Conceptual University-of-the-Future Business Model in the Digital Era: Community engagement in improving the employability rate of youth and soft skill through a digital platform

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Abstract: The students are the country's potential leader. Building a strategy for creating a better nation needs to start with first nurturing the young. Universities play a vital role in building up educationally balanced students and also personality to achieve goals of the UN SDG. The research introduced a few strategies to address the financial problems of the student to sustain their university life by establishing a hiring student web portal called "i-Mahna." By conducting a literature review and an interview with our target users to find out the real challenges they face and what is the possible solution can be introduced; analysing and formulating the conceptual solution using business modelling tools such as BMC and VPC. The BMC and VPC have validated after conducting the interviews with the prospect users. The primary goals of this research are to help disadvantaged students survive their university life by providing them with a platform to find a part-time job to sustain their lives and enhance the employability of the student by allowing university partners to advertise any suitable placement for them. Hence, this paper offers a validated conceptual Malaysian University-of-the-Future (UotF) business model with a focus on community engagement programmes. The value proposition of the conceptual business model is to enhance the wellbeing of Malaysian B40 youth in improving the employability and entrepreneurship rate through Balanced Skill Building and i-Mahna Digital Platform.

Keywords: Youth, Wellbeing, SDG8, SDG1, SDG4, SDG2, BMC, VPC, Employability, UotF Digital platform.

I. INTRODUCTION

All economies around the world are currently experiencing an economic slowdown and Malaysian companies including large conglomerates are not spared from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic [1]. Covid-19 crisis has left a negative impact on many sectors in Malaysia. Thus, most companies had to retrench their employees, forcing their employees to take unpaid leave and even worse deducting their salary [2]. Therefore, the percentage of unemployment will rise due to the impact of Movement control order (MCO). The department of statistics has revealed, due to the impact Covid-19 crisis the percentage rose by 17.1 per cent over 610,500 people have been employed in March as compared to the same month in last year, 521,3100 [3]. In addition, the unemployment youth age group from 15- 30 years old rate is 6.9% Which makes the youth the highest unemployed rate in the first quarter of the year [4]

Most companies closed hiring new employees during a pandemic crisis to cut costs. Many graduates who finish the study in the early years are unemployed due to the covid-19 crisis. Clearly, 29.3% came from graduates who are unemployed.

Some of them find other alternatives while seeking for part-time jobs to survive during the pandemic crisis. Therefore, before covid-19 crisis happened, part-time jobs were the best alternative for students to solve their financial problems. Based on Mark, as cited in Endsleigh (2015) indicated that eight out of ten (77%) students are now working part-time to help fund their studies and More than half (57%) of students who work part-time spend their additional income on necessities – accommodation, food and household bills. Sometimes, the study loans they get from the government are not enough, and it only covers the tuition fees, and they don't have enough money to buy their food[5]. They cannot focus if they did not get enough nutrition, recent studies have demonstrated that diet affects students' thinking skills, behaviour, and health, all factors that impact academic performance [6].

This research aims to provide solutions for students who have financial problems at university. The conceptual approaches suggested for these issues are to develop a recruiting web platform for students to find any suitable work for them and to provide university partners/employers with service to advertise any vacancies for students to do their part-time job. Besides, students can also find a firm to do their internship by uploading their curriculum vitae on this website, and employers can find appropriate applicants for recruitment. This approach is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN) number 8 (decent work and economic growth), 1 (no poverty), 4 (quality education), and 2 (zero hunger). In the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, the intention was to create a collection of common goals that would address the increasing environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world.

II. OBJECTIVES

The main goal of this research is to establish solutions through a validated business model using conceptual approaches that help the community of the university especially students to survive on campus, especially those from a low-income family(B40). Other than that, I-Mahna also focuses on building a conceptual University of the Future business model for sustainable implementation. Moreover, to reduce the poverty rate among B40 communities and enhance the wellbeing by increasing the knowledge and skills of the youth and ensure the accessibilities to quality and balanced education for B40 students to survive in the real world. With these opportunities provided by employers, students will be prepared to enter the realm of work with several skill sets. Not only does this approach benefit the students in terms of employment and job creation, but it also offers employers the ability to find competent candidates for their firm. The engagement from the alumni is essential as it can keep the connection with the university and gain information about current industry needs. Ultimately, by developing an online recruitment portal, the approach proposed for these issues would have a significant impact on communities and contribute to the youth wellbeing of society and will also be recognized by other countries.

III. METHODOLOGY

This section will be discussing the methodology used by our team to gather information regarding this project. Due to various circumstance, we are limited to implement a few approaches which are these three as follows: -

A. Literature Review

Literature review approach is a method that we research through existing written material that is highly related to our project. We gather articles from the internet from various perspectives toward the student employment from current circumstances, benefits and consequences that may contribute to the success of our project.

B. Benchmarking

To solidify our proposed system, we had conducted a simple benchmarking procedure toward existing systems that have the same principles as ours. We picked a few systems as a base structure by reviewing their basic features and system flows in order to further enhance our idea on the system which will be developed.

