently while advising my daughter, a sophomore at the University of Michigan, on a possible term paper topic. I suggested that she might challenge the alleged "findings" in a paper on the heritability (sic) of IQ. She said to me: "Daddy, are you crazy? I can't do that. Can't you read? It says that they prove their point right here on page 40." As she pushed page 40 in front of my face, I thought to myself, "Boy, does she have a long way to go!" (McPeck 1991: 25)

The same parroting attitude reason is well elaborated by M. Bakri Musa (1999) in referring to the Malay society in his book *The Malay Dilemma Revisited*. He even quoted the teaching of Munshi Abdullah (a respected classic Malay scholar) regarding parroting attitude in his dedication page: "Between those who are thought and those who parrot is a vast difference" (ibid: v). According to him (1999: 129): "Learning in Malay society involved memorization and recitation of the holy Koran, and perfecting the prayers and rituals of Islam.... Everything was laid out and there was no room for discussion or questioning. It was not so much education as indoctrination." M. Bakri Musa's opinion was not only right in referring to the Malay society, but it is generally true for the wider Malaysian society.

In Malaysia, many professors seem to worry about our university students, whom they think are passive and having no critical mind. Prof. Khoo Kay Kim, a professor of history in University of Malaya then, as reported in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Silverman 1996: 24) feels sorry for the quietness of our students during their tutorials. According to him, students in the universities in Malaysia have become so quiet that not many lecturers have the interest to conduct

discussion session. The students do not want to ask. All of his students will only ask him to speak slowly so that they can copy them word by word and spew out the same phrases during the final examination and they are of course so allegiance towards authority. Prof. Osman Bakar also reported to have the same comment: "The students are extending their spoon-fed learning through university. They depend too much on lecture notes" (Silverman 1996). Their ideas are true in their own ways. However, do all of our teachers, lecturers and especially professors are prepared to be questioned with an open-mind? Quoting M Bakri Musa's experience when he invited his fellow colleague to give a seminar to his students and medical officers, his colleague commented on Bakri Musa's active participating students and junior doctors: "No respect for professors and elders!" (Bakri Musa 2003: 87). As for Bakri Musa, he viewed that comments as common in Asia, a reflection of the culture of reverence towards elders. For him, reverence and respect is a "yes" but blind obedience and uncritically accepting what is being uttered is "no" (ibid). The parroting attitude in student is made worst by academic ignorance culture. According to Lennard J. Davis (2005), we choose ignorance when we conclude that a thinker's work is a "must read" if he or she is famous, and not worth reading if the scholar is obscure. A genuinely inquiring mind can have thoughtful opinions about a thinker only after reading his or her work. When one actively ignores a thinker, trend, or way of thinking, one is engaging in academic ignorance. Very unfortunately, the "we" as mentioned include not only students but academicians and the society too, thus signalling that we all are actually not far from the end of academia. In Malaysia, Bakri Musa (2003: 87) wrote that his opinions often get rebuttal but through reasons such as he is not an ulama (Islamic religious teacher), thus cannot comment on religious matters or he is living aboard, thus his view on Malaysian affairs is not valid. These seem show that Malaysian society often suspend their critical judgement and spend more time evaluating the credentials of the writer/thinker than on the merit of the arguments.

