

ICONSPADU 2021**International Conference on Sustainable Practices, Development and Urbanisation****THE SIGNIFICANT OF HAVING DOUBLE DEGREE MAJOR IN
TALENT DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract

COVID-19 has recently given challenging times to all institutions, especially higher education. The scenario has formally changed from conventionally pedagogies towards the introduction of digital platforms in teaching and learning in ensuring the university sustainability. The sudden transition in the educational industry has pushed the university to diversify the double degree major offered in attracting local or international students to opt in. Many researchers had discovered the advantages of a double major degree towards university but it limits graduates' talent's characteristic. Hence, the aim of this research is to investigate the effects of a double major degree in the characteristics of a graduate's talent in Malaysia. The research was conducted qualitatively towards the legal profession industry with the involvement of 18 law graduates who completed the double major law degree offered by the university. The outcome of this research showed that the double major law degree had developed five main characteristics which were multitasking, adaptability, emotional intelligence, analytical skills and knowledge. These five main areas of talent characteristic development, suit the demand in the legal professional industry to produce well-rounded graduates in the legal profession. As for the recommendation, it gives an opportunity to the university to benchmark the outcome of this research in re-formulating the policies and regulation towards offering double major degrees on other courses.

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1. Introduction

A competitive entrance into the legal profession in Malaysia has emerged as the exclusive talent for law firm sustainability. The challenge in handling various clients with different backgrounds and the need to respond to all legal issues require a well-rounded law graduate. With the ability to cover more than one specialisation area, a double major degree seems to suit this need. Steagall et al. (2021) defines double major degree as undergraduate programs that incorporate two major fields over five or six years of studies. For example, the double major in bachelor of law requires five years for civil law and Syariah law. Students usually receive a discounted credit hour compared to undergoing a single degree one after another.

On a different note, double major degrees offer options to graduates to diversify their career, rather than remaining on a single and straightforward career path. In fact, new opportunities exist in the legal profession for graduates with a mix of knowledge and skills: advocates and solicitors acting as Syariah counsel; advocates and solicitors as arbitrator and mediator. Moreover, there is an increasing demand for lawyers with multiple skills and literacies in the legal profession. In adapting between two disciplines, double major graduates may be more adaptable in terms of their skills and being more flexible and responsive (Arrabal, 2019; Shenderova, 2018).

To thrive during this turbulent period, a law firm must retain a talented and high performer to meet client demands and maintain the firm's reputation. A product of good legal education seems to possess cognitive abilities and skills to meet the firm's requirements. This research was conducted qualitatively towards the legal profession industry with the involvement of 18 law graduates who completed the double major law degree offered by the university. The research investigated the experiences and skills developed by the graduates that affect their characteristics which are vital in the legal profession. The research was carried out with a qualitative survey process. In this article, we discuss the characteristics possessed by double degrees law graduates which suit the demand in the legal profession, i.e multitasking, adaptability, emotional intelligence, analytical skills and knowledge. Based on our findings, we make recommendations for institutions to develop and implement double degrees to other courses.

2. Literature Review

The most common ground for pursuing a double major is the career path and career growth. In fact, double major has successfully prepared students for work (Yates et al., 2020). In a study conducted by Zhu and Zhang, (2021) showed that 68 percent of students who chose a double major were being competitive in industry. Further, Evans (2019) supported the findings with the view that students opted for double majors aimed to improve their prospects in the labor market. Despite having high expectations on future benefit, research on the effect of double majoring in students' characteristics are relatively low (Khan, 2021; Lima, 2018; Nakissa, 2020; Rosenberg et al., 2020; Sedeño, 2018). Most research are focusing on law education and how it affects the legal profession rather than the benefit of combining two major field into one degree and it effects in students' characteristics (Ariyanda & Arifyani, 2020; Chang et al., 2017; Nugraha et al., 2021; Rosenberg et al., 2020; Yuan, 2021). Zhu and Zhang (2021) suggest

that double major offers more benefits than single major especially in terms of students' academic characteristics.

Budiartha (2020) viewed law education as the introduction to legal concepts and content which cultivate students' ability to legal analysis and thinking, decision making law as well as understanding the rights and obligations in adapting the law-abiding behaviour. The single major usually involves civil law education in preparing students to become advocates and solicitors and members of judiciary. The civil law education is focusing only on one legal system, i.e. the civil law legal system (Yang & Song, 2019). McRenoyld (2016) suggested that this law education is teaching people to abide by the law and understanding the governmental structure. However, law education is wider than only one legal system. In shaping students' characteristics in the legal profession, it is vital to incorporate more than one major in legal education (Kuchuk et al., 2019; Wang, 2020). Even with single major is proven to improve students' characteristic in terms of analytical skills, legal thinking and decision making, double major is suggested could produce adaptable, knowledgeable, multi-tasking and emotional intelligence law graduates