C. Online Survey

For the last approach, we conducted an online survey for the purpose of collecting user opinion on job-seeking and hiring. Our survey had focused on questions that inquired about their agreement toward a new system which can assist those processes to all users related to the proposed system. The input from respondents will be useful to support the establishment of our project.

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IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Student Part-time Employment

The most predominant business model that is taken by the majority of universities is broad-based teaching, which blends the curriculum into whole learning experiences. They emphasize experimentation experience using the body of knowledge. To enhance the learning experience, improvement in student part-time employment needs to be given attention where many valuable experiences can be gained through a real working environment, even if it is not a job that requires specialized skills. Though according to the available research, part-time working students are proven to be an obstruction and don't improve any of their learning experiences. This is because too much labour or time consumption can affect the student's lives negatively by neglecting the main priority of their roles when the job is not selected carefully. Therefore, the student needs to be cautious in starting a part-time job and requires the university management to monitor them with specific standards. [7]

B. Benefits of Part-time Work for Students

A part-time working student is seen as tough, and in reality, it requires extra effort and motivation to keep you going. The reason for that is because of the necessity to maintain their grades even while working part-time, and many those that failed to cater both of them ended up focusing on the work and getting only passable grades. However, once we are capable of maintaining both of them at the same time, many benefits can be gained. First is money that can be used to cover living costs, entertainment, and luxuries. Second is budgeting skills where to spend money wisely that is often learned by those who earn their own money. Next is time management from the experience of catering time for both student lives and part-time jobs and being able to fill leisure time valuably by those who have too much free time[8]. Students can also learn various useful skills for future employment such as teamwork, leadership, flexibility, attention to detail, communication, and others, depending on what kind of job they are working.[9]

C. The Future of Work and UotF in the Digital Era

Our society often faces a growing gap between graduates of higher education institutes and changing job markets, specifically in terms of practical skills. Based on the writer's research"introducing students to industrial environments through learning models, universities would need to establish deeper symbiotic relationships with industry in order to collaborate on curriculum development" [10]. This problem often countered by adopting the industry skill relevant to the current market, which can be viewed as having the curricula of education institutes dictated by industries. Some feedback claims it is better to focus on micro-credentials, which significantly lower in cost than the standard degrees. However, this solution results in viewing humans as utilities like software to perform a set of instructions. In the end, what the employers seek for is a human being and possess intelligence[11].In reality, the majority of students proceed with their careers in different fields from their study program thus, make the broad-teaching policy of the education institutes somewhat useful in preparation for the students when entering society outside their field of study. The process of building UotF can be effective and it is also mentioned by the authors "The approach permits us to generate options and new business designs fast with ease"[12].

D. Benchmarking

We had referred to the existing one-stop centre for job recruitment for our proposed system. We had selected Google Job, Jobstreet and Linkedin to conduct benchmarking.

For the first one, **Google Job** is one of the common job portals used worldwide. The company nowadays covers most of the online service from a search engine, cloud storage, online business tools, etc. It handles intermediaries which require companies that want to post their ads to have their own website or use the 3rd party site that posts on this portal. This is because this service only covers the posting of ads into relevant search results. However, a certain degree of technical skill is necessary due to its complicated setup. Thus, hiring experts may be required unless using the 3rd party one.[13]

Next is **JobStreet** that provides connections between employers and candidates. It requires email registration to create an account from both sides and does not involve themselves with processing the job application. The job posting will automatically post in real-time without any special code required. Candidates can specify their own capability to be viewed as CV and then posting related to the skills will be recommended into your feeds. [14]

Lastly is LinkedIn which is an employment-oriented online service in the form of a social media platform that focuses on professional networks among similar careers. It allows employers to post vacant jobs in searching for potential job candidates. Besides that, LinkedIn is also a search engine which enables employers to filter job seekers based on their requirements. to job seekers to post their CV and create a professional portfolio from their profile.[15]

E. Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 4 and 8 (SDG)

8 Decent Work & Economic Growth

1 No Poverty

4 Quality Education

2 Zero Hunger

One of the main common reasons for enrolling into a higher education institute is for the preparation of students' potential future career aside from gaining knowledge. Therefore, it is natural for the institute to aim for a higher quality of education and secure the future of their students upon a graduate. For the institute, providing essential education to the student is a given as their responsibility which is relevant to the current job market equally for all kinds of people including disabilities, indigenous and those with financial problems. Moreover, they need to provide better chances for the students' to proceed with their career according to the desired fields and personal circumstances. The first priority in SDG is the 8th goal of promoting decent work to encourage economic growth with the second as a 4th goal of providing essential education equally for all. Next is the 1st goal of eliminating poverty indirectly by promoting jobs for those in need and lastly the 2nd goal of reducing hunger that may be influenced by the improvement of other mentioned SDGs.