Karl Sherlock's view of human intelligence as among the most fragile things in nature offered complement reasons to explain the death of dialectic and the lack of argumentative space phenomena in the German education previously in the 1930s. Based on Neil Postman's 1988 book entitle *Conscientious Objections: Stirring Up Trouble About Language, Technology, and Education* and Germany education as example, Sherlock (nd) stated that intelligence can be easily and quickly defeated by one of its several nemesis: ignorance, superstition, moral fervour, cruelty, cowardice and neglect. For example, the cathedral of human reason in Germany had been transformed into a cesspool of barbaric irrationality in the space of less than 10 years from most literate, cultured nation in the world in the late 1920s. By mid-1930, many of the most intelligent products of German culture were forced to flee. Examples are Einstein, Freud, Karl Jaspers, Thomas Mann, and Stefan Zweig. Even worse, those who remained were either forced to submit their minds to the sovereignty of primitive superstition, or worse still, willingly did so like Konrad Lorenze, Werner Heisenberg, Martin Heidegger, Gerhardt Hauptmann. On May 10, 1933, a huge bonfire was kindled in Berlin and the books of Marcel Proust, Andre Gide, Emile Zola, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, and a hundred others were committed to the flames, amid shouts of idiot delight. By 1936, Joseph Paul Goebbels, Germany's Minister of Propaganda, was issuing a proclamation which began with the following words: "Because this year has not brought an improvement in art criticism, I forbid once and for all the continuance of art criticism in its past form, effective as of today." By 1936, there was no one left in Germany who had the brains or courage to object (ibid). Beware! Those histories are capable of repeating themselves. Perhaps, in the contemporary capitalist era, intellectual might be more possibly burn in the flame of profit maximization intention and political colonization of the mind rather than brutal military-type of forces.

2.2 *The surrender of culture to technology*

The late renowned social critic and education analyst, Neil Postman in many of his works viz. *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School*; *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* alarmed us with the problem of our education today that lay within a few dimensions, with the over-dependency on the technology being one of the most important. Technology has now got its momentum in almost all kinds of human affairs included education. Two most alarming phenomena are technology has begun to change the human thinking culture from being an active thinker to passive reception of information and transforming the role of computer as our tool to as our objective. We briefly refer those as "technology worshipping" that explained the surrender of our culture to technology. According to Morrisett (1996), society can be credited for creating technology, but technology is simultaneously creating society. People have become "compulsive information consumers," who favour the passive reception of information as a form of entertainment over the more challenging act of thinking. In the twenties century, the dominant communications technologies have been the printing press, radio, television and telephone. Thus, if students' education rely only those communication technologies, namely through the medium of a book, newspaper, television or radio program, they will received the communication via a one-way street and described as "readers", "listeners" or "viewers." Although reading, listening and viewing all can involve thought and learning, because no conscious thought, response or action may be required, they can also be highly passive activities (ibid). In today capitalist world, the case didn't stop here until money came into play and blends technology worshipping with kulturindustrie phenomena to enslave our culture to technology.

In what Theodor Adorno described as a kulturindustrie phenomenon, information is packaged as an entertainment

commodity for making money. Perhaps, that explained the situation why books and television programs in Malaysia and Germany focus bias toward entertainment purposes rather than thinking stimulating contents. Nowadays, even documentary programs are watched as a form of entertainment while books are read for memorizing-oriented examination purpose only. However, the worst-case scenario is that the society, which included students and academicians tend to view intellectual information as entertainment while reversibly taking entertainment as factual information. For example, after the tsunami tragedy in East Asia on 26 December 2004, information on that tragedy was packaged with wild theories related to religion and fiction in various “documentary” films. Malaysian also snap up the Hollywood films *The Day After Tomorrow* for the purpose to find out any facts or clues that can explain that tsunami tragedy. The second phenomena of technology worshipping is regarding that our society does not bother whether one have the true knowledge. What they really bother is whether one knows how to use the computers! Computer, the key symbol of technopoly, is only the tool but we tend to treat computer as our objective. The dimension of humanities and cultures has become the rubric of the past. Computers “undermine the old idea of school” and defeats attempts at group learning, cooperation and social responsibility, thus substituting technical solutions for human ones. In this case, technology has evolved from being a support system for a culture’s traditions to competing with them and, finally, to creating a totalitarian orders with no use for tradition at all. In Malaysia, the main concept of “Smart School” is based on knowing computer skills. Likely, the “thinkers” behind this concept are the slave of technopoly. As a result, the academic and non-academic achievement of normal (so-called “traditional”) schools out-smart the Smart School. Likewise in Malaysia, German education also gives emphasise on the computer. As stated by Flippo (2005b), computer science courses are increasingly available. The German also have begun linking many of their schools via internet, which is what Malaysia wish to have in near future. Furthermore, while in the overwhelming mood on computers, Malaysia face the dilemma of lacking of teachers who know how to teach (or even use) the computer. Besides, most presentation in seminars might give more priority to the colourful Powerpoint than the content of a working paper. Powerpoint, therefore may have superseded the oratory skills. Access to computers and other technology in Germany is still often quite limited. Both that situations clearly highlighted what Neil Postman (1993) described as “technopoly: the surrender of culture to technology”. Why technology becomes so over-important? Simply, in this capitalist world, technology sells better than anything branded as “traditional”. This brings us to the next discussion point: the slavery of market-driven education.

