

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF MALAYSIAN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION: A STUDY OF ACADEMIC EXPATRIATE EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates conceptualisation and interpretation of the apprehension of internationalization and its consanguinity to academic expatriates in higher education. It endows the scenario, anticipation and challenges of internationalization in Malaysian higher education. The paper entices together questions and issues in Malaysian higher education in the context of its rationale for recruiting academic expatriate. What amplify throughout the study is a critical awareness encircles policies, practices and personal views, alongside alternative perspectives on how Malaysia Public Higher Education Institutions is acknowledging to the issues and responding to the process of internationalization.

Keywords: *Internationalization, Malaysia Higher Education, Academic Expatriate*

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Introduction

In both developed and developing countries, oftentimes acclaimed that various ubiquitous facets influence higher education with the primary facet being the shifting from industrial and service-based economies to knowledge-based economies. Intensifying, this reposition in the direction of knowledge-creation establishment, composition and dissemination is recognized as a further significant wealth venture compares to physical venture in developing countries (Irma Wani *et al.*, 2015a; Muhammad Safuan *et al.*, 2015b). In this erstwhile decade, there appear to be inflated admissions and recruitment of students and staffs in almost countries, observably in developing countries. By fair means recruitment and enlist have on a par in countries worldwide, for the most developing countries, there is an enlarged call for higher educations of young people endeavour to acquire tertiary qualifications for their prospective employment and career undertaking. With the recent breakthrough and progress in information and communication technologies, the requirement terms, elocution and commerce of higher education has earnestly alter the scenery of higher education in numerous countries worldwide. These reconstructing known as internationalization of higher education, hence evolvement in the domain of technology assist to prompt that higher education is at present foreseen as worthless trade, implicating engaging of international pupils and rationale for recruiting expatriate academia that encourage inception and formation of universities branches overseas, franchised provisos and online education (Irma Wani, 2014).

Malaysian Higher Education System

As for today Malaysia higher education system consists 20 government-funded universities, 25 private universities, over 500 private colleges and the population of approximately 650,000 students enrolled in the Malaysian higher education (MOHE, 2015). These institutions include of a number of faculties which offer a wide variety of courses. Malaysian degrees accord to undergraduate (bachelor degrees) and postgraduate (master and doctoral degrees). The undergraduate degrees obliges at least two to three consequence years of full-time study. Generally for most fields, students are in a position to elect from an extensive of options, allowing their preferences for elective/minor papers. On the other hand the master degree entails further two years. Full-time programmes on doctoral degree acquire more or less addition of four years. The private institutions proffer twinning and parallel programmes oftentimes with higher education abroad. The Malaysian higher education system experienced substantial growth since 1980s and at present there are public and private higher institutions mushrooming throughout Malaysia. Until 2004, universities in Malaysia were governed under the Ministry of Education and administered by the Department of Higher Education. Approaching early 2005, the administrative of the department and governance at the ministerial rank has been contrived to assure enlargement and substantiation of higher education in Malaysia.

The Ministry of Education initiated the current Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) which will responsible mainly to encourage and foster the Malaysia known as focal point of education hub in the region. International offices representing MOHE have been positioned in China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore, United Arab Emirates and opening more in numerous countries to introduce and promote Malaysia's products of education. A specific emissary commensurate to ministerial authority was appointed to entice blue-ribbon foreign higher institutions to establish branch campuses in this country. In July 2011, the Malaysia government announced the national policy operations for internationalization (MOHE, 2011). It is stated in the National Strategic Plan for Higher Education that main purpose of the policy is to accelerate the inflow of international students to 100,000 in 2012 and furthermore to 200,000 by 2020 (Tham and Kam, 2008; Tham, 2010) (please see Table 1). Based on the target stated, the biggest challenge is to manage international students at both macro and micro levels.

Table 1: The Enrolment of International Students in Malaysia Public and Private Universities (Year 2002-2013)

Years	Types of University	
	Public University	Private University
2002	5,045	22,827
2003	5,239	25,158
2004	5,735	25,939
2005	6,622	33,903
2006	7,941	36,449
2007	14,324	33,604
2008	18,486	50,679
2009	22,456	58,294
2010	24,214	62,705
2011	25,263	69,123
2012	26,232	72,553
2013	28,830	87,851

Sources: http://www.mohe.gov.my/web_statistik/

In the face of stiff challenge from within and outside the country, the intake of international students shall also reaffirms that the quality of education is not relinquish in pursuit of the intended quantity of student participation. The challenges face by Malaysia higher education institutions is to integrate, in systematic and sustained ways, appropriate aspects of internationalization more fully across all dimensions of the learning environment consisting of curriculum, research, experiential learning, student services and a wide range of non-formal curricular activities (Irma Wani, 2014). These include improving the international coverage in the curriculum so that graduates will possess the knowledge they will require for successful careers in the 21st century (Irma Wani *et al.*, 2015a).