V. ENVIRONMENT MAP

VI.   THE INITIAL BUSINESS MODEL

Figure A: Initial Business Model Canvas(BMC)
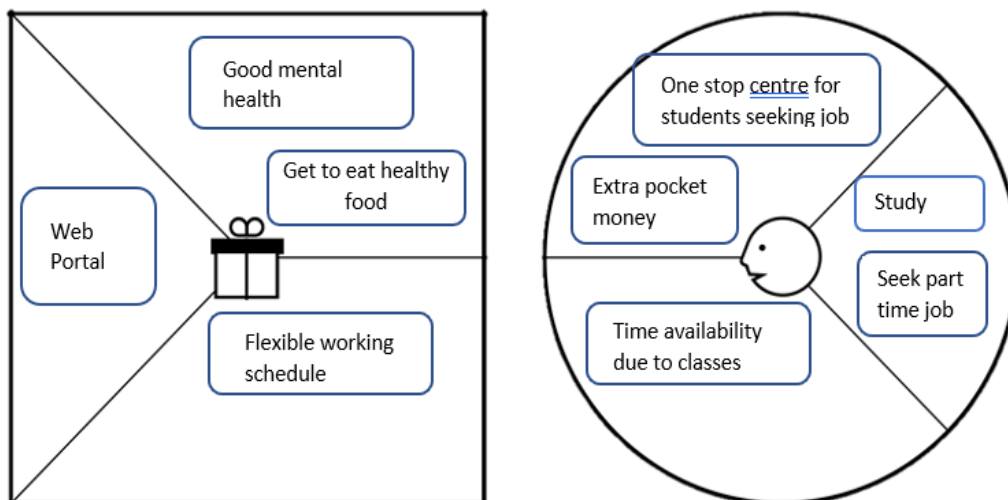
VII.   INITIAL VALUE PROPOSITION(VPC

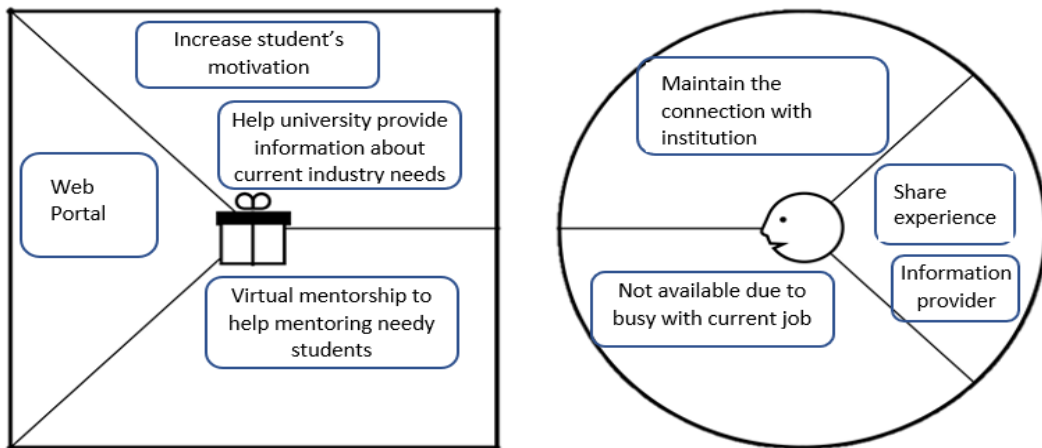**Figure 2: Value Proposition for B40 Students**
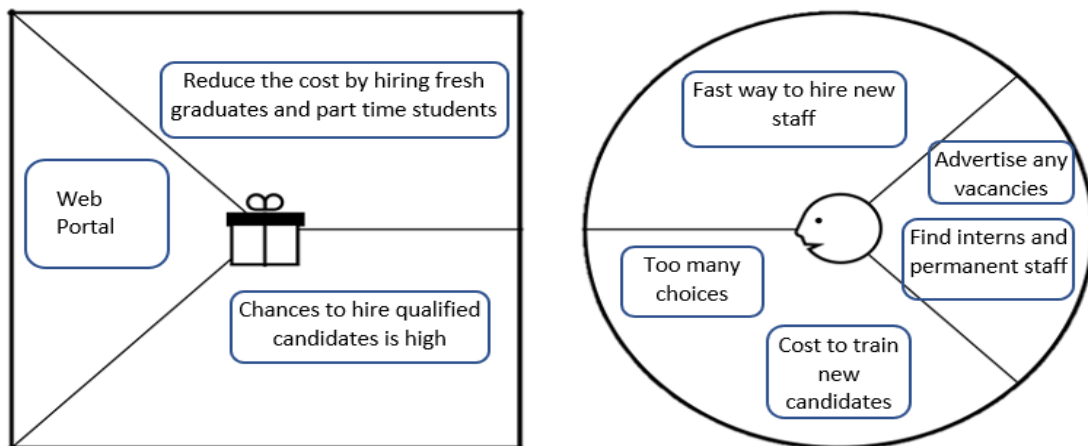
Figure 3: Value Proposition for Alumni