2.3 Education as Industry: The slavery of market-driven education

The recent trend in the demand for a market-driven education has reached an alarming state. In this case, we may blame it on the capitalist economics factor, which uphold capitalists’ desires (sales and profit), thus academia as “slave” to serve this capitalists’ desires. Lee Harvey (2000) stated that in many countries since 1980s, there has been increasing pressure on higher education to contribute directly to national economic regeneration and growth. Increasingly, national and international assessments of the role and purposes of education indicate the need for higher education to contribute significantly to ‘meeting the needs of the economy’, not least to ensure future competitiveness. From here, we can see education has evolved into what Theodor Adorno called as *Kulturindustrie* (Cultural Industry, refer Adorno & Horkheimer 1993). *Kulturindustrie* is a term used to describe a culture (including education) that has been turned into an industry commodity, producing and selling worldwide according to the rules of the capitalist market, which are profit maximization is a rational behaviour and to maximize profit, the best way is to treat consumer as the king. Thus, the following five directions of education are heavily influenced by those capitalist market rules: (a) undermining of the importance of non-pragmatic and non-market-driven subjects; (b) rapid increases of sub-standard educations; (c) immortalizes the students as “King Consumer”; (d) preferring ‘Teacher’ academician than ‘Thinker’ academician (e) from free public education system towards paid private education.

Specifically, three first trends are seen as potential forces driving the academic world from *cogito ergo sum* to *consumo ergo sum*. Firstly, the market-driven education undermined the importance of other so-called non-pragmatic and non-market-driven subjects, especially humanities. Those subjects like philosophy, critical thinking, rhetoric and literature seem to have no-role in our universities’ curricular (especially in the private universities and colleges), except to serve the academic ornamentation and are in the process of being phasing-out. This tendency was basically evolving from our own very basic social construct that gave prominence to material values. Everywhere we go, people tends to talk about what kinds of house they have, what kinds of new car that they have just bought, what kinds of branded product that they have consumed or possessed. If we look at the emergence of all those private colleges and institutions, then it takes no expert to conclude that we have no place for knowledge of “knowing that” (i.e. Do you know that there’s God, that you are now reading this article) but only knowledge of “knowing how” (i.e. Do you know how to use a computer, how to ride a horse). By knowledge of “knowing that”, we are generally referring to wisdom, knowledge (episteme) stands in contrast to opinion (doxa); whereas knowledge of “knowing how” is vocational skills. Some might have claimed that Malaysian public universities had failed in competing with those private institutions in securing the students intakes. This is perhaps true in one sense when we try to equate knowledge with vocational skills per se. But skills alone don’t make a university. We can have all kinds of training colleges in order to cater for the need of labour

force in the market. If we want to have more skills workers in computer and multi-media, then we should have more computer schools or computer training colleges, if we need more teachers, then we should have more teacher training colleges etc. We should not keep on changing our educational duration of study just to fulfil the need of our labour-force, i.e. from four years to three years when we need more skill labours and subsequently shifting from three years to four years when there are no demand. Training colleges are skills-based whereas universities are knowledge-based. University education should teach students to appreciate knowledge, inculcate creative and critical thinking skills so that they know how to decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong in their decision-making processes in life. Besides that working skills should be part of it but should not form the totality of education objectives. Throwing away knowledge and replacing it with skills alone will be a long-term catastrophe. Job opportunities should not become the sole and only priority of education, but unfortunately, due to the lucrative incomes that we can generate in this sector, education has been denigrated into a factory and nothing else. And it seems that we are now heading to a direction that give priority to the knowledge of "knowing how" instead of knowledge of "knowing that." Thus an institution that thought the knowledge of "knowing how" alone does not qualify to be called as a university but a factory.