The legal knowledge as defined by Mavroudis and Bournelli (2016) refers to basic concepts and law-related knowledge in daily life to ensure the understanding of the protection of rights. While Banakou et al. (2016) suggested that legal knowledge covered the principle, meaning, action and amendment of law. This legal knowledge contributed to students' characteristics, but only covered one main legal system. For other countries with a single legal system, the existing legal education with a single major seems to be sufficient enough to equip students with necessary skills. However, as a dual legal systems country, there are new niches in the legal profession in Malaysia which demand law graduates with double major knowledge, specifically civil and Syariah law knowledge. Hence, it requires law graduates with hard skills and soft skills (Damayanthy et al., 2020)

Hard skills are well known skills which are well-equipped by law schools. However, soft skills such as emotional intelligence, analytical skills, adaptability and multi-tasking are among the skills which require more effort from the students. Damayanthy et al. (2020) suggests that the change in the legal profession, especially on the characteristics of legal professionals will be different by the end of this decade. If the law graduates remain the same as it was traditionally, it becomes vague on how law graduates can be competitive in the legal profession. Thus, this research includes graduates' talent and employment rate in the legal profession as the outcome of a double major law degree to understand how a double major law degree may affect graduates' characteristics in the legal profession.

As discussed deliberately with the current pandemic COVID-19 situation, many universities globally had taken a proactive action in uplifting graduates' employability by offering double degree majors. Hence, this research profoundly found gaps either theoretically or practically. In the theoretical part, this study offers the conceptual framework of a double degree law major based on graduate's characteristics required by the legal profession in Malaysia. On the practical part, this study can be brought as a blueprint documentation for legal firms in hiring legal assistants for the future.

3. Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following questions

- i. What are the talent characteristics possessed by double major law degree graduates?
- ii. What are the talents needed by the legal profession industry?

4. Purpose of the Study

- i. To examine the talent characteristics possessed by double major law degree graduates.
- ii. To investigate the talent needed by the legal profession industry.

5. Research Methods

In terms of the qualitative method, the researcher has conducted semi-structured interviews with eighteen law graduates that had undergone double major law degree. Thus, eighty informants were interviewed to ascertain their perspectives on the types of skill required and held by the legal profession sector. Since the COVID-19 Pandemic was hit tremendously all around the world, it gives such a restraint to the researcher to meet and interview face-to-face. Alternatively, all the eighteen law graduates were selected via convenience sampling technique and the session was conducted via Google Meet.

Before the interview began, all the informants were briefly informed with regards to the research's objective in order to have a clear picture and perspectives about this research. An informant interview guide was utilised to obtain informants' views on the kinds of skill necessary and held by the legal profession industry's required double major law degree. Between 15 and 25 minutes were allotted for interviews, which were audiotaped. Following verbatim transcription of the audiotapes, two investigators performed a qualitative thematic content analysis to establish a preliminary classification system. The coding method allowed the systematic identification of analytic patterns and theoretically significant ideas revealed by the data. Participants provided little demographic information. eighteen interviews in English were performed to ascertain their capacity, proficiency, and comprehension of the language. All data gathered was analysed using NViVo Software, which was designed specifically for the purpose of interview analysis.

6. Findings

According to the interviewed session, most of the informants were between the ages of 24 to 27; 60% male and 40% female. Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed two main themes which were:

- 1) Talent possessed by the double major law degree graduates.
- 2) Talent needed by the legal profession industry.

6.1. Theme 1: Talent Possessed by The Double Major Law Degree Graduates.

This section will discuss the answers to RQ1 by using qualitative data software, NViVo. New themes that emerged from the interview excerpts were also presented. The findings of the talent possessed

by the double major law degree graduates were presented in this section. From the findings, 90% of the informants (N=18) informed that three main talents possessed were multitasking, emotional intelligence and knowledge. C1 mentioned *“After I finished my double degree, I learned many skills and talents especially on how to be a multitasker. It helps me with cases and courts”*. Meanwhile, C9 informed me that *“Multitasking does help me to be better in law practice”*. Moreover, C10 did describe the talents as *“I believed that as being a lawyer, by practising a good emotional intelligence, multitasking and being knowledgeable are the most important skills needed ensuring success in the legal field.”* In addition, there were (3) employees stressed on the importance of having good traits in practising law in Malaysia. According to C5, *“by being a double major law graduate, the program itself has helped me to be more knowledgeable in many fields and yet with the right mind of emotional intelligence, I manage to obtain a good result during my study. So, on top of everything, when I start my chambering, I am being more multitasking and working diligently.”*

Regarding Theme 1, it shows that a double major law degree could enrich law graduates with exceptional knowledge, more positive attitude in managing legal work, proven to be multitasking by the ability to handle multiple tasks during chambering period and having positive attitude in managing emotion which led to emotional intelligence.