Figure 4: Value Proposition for Employers

VIII. THE VALIDATED BUSINESS MODEL

A. Findings after validating BMC and VPC'S

The survey conducted using an online survey method to validate the business case and the survey conducted through a google form. For the first question, we asked them their status to identify which customer segment they belong to, and 74% of the respondents are students while for alumni and employers are 13%.
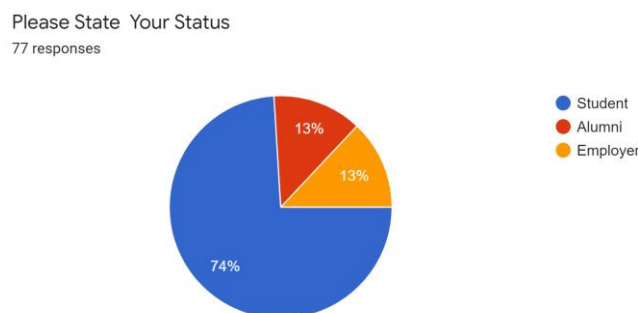
Figure 5: Type of customer segment

In this survey, we asked the students which category of their family household income. Approximately, half of the respondents come from B40 household income. 35.1% comes from the M40 category and 14% comes from T20 household income.
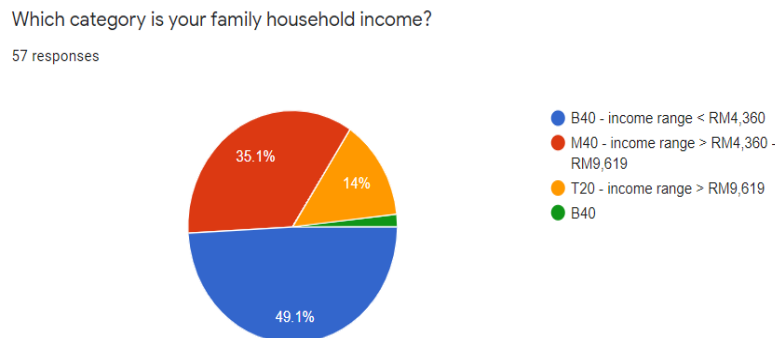
Figure 6: Category of family household income

For the second question, the pie chart shows that the majority of the students possess working experience with 71.9% and 28.1% did not have any working experience at all.
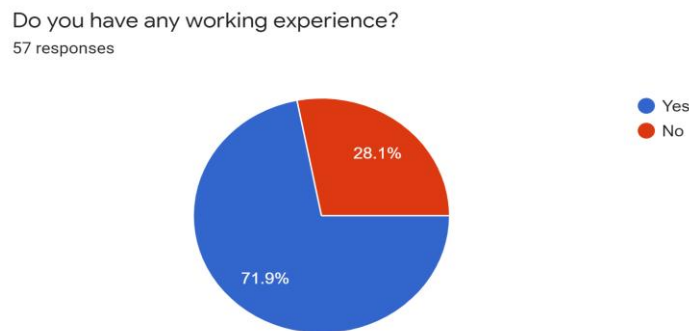
Figure 7: Working experience

For the third question, we ask about what is the reason for respondents to seek part-time jobs. The majority of respondents choose to seek a part-time job because to earn working experience. More than one-third of respondents seek part-time jobs to support tuition fees. The rest of the respondents choose to earn more pocket money.
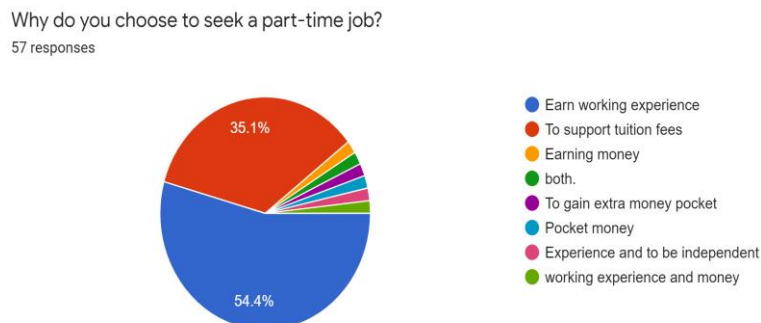
Figure 8: Choose to seek for Part-time jobs

Moreover, a large sector of the pie chart present around 70.2% of the students think that having a part-time job will affect their academic performance while around 29.8% said they did not have any issue having a part-time job.
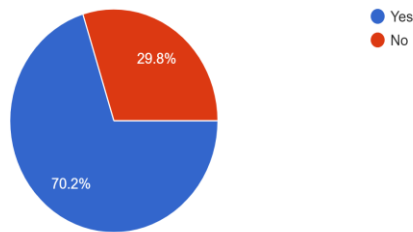
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Figure 9: Student academic performance

This section is for alumni where we conduct a survey to know which alumni still work at their internship place. Majority 90% of respondents do not continue to work at the internship place and only 10 % choose to stay and work in an internship place.
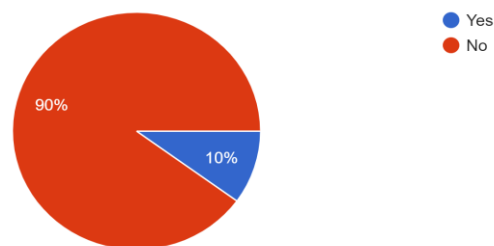