If you think the mentioned situation is bad, the second trend of rapid increases of sub-standard educations make it worst. Over emphasize on profitability and Adam Smith's doctrine of the *invisible hand* of market demand and supply have results in universities and colleges taking students whom are not qualify into public universities. It is a noble move to give more education opportunity to everyone but the market-driven motive that steadfastly bends to higher enrolments over the quality of teaching and learning should not be tolerated at all cost. In Malaysia, private universities and colleges especially, offer relaxed entry requirements and temptation of foreign university certification through locally study twinning programs flood up the labour market with sub-standard graduates. Prof Khoo Kay Kim has contrasted the situation in the millenium era with that of University Malaya's earlier days, when a mere 25 percent of its students who had come in as freshies would walk up the stage to receive their degree on convocation day, four or five years later. But now, the passing rate in the university is so high, exceeding 90 percent and that is even more apparent in the private universities because failing the students means shying away potential customers (Yusof Ghani, n.d). Sub-standard education and maximizing the enrolment (and graduation) of students may have causes serious unemployment problem among fresh graduates despite the fact that the courses these graduates studied are market-driven courses. That included business, management, economics and information technology courses. These sub-standard educations has prompt comments from employers that Malaysian graduates commonly lack of language proficiency (especially in English), lack of personality, textbook and exam oriented and unable to match the knowledge learned into working reality. Germany unemployment did not fare any better either, registering a scary 5.037 million in January 2005, the highest since the 1930s (BBC News 2005). This has prompt the government to have reforms in various sectors seen as contributing to that high figure and education is one of them.

Furthermore, technology advances has dramatically introduced new educational nomenclature: "virtual education," "virtual universities," "electronic learning," "electronic universities" and "cyberspace institutions". Many educational institutions seem driven to use newly found access to global data communication that will increase enrolments and will award a vast range of degrees through massive investments in distance education programs. Again, this fit into the one of the characteristic of kulturindustrie that is big scale of commercialization and marketing of education for profit (not knowledge). Therefore, we can often find lurid jargon that enticed students to pursue "alternative fast track diplomas" and "non-traditional paths", thriving marketing schemes and a less demanding academic requirement. When compared in-depth to the curricula of bona fide academic institutions, however, these ventures appeared to be little more than money-making plots managed by capitalistic-minded individuals who held verily the slightest regard for academic values. Their academic services lack academic authenticity and educational quality (Hamza & Alhalabi 1999).

The third trend is education immortalizes the students in education with an attitude of "the customer is always right". Taking students as "customer" and "king" is of utmost important for sub-standard education providers' survival and act as to "blind" students and their parents from questioning the quality of their education programs. Furthermore, students' evaluation is an utmost important factor in lecturers' performance evaluation, promotion consideration and salary incensement or bonus schemes. As a result, the students are overly proud of themselves while the academic institution's prestige and respect gone downwards. Quoting the Economist (2005) special report on higher education, most student, like customers everywhere, are looking for the best deal: how much time and money gain them what benefit? Thus, to attract students, an academic institution needs to market its strong point which unfortunately included awesomely beautiful buildings, almost guarantee passing exams and its popular branding. An Asian popular advice stating "you cannot fill up your glass with knowledge if you come with a glass full of water" seems to have another version for the academic institutions: "you cannot fill up your bank accounts with money if you didn't satisfy your customer-students".

The forth phenomena in a market-driven education system is that education institutions prefer 'Teacher' academician than 'Thinker' academician, if the education institutions were to choose either one. Why? Simply, lecturer's productivity is measured by number of teaching hours. Therefore, 'teacher' academicians who are more willing to teach rather than to do research contribute more toward the institution's (especially private college) profit. This causes