6.2. Theme 2: Talent Needed by the Legal Profession Industry.

Basically, in this theme, all the informants were informed and mentioned various kinds of talent needed by the legal profession industry. All the informants responded eagerly and excited in listing the most wanted talent needed while practising law in Malaysia. As mentioned by C18, *“When it comes to talent needed by the law graduates, there are so many things required but however, I would put in 5 words which are hardworking, multitasking, adaptability, analytical skills and knowledgeable.”* Apparently, C17 stressed that *“when it comes to the talent needed, I can simply name any, but somehow, I would like to emphasise on analytical skills which is for me it is really important. As a lawyer, we have so many cases that we have to refer, implement, adapt and adapt with the current case that we face, with the analytical skills possessed, it does help me to sort things into places...”*. On the other hand, C11 had mentioned that *“to be a great lawyer, you have to upskills your knowledge and adaptability because, as you know, there are various types of law we do have in Malaysia and not to mention we also have sharia law as well, hence, in order to be well rounded lawyer, we have to adapt and be knowledgeable. Being a lawyer is not just winning and losing but we bring hopes to our client.”*

Theme 2 proves that a double major law degree could produce law graduates with the talent needed by the legal profession industry. Law graduates with high knowledge in two major legal fields tend to be more analytical and adaptable in practice. They show high willingness to handle multiple cases at one time and are proven to be more talented in handling client demands. Apparently analytical skill is the most crucial skill in the legal profession. With a double major law degree, law graduates are occupied with high analytical skill when analysing the application of law into the case at hand. Nevertheless, based on Theme 2, the interview session with all respondents shows that the mastery of legal skills is the yardstick to the sustainability of the law firm.

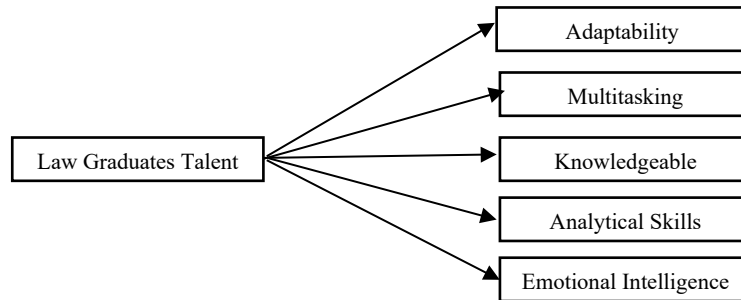


Figure 1. Developed research framework based on findings (Almutairi, 2021)

According to the findings obtained, the implication of this will bring this study as a picture of a skills revolution, and our world is a microcosm of that transformation. It is inevitable that graduates from higher education institutions (HEIs) would be forced to match their skill levels with the employability skills requirements of current and future job settings as a result of this call to time. This demonstrates that the proactive collaborations between the government and education should be strengthened. Because of this, higher education institutions (HEIs) should continue to develop employability skills in their students and aid them in becoming competent in the use of these talents even before graduation and entry into the job. Government employers should also establish appropriate intervention activities to assist graduates in maintaining and improving their acquired competences and skills, which are essential to continue in and progress in their current roles.

The aforementioned findings have implications for both study participants and the general public. It is made known to government employers which employability qualities may have a significant influence on an employee's contextual performance, allowing job searchers more opportunities to perfect these abilities. Despite the fact that certain talents may be disregarded in terms of contextual behaviours, their continued development may be useful in specific aspects of job performance, such as task performance. Employee skill development for both task and context performance would be beneficial if organisations could consider balancing employee skill development for both task and context performance. Government employees may get enough training in the employability skills that are necessary to enable the effective and efficient execution of their responsibilities that necessitate extra-role behaviours that are helpful to the overall welfare of their workplace.

7. Conclusion

As a conclusion, the double major law degree offered by local schools helps law graduates to be more competitive and to add value to their resumes by incorporating a variety of abilities into their training. Competition in the industry is obvious, as shown by the fact that the majority of senior legal practitioners are "conquering" the legal market at the moment.

Hence, the findings of this study are truly eye-opening for the legal industry, and how law graduates with dual major degrees would have fared in this market if the data had been published earlier. People in need of their services are in desperate need of their abilities and talents, which are put to professional use. Multitasking, adaptability, emotional intelligence, analytical capabilities, and knowledge are some of the other important talents that informants have mentioned or mentioned themselves. With

the growth of these five main areas of talent characteristic development, the legal professional sector can fulfil the need for well-rounded graduates in the legal profession. As for the proposal, it offers an opportunity for the institution to use the findings of this research to re-formulate the regulations and legislation in order to grant double major degrees on other courses based on the findings of this study.

Moreover, this study also offers a suggestion to the education and industry player to take a short-term view. The findings of this study can be documented and blueprinted in order to ensure that the quality of talents is met. In all, it shows that this study has met the objectives and yet it could help to expand the economy, meet industry needs and reduce reliance on “foreign” talent. It is clear from this study that closer links between education and industry are required to reduce skills gaps. Merit-based assessment methods should also be incorporated to drive up skill quality.

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