Figure 10: Continue work at an internship place

For the second questions, the alumni were asked how they found their internship place. Around 30% of the alumni found their internship place through a digital platform. There are about 3 sectors with 20% which is a total of 60% found their internship place through a career fair, walk-in interview, and through university channel and the 10% of the respondents respond that there was no internship during their time.
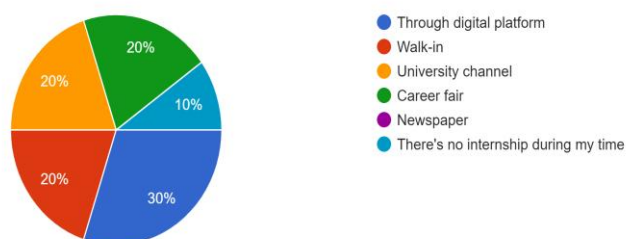

Figure 11: Internship placement

Moreover, all respondents are agreeing to collaborate between alumni, lecturers and students for the career mentorship program
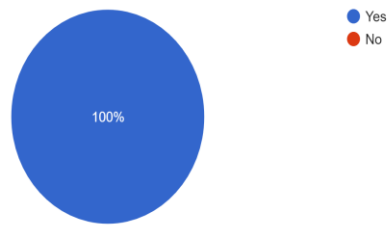
Figure 12: Collaboration between alumni, lecturers and students for the career mentorship program

Furthermore, the alumni were asked which platform they would choose to share their experience with students. The pie chart displays the platform they would use and about 70% alumni choose to use personal group chat while another 20% choose forums and about 10% choose email as a medium to consult with the student.
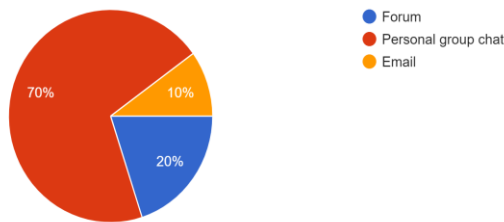

Figure 13: Platform to consult with alumni

In this question, we ask alumni to add any suggestion features on this platform. One of the respondents suggested having a face to face group session and another respondent suggested integrating it with an i-intern platform. While others do not suggest anything.
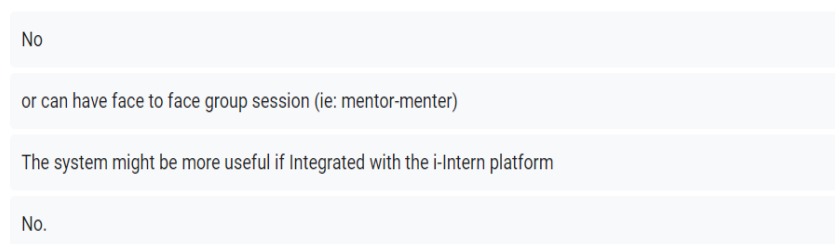

Figure 14: Features suggestion for this platform

This section is specially addressed to the employer and the employer was asked whether they prefer to employ students as part-time workers. From the pie chart, it indicates that most of the employers said they would employ the students with 80% of the percentage and the remaining 20% of them were not interested to employ students as part-time workers.

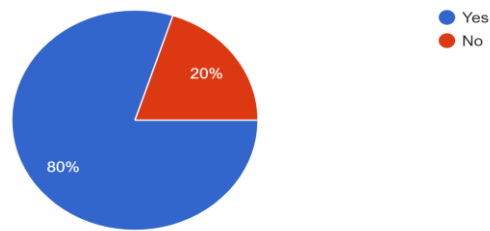Do you prefer to employ student as part-time workers
10 responses

Figure 15: Employers preference in hiring student's part-time workers

This question is related to a previous question where we ask employers whether they prefer to employ students as part-time workers or not. 8 out of 10 respondents prefer to employ students as part-time workers. One of the respondents commented that students are capable of handling a task and students are more aware of job scope. Some of the respondents prefer to employ because to give them some experience and less pay. In addition, they employ students only for temporary jobs.

If "Yes," what is the reason
8 responses

Less pay

Give them experience

I know when they aply, they need money. They have same shoes like the old me.

Only for temporarily jobs e.g. designing website, graphic design, conducting survey

Good exposure / experience

On project basis

Because students are capable of handling tasks that are given to them. It is better to employ students that are aware of the job scope.

Figure 16: The reason why employers prefer to employ students as part-time jobs

For this question, the employer was asked what job they would offer if they hire students as part-time workers. Based on the pie chart below, about 2 sectors with 33.33% which is a total of 66.6% of would offer students to be their website developer and customer support while 22.2% of the employers would offer them to be a graphic designer and 11.1% would say it depends on the student's ability.
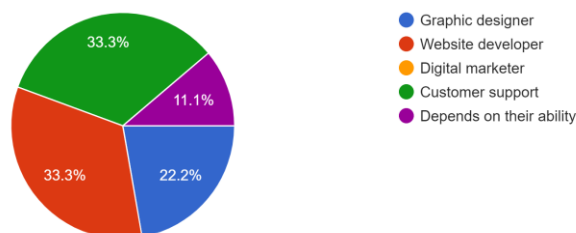
Type of jobs to be offered
9 responses

