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## 1. Introduction

The bias in academia towards quantifiable metrics, particularly in research and teaching, can be traced back to several historical developments, with the Humboldt model of higher education serving as a significant turning point (Rouse 2016) Wilhelm von Humboldt's integration of research and teaching advocated for the integration of research and teaching in universities. It emphasised knowledge creation through research as a critical component of higher education. The Humboldtian model, which initially supported a wide range of disciplines, including the arts and humanities, valued academic freedom and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.

The Humboldt model's emphasis on research and the creation of new knowledge laid the foundation for the modern research university. However, as the model evolved and was adopted by universities worldwide, including those in Malaysia, it inadvertently contributed to the development of biases favouring quantifiable metrics and research outputs. The Humboldtian ideal of the unity of research and teaching gradually gave way to a greater emphasis on research productivity, which could be more easily measured and compared across institutions.

In the Malaysian context, the influence of the Humboldt model can be seen in the establishment of research universities and the increasing focus on research performance. The Malaysian government's strategic plans for higher education, such as the National Higher Education Strategic Plan Beyond 2020, set ambitious targets for research output and university rankings. These targets have led to the prioritization of STEM disciplines, which are perceived to be more aligned with the nation's economic development goals and more readily produce quantifiable research outputs.

While the Humboldt model's original vision encompassed a wide range of disciplines, including the arts and humanities, its modern interpretation has contributed to the marginalization of these fields. The pressure to perform in global university rankings and to demonstrate research productivity has led to an imbalance in resource allocation and recognition, favouring STEM disciplines over non-STEM fields. This bias has had significant implications for the career progression and wellbeing of academics in the arts, humanities, and social sciences in Malaysian universities.

With the rise of the 'knowledge economy' in the late twentieth century, we see a shift towards quantifiable metrics. With the advent of the knowledge economy in the late twentieth century, there was a growing emphasis on the economic and practical utility of university research. Following that was a period in which universities were increasingly viewed as engines of economic growth rather than institutions of pure learning and knowledge dissemination. Governments and funding agencies began to use performance-based funding models, emphasising measurable outcomes such as research publications, citations, and grants.

In Malaysia, these developments favoured STEM disciplines, which more readily produce quantifiable outputs and are often more directly linked to economic benefits. As a result, the arts and humanities began to be seen as less valuable in this new paradigm, given their more qualitative, interpretive, and less immediately economically quantifiable nature. With the goal of bolstering Malaysian research universities even more, the National Higher Education Strategic Plan Beyond 2020 projects that two



































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