teaching alone to become the utmost important criteria in a lecturer's key performance index in private education institutions. That is a fault in the education institution aspect. Complement to that is the society view on academic job that we may call this as "careerist versus academician" phenomenon. "Careerist" minded school teachers to lecturers and professors view their academic post as careers, who assumed academic activities as "teaching only", the worst is assuming academic jobs as an easy job for stable income. They will not bother or might even discourage others to do research and publication. Worst, flexible working hours given by the education institutes for research purposes are utilized by careerists for non-academia but personal extra income generating activities like teaching part-time, giving paid tuitions or doing direct selling. In contrast, let us take lessons from the centenary appraisal of Kurt Wais by Chetana Nagavajaran (2006). Kurt Wais, an example of conscientious academician, was a renowned German Professor of Romance Philology and Comparative Literature at Tübingen University until his retirement in 1975. Professor Wais engaged in fresh research all the time and his teaching was based on research (ibid: 5). Not neglecting the responsible to students, Kurt Wais also expended his time daily on advising students included consultations on the phone often until shortly before midnight (ibid: 7).

Perhaps, one of the shocking effects from this market-driven education is the recent issue of "thesis outsourcing" in Malaysia, made the front page headline of *New Straits Times* (NST), a major local newspaper on 22nd December 2007. Reporting for the mentioned newspaper, Azura Abas & Minderjeet Kuar (2007: 6) wrote that hundreds of master's and PhD students are getting "professional thesis writers" to pen their thesis. The Higher Education Ministry of Malaysia acknowledged that it was aware of this, but as educational institutions were not complaining about it, little could be done to put a stop to this shameful practice. Among case study conducted and highlighted by NST included confession of a 38-year-old human resource manager, signing up for a master's degree program as a gateway to promotion and better pay. However, his work commitment made it difficult for him to finish his thesis, thus paying RM8000 to outsource his thesis after seeing an advertisement on the wall of his college toilet, which read: "100 per cent guaranteed pass. For more information call Ben at XXX". Other cases highlighted are a non-degree person helping a master's student with his project paper for RM2000 and confession of a "phantom thesis and assignments" writer that the outsourcing of academic works is an open secret among academic fraternity. Hence, all are back to the supply and demand market mechanism, the willingness to pay fees for outsourcing matching the willingness of phantom writers to accept the job.

Trends of slavery of market-driven education have also causes changes or demand of changes in the German education, most noticeably being the demand to end its free education system. A free education (*Bildung zum Nulltariff*) has become a popular tradition in Germany and Austria (Flippo 2005b). Thus, recent proposals to introduce tuition fees as "high" as 1000 DM (US\$650) per semester have produced intense debate in Germany despite that amount is considered as a bargain for American students. University overcrowding and under-funding sparked student protests in several German university towns in November and December 1997. The source of their discontent is, in a word, money, and many university and government officials agree they are right to be angry. Students complained that budget cutting at the state and federal level has left Germany's colleges and universities with too few faculty members, overcrowded classrooms, antiquated research facilities and inadequate libraries. Students requested for an explicit prohibition on the introduction of tuition fees (*studiengebühren*) and protested on the Higher Education Framework Law in which requires students in many fields to demonstrate that they are making adequate progress by passing an exam midway through their studies (rather than at the end of the student's career as currently).

Do all these mean that the market-driven education is fast becoming the undisputed winner? If you have not been convinced, Kaplan, a big education company even owned the *Washington Post* newspaper, Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) qualification is being seek all over the world and twinning programs with overseas education institution is everywhere in Malaysia and many others developing countries. In sum, the high level of education quality per se is not the main priority as compare to maximizing profit intention or unless maintaining education quality can bring in business and profit. Thus, the major concern is whether the high quality of education can survive along with profit maximization intention? In this case, the American education could still give a "yes" answer but certainly not in Malaysian education. The German education could still, at least at the moment reject the temptation to be turned into a *kulturindustrie*. Nagavajara (2006: 11 – 12) still believed that it is in consonance with the German tradition of linking teaching and research together, and the primary assumption is that research is part of one's daily life and that every academician must be engaged in some form of research at all the time. He also believed that a "research university" not necessarily a richly endowed institution whose members manage to publish in "peer-reviewed" journals with high "impact factors", but a community of scholars whose daily life is propelled by a thirst for knowledge under the guidance of an erudite, perspicacious and dynamic leader (ibid: 6). However, if government support in term of funding and others mean continue to decline while growing trends of education commercialization intensified, *kulturindustrie* destiny for German education is inevitable.