Figure 17: Jobs might be offered by employers

This question we ask the employer where they advertise the job vacancies. Half of the employers choose job hiring portals to publish their job vacancies. While 40% of respondents choose social media and others prefer word of mouth.
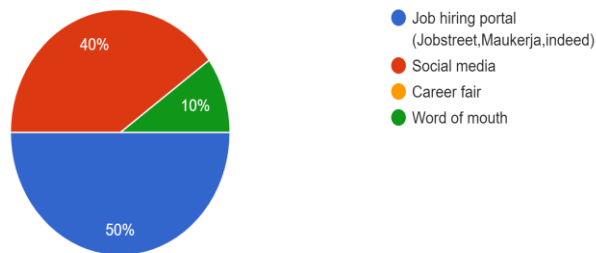
Figure 18: Place of advertising the job vacancies

Moreover, the employer was asked if there are new skills required by their company for post-Covid-19 MCO. The majority of the employers (77.8%) said that there is no need for new skills for their company and the rest (22.2%) said they need new skills for post-Covid-19 MCO.
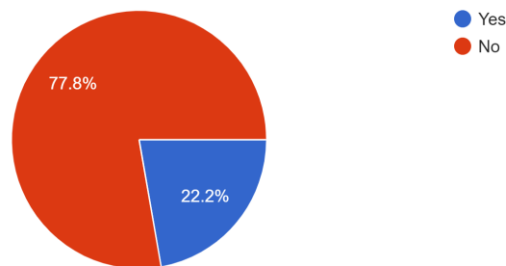

Figure 19: Skill required by company post-MCO

For this question, if the employers said yes then what are the new skills required for them. Based on the responses, the employers would suggest the new idea for the automation process in daily manual routine, and the second one they suggest that the skills needed are web development.

Figure 20: A specification if there are new skills needed

In this question, we ask for employers to rate from scale 1 to 5 whether their company is affected by MCO. 10 out of 10 respondents state that their company got impacted by Movement Control Orders(MCO).
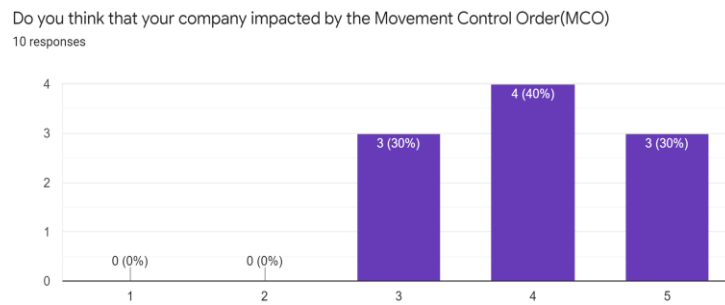
Figure 21: Company that impact by Movement Control Order(MCO)

We asked the respondents whether they have made any retrenchment of staff due to the Movement Control Order(MCO). 80% of respondents have not retrenched any of their staff due to Covid-19 crisis. The rest of per cent decide to retrenched their staff during MCO.
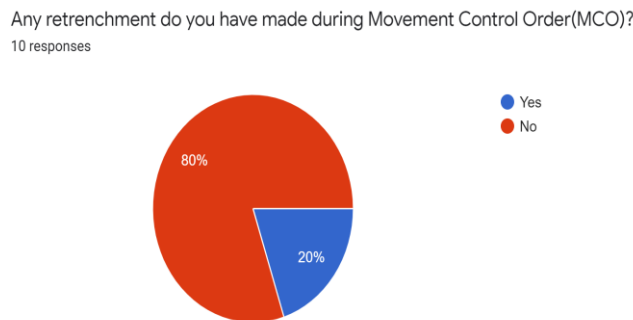

Figure 22: Retrenchment made during Movement Control Orders

For the last questions, the employer was asked if they are willing to collaborate with any universities to employ students as part-time workers. So based on the result, about 80% of them would collaborate with the universities and the remaining 20% did not show any interest in collaborating with the universities.
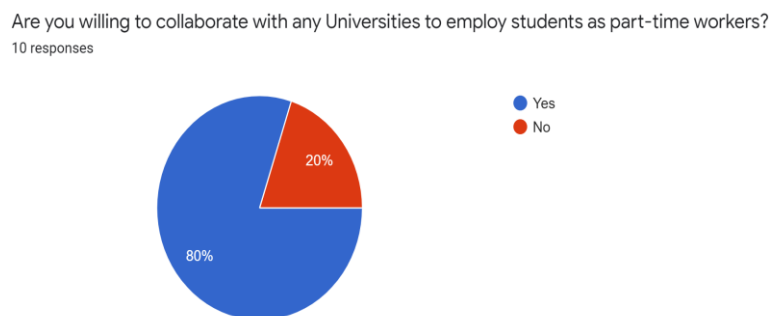
Figure 23: Employer's opinion whether they want to collaborate with universities

In this last question, we asked employers if they have any suggestion of features to include in this platform. One of the respondents suggested listing down the skill that can be offered and other than that, other respondents suggested adding documents such as resumes to ease employers to view students' profiles. While others did not have any suggestion to be added.

Figure 24: Employer's suggestion for this platform
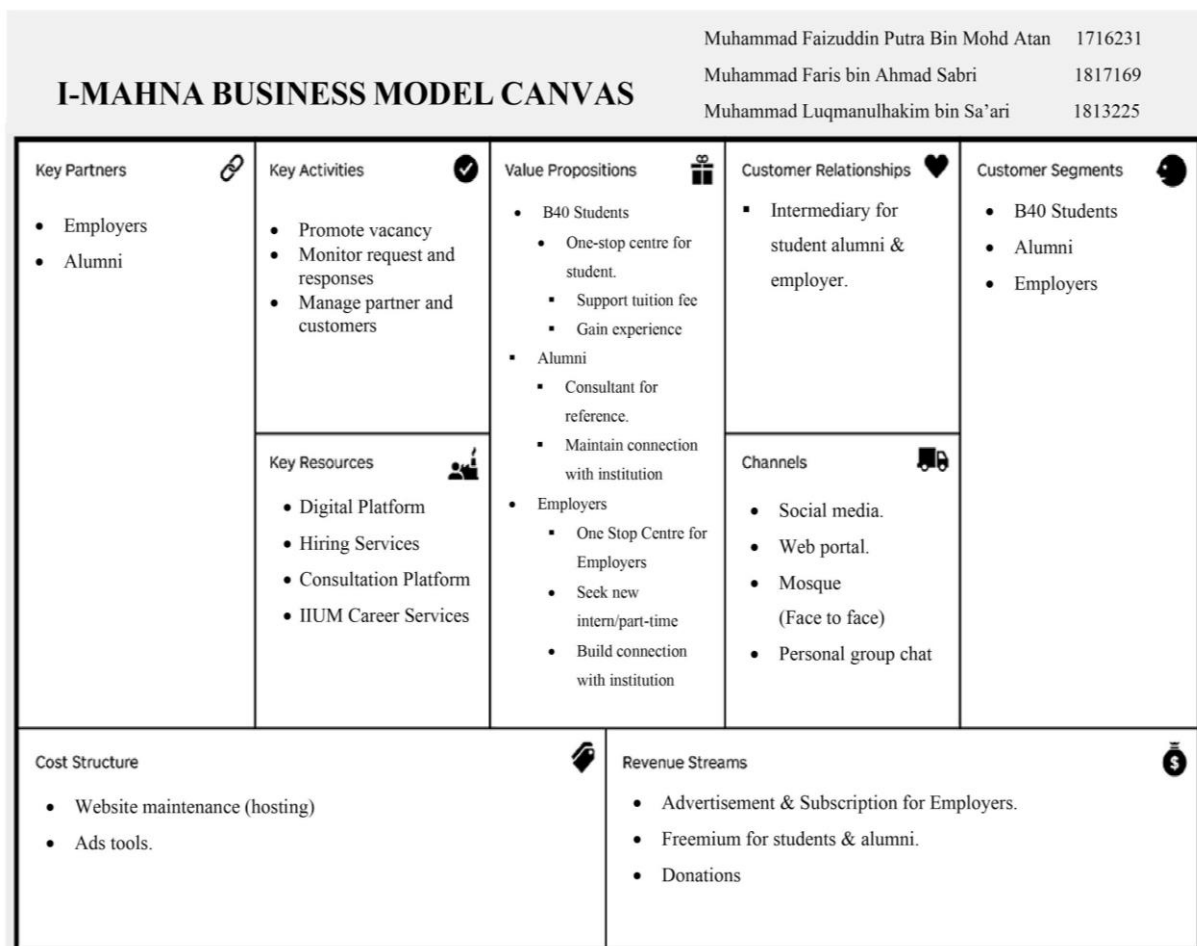
B. Validated Business Model Canvas(BMC)

Figure B: Validated Business Model Canvas (BMC)

1. Value Proposition

The value proposition defines as the values of the project promise to deliver B40 students, alumni and employers should they choose to use this platform to seek employment. The benefits that offered include a One-stop centre for the student, support tuition fee, gain experience; consult for reference, maintain the connection with the institution, provide a hiring platform and seek new intern/part-time. The values that have been added to the value proposition can help students to find new jobs and solve financial problems. Besides, students gain some knowledge, experience, and skills so that they are expected to get decent jobs. Moreover, this project aims to reduce poverty by providing jobs to students and society.

2. Customer Segments

The customer segments describe the different groups of people, communities, and organizations. I -Mahna includes B40 Students, Alumni and Employers.

3. Customer Relationship

The customer relationship describes the way how this project will continuously connect with users to improve customer experience. The ties for this project can be through alumni and employer, intermediary for students.

4. Channels

This channel describes the platform to be used in delivering value propositions to its customer segments. These channels include i-Mahna digital platforms, social media, Mosque, where we have a face to face conversation. Basically, the features of i-Mahna digital platform are accessible for both users, students and employers. Each job advertisement needs to be categorized by each type of field so the students can manage to seek for the right jobs. i-Mahna digital platform allows the student community to interact with alumni and employers where they can find and reference or information regarding the position of jobs and also students can seek the job from the advertisement post by employers. therefore, providing a personal group chat with students and alumni.

5. Key Activities

Key activities describe the action to deliver value propositions to customer segments. The key activities include upskilling, promoting vacancy, monitoring requests and responses, managing partners and customers and developing and managing i-Mahna digital platforms.