2.4 Politics and Education: Administrators' hegemony and the syndrome of pseudo-professors

Academic freedom with responsibility is the root-word for academic performance and excellence. Do we really have that basic freedom? In Malaysia, various restrictions imposed on members of the academia through laws such as the Universities and Universities Colleges Act (UUCA) and Statutory Bodies Act (Manan 2005). In our current education, academic achievement has been so much bureaucratized. Even within the same institution, one has to apply in order to be promoted when indeed the institutions have already had the records of their staff in place. How if one is talented, and was recognized academically worldwide but has refused to go through all those application hurdles, as it is too tedious? Where should we put this kind of academicians? Does it mean that he or she is not a good academician? This administrative process creates a hegemonic culture for the administrators and the so-called pseudo-professors to have their say, for example if one candidate has filled in their forms, registered their research etc. Lately they even have to sit for the exam. This is the relationship of power that retards our academic excellence. The more examinations that we have created will sink our academic culture further and it gives the administrators the right to determine or upper hand. The opposition culture will be labelled, as rebellion and eventually nobody will challenge for the sake of gaining favour or promotion. Furthermore, in this marketing oriented world, the academician performance is at the hand of students. Students' evaluation is the yardstick for measuring academician's performance. Those are widely practice in Malaysia especially in the private education institutions.

Let us go back to the very basic. Just let our academicians do their research, write and publish freely i.e. focus on their core-business. Give them less non-academic stuffs, less non-productive meetings and less politicking. Anyway, at the end of the day, it is the number of good quality works that count internationally and not the number of committees that they represented, not how many non-publishable reports that they have produced and not how many meetings that they have already attended. It is the quality of work that moulds the academician. It is the quality publications that make the university, not the reports and meeting attendance. The attendance of an academician alone in the university does not bring any result if they don't publish. As an academician, one do not have, as the Germans called it, *Praesenzpflicht*, the duty to come to the university, out of his teaching hours and appointment time. Our academicians too should be encouraged to pursue their post-graduates studies and applying for grants and/or fellowships from internationally recognized body or foundation for their research. They should be encouraged to go global. We should not only go for local resources if we want to be a global player in the era of globalization. However, Malaysia education seems practicing the reverse situation, widely believed due to political reasons. Two highly publicized cases of "force" resignation by two top academicians clearly illustrated the shame of Malaysian higher education to the world. First, it was Prof KS Jomo, an internationally renowned economist. Jomo left University Malaya (the top and longest established public university in Malaysia) for the United Nation early this year to take up appointment of assistant secretary-general under Kofi Annan after "decades of frustration, discrimination and non-recognition of his academic and intellectual talents and qualities"(Malaysiakini.com 2005). Jomo was never given any senior appointment, whether as dean of faculty or head of department, although many of his students have occupied these positions. His application to be senior professor was supported by three Nobel laureates as reference, which included economist Amartya Sen, and Joseph Stiglitz. Nevertheless, it was rejected. The second case is still a hot issue currently and the academician victim is Associate Prof Dr Edmund Terence Gomez, also from University Malaya (UM). Despite given strong verbal assurance by the university's vice-chancellor, Gomez was denied a two-year leave of secondment to take up the prestigious research appointment as Project Manager at the Geneva-based United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) to pioneer global research on racial conflict. The university claimed it turn down the application because it needed the service of the lecturer (Puah 2005). To make the case worst, her head of department has told Gomez's wife that any application for unpaid leave will not be entertained. This has prompt Gomez (2005) to state that his and his wife cases "suggests a serious case of victimisation and abuse of power by the university authorities." According to one of the letter posted in malaysiakini.com website by "Mr. Fed Up" in 26 May 2005, the writer stated: "The Dr. Terence Edmund Gomez saga reeks of discrimination of the worst kind. Would things have turned out differently if he wasn't a non-bumiputera?" (bumiputera literally means "son-of-the-soil" that used to refer the Malay and various aboriginal groups as "early settlers of the country"). The University Malaya Academic Staff Association (PKAUM) President, Rosli Mahat claimed that e-mails sent out to the university in-house e-mail list were vetted and filtered. Discussing on those censorship issues and Gomez's case were never uploaded, thus shutting down their means of open communication (Manan2005). Thus, in the two cases, the international recognition for Jomo and Gomez should be seen as an honour to the universities and their outstanding achievements should be encouraged. Politic or racial discrimination should not interfere and control the academic freedom.