6. Key Resources

Key resources are the crucial assets required to deliver the value propositions to customer segments. The key resources include digital platform, hiring services, consultation platform, IIUM career services.

7. Key Partners

Key Partners are the connections that a company has with other companies or non-consumer entities that help the business model work. The key partners include employers and Alumni.

8. Cost Structure

This section describes all the costs and expenses the project must incur to maintain and sustain the business operations. The cost structure includes web maintenance(hosting) and advertising tools, and running the key activities.

9. Revenue Streams

The revenue comes from the customer segments. This is to cover the cost of operation. The revenue stream includes advertising and subscription from employers and freemium for students and alumni. In addition, a donation from companies.

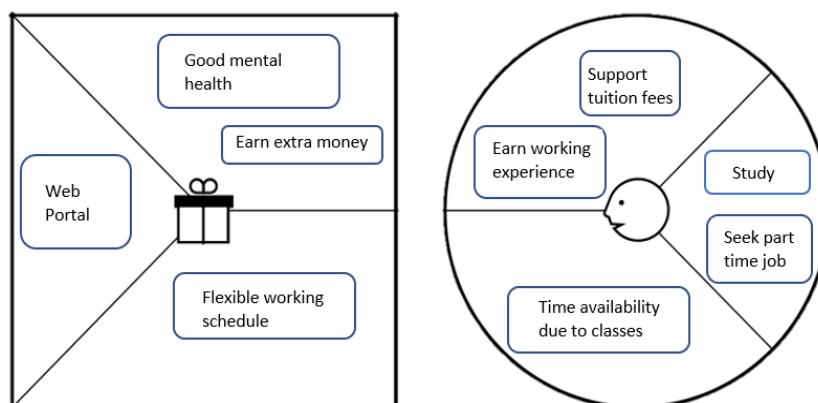*C. Validated Value Proposition Canvas(VPC)*

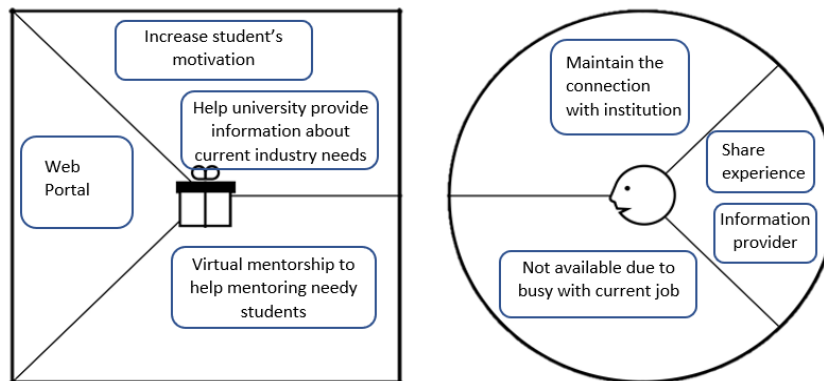**Figure 24: Value Proposition for B40 Students**
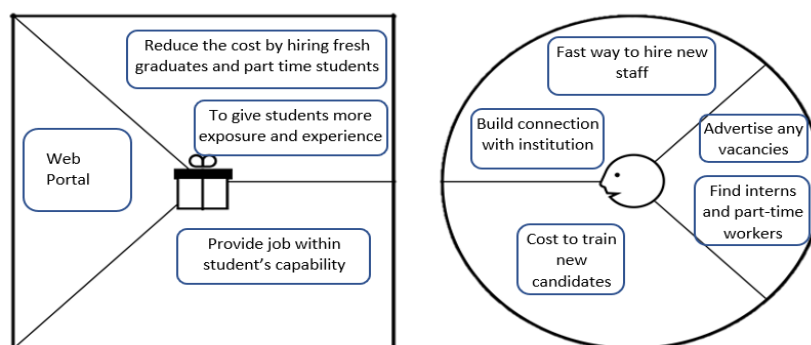
Figure 25: Value Proposition for Alumni

Figure 26: Value Proposition for Employers

IX. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This paper suggests the Malaysian UotF's conceptual business model in offering potential solutions through the creation of a platform to look for part-time work, especially for students with financial problems and/or motivatedto enhance their real world skills, and part-time workers for employers.By aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), i-Mahna will facilitate poverty reduction, enhance creation of more decent work and economic growth, quality education and reduce hunger. The creation of this platform will also assist students in acquiring knowledge, skills and ethical values that will help them. in their professional, entrepreneurial, and career development. This paper offers a validated conceptual Malaysian University-of-the-Future (UotF) business model – in the form of BMC and VPC - by focusing on B40 youth community engagement programmes. The value proposition of the conceptual business model is to enhance the wellbeing of Malaysian B40 youth in improving their employability and entrepreneurship success through Balanced Skill Building and i-Mahna Digital Platform.This platform not only provides students with the jobs, but it will also brighten the future for students if they give full commitment to their employment so they can employ in the company as a permanent worker.

For future work, we plan to transform the business model with the proposed I-Mahna solution into the actual project implementation. This includes establishing a project management plan (PMP) for the development of I-Mahna Digital platform.

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