4.5 The bandwagon culture and wholesale purchase of ISO in education.

ISO has been generally accepted in most of the countries as a symbol of quality especially in measuring products. Some criticize the use of ISO as a kind of Americanization but even with that, Americans themselves might not thrust their education business in the hands of ISO alone. No doubt ISO might have its worth in 'commoditized' industry but we should not worship ISO like God or as a creation of God. However, in our current society, it is unfortunate to say that the term "ISO" has become a fashionable word to be used to hypnotize the consumers and sometimes even being

manipulated as an ornamental or packaging label. The fear for not being granted the label of ISO is increasing. ISO alone doesn't equate with value of quality. It can no doubt produce a product with certain relative level/norm of standardization. But our students shouldn't be treated as products. What good does (is so great of) standardization in education do anyway? Standardization alone will kill creativity and different types of intelligences; standardization will push away those talented, creative and critical thinkers. Hence, we should apply ISO with caution in the field of education. For a university to become a renowned institution, it is not ISO that matters but it is the number of thinkers that we produce, the qualities of researchers that we generate, the facilities for graduates and undergraduates (i.e. labs, computers, reading materials, academic-friendly environments and academic-friendly academicians and supporting staffs) that we provide that matters. Therefore, if that is the direction/pathway we take, we should give more priority in producing great thinkers. With those pools of thinkers, the universities will surely flourish as centres of learning and innovation. Let us get back to the core business of a university, and give a better academic environment to our academicians and not engaged in the peripheral bureaucratic battles. University should not only talk about technology transfer, university should talk about indigeneous development. Let us produce people like Immanuel Kant, Edward Said, Albert Einstein etc. If we believe in Malaysia *Boleh* (literally means "Malaysia *Can*" or "Malaysia *Capable*"), then this is the right direction that we should pursue. Malaysia *Boleh* in producing our own thinkers who can shape the epistemology and who can shape the academia! We will then harvest the results when there are more thinkers around. People will go to the experts and thinkers for knowledge and the rest will be secondary in the process. With more thinkers around, we will surely be able to impress/attract more talented foreign students. With the introduction of ISO, there are more documentation and procedures, more papers than publications. In order to have the records, we want everything to be documented, which at last sacrifice the number of publications and more prospective/potential papers have been wasted in the process. And it is of course not environmental-friendly! But can ISO help us to produce thinkers?

The above signs, which this article has mentioned are something that we should ponder. If we are not serious in rectifying this dilemma, then perhaps we will later throw away the academia replacing it with an Academy Oscar for the future generation promulgating or contributing toward "the end of academia." The end of academia will mean the death of university. Or maybe we would like to celebrate this funeral!

References

- Adorno, Theodor & Horkheimer, Max. (1993). The culture industry. Source: www.earlabs.org/text/historic/hork.pdf. Access date: 21 April 2004.
- Atkins, William. (2002). The politics of Southeast Asia's new media. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press.
- Azura, Abas & Minderjeet, Kuar. (2007). Phantom writers an 'open secret'. *New Straits Times*. 22nd December: 6.
- Bakri Musa, M. (1999). *The Malay Dilemma Revisited: Race Dynamics in Modern Malaysia*. New York: to Excel.
- Bakri Musa, M. (2003). An education system worthy of Malaysia. Petaling jaya, Malaysia: Strategic Information Research Development (SIRD)
- Burniske, R. W. (1998). The shadow play: How the integration of technology annihilates debate in our schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*. Vol. 80 (2). Source: <http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kbur9810.htm>. Access date: 7 January 2008.