The Scenario of Internationalization Malaysian Higher Education

Being a green yet meteoric progressive nation, Malaysia has an abundance of necessities in her pursuance to attain the nation's request in the 21st century for an immensely trained employment force within the sphere of present-day's knowledge economy (Irma Wani *et al.*, 2015c). In due course, the market influences of globalisation and internationalization have affected discourses and deliberation on Malaysia's higher education ambience in various means. As such, numerous of these push-and-pull circumstances have unfailingly inaugurated a plethora of higher education providers in Malaysia for its perpetually intensifying and exacting patron of younger generation searching to acquire higher education certifications in their mission to secure more advantageous profession chances in inflating borderless career contexts (Irma Wani *et al.*, 2015b; Muhammad Safuan *et al.*, 2015b).

This veer of direction has unquestionably uplifted the inception of current, exclusive and numerous occasion for-profitable higher institutions to contend with long-established public universities (Irma Wani *et al.*, 2015a) This inclination tendency, although observed to certain expanse by the Malaysian Higher Education Ministry, raising accentuate the requisite for the government to position more effectively educational amelioration and refinement to make certain that these inceptions, in their search to strive for commercial values in educational resources, do not only benefit market significance and proposition but also make a contribution to the society righteous of higher education accordingly contributing distinctive degree courses.

Besides constituent effecting public universities in Malaysia is the persuasion and coercion from current and regularly for-profit institutions that have snowballed in reciprocated to the enlargement population of students' growth and desires for higher education. These institutions are commonly market-acclimatize in their strategies and deploy another formation of aggressive persuasion on the long-established, conventional and accustomed public institutions (Morshidi, 2006b; Irma Wani, 2014; Irma Wani *et al.*, 2015a, c). Thus, these advanced providers have the potentiality and skilful strategies of pull in not only talent, but also resources away from current public institutions. At the same time, another attention arrives in the manifestation of amalgamated Malaysian government authorities cautiously pacing back and as commented by Morshidi (2006a) allowing the private universities to develop and diversify as public funded universities no longer be in possession of accessing the resources nor the tenacity to furnish for cutting-edge and enlarged public institutions for the raising figure of students.

To be even-handed, on the whole Malaysian higher educations, there have been concerned discussions and debates due regards to a number of the ensuing viewpoint suggested by Teichler (2004) – (i) scholastic and economic development, (ii) impartiality of opportunity, enhancement of educating and employment growth, (iii) association-linking universities and the workforce market, (iv) diverseness of universities, (v) the governance of universities, (vi) assessment and an upward direction approaching to become a knowledge society. Indeed, internationalisation have get to be leading point at issues in almost higher education institutions all through Malaysia, hence implying that the repercussions and significance of these markets pressure have been warranted due thoughts. Consequently, such occurrence in higher education are still being talk through and explored in Malaysian Higher Education as there is still breadth for consideration prior to guidelines and policies can be executed.

All too recurrently, those concerned in internationalisation movement and restructuring of universities have not participated in institution-wide, international discussions about their missions, manifestation and strategies to the establishment of universities or campus-wide internationalisation. In predominantly research, there is a propensity to designate internationalisation of higher education to a handful of activities such as scholar mobility, worldwide or multicultural educative institutions, diversifying fields of studies or twinning programmes for overseas study (Irma Wani *et al.*, 2015b, c). That being the case, if researchers require to scrutinizing these movement in trends in our restricted state of affairs such Malaysia, they perhaps will appreciated the prospect that internationalisation give access to further advantageous possibilities than in provokes risk (Irma Wani, 2014).

A Study of Academic Expatriate Experiences

Within the literature regarding the expatriation of academicians, academicians are classified as professorial and non-professorial personnel as well as those involved in research works and the teaching profession (Scott, 2004; Richardson, 2008; Irma Wani, 2014). Almost all literature discussion about internationalization covers student intake, curriculums, training the trainers and administration process. Nevertheless, one of the internationalization aspects that are slowly left behind is internationalization through multi-racial academics intake (Richardson, 2006; Richardson and Zikic, 2007; Selmer and Luring, 2010; Irma Wani, 2014; Irma Wani *et al.*, 2015c; Muhammad Safuan *et al.*, 2015a, c). Expatriate academic circles are less focused as survey informants as higher education institutions often focus more on the education internationalization system in line with contemporary strategy planning between the university and increasing global mobility among international students (Thorn, 2009; Irma Othman, 2014).

In the Malaysian higher education setting, internationalisation in universities practically signified memorandums of understanding (MoU) oftentimes with the breath of international student and scholars, and collaborative academic research (Morshidi, 2006a). An eminence aspect of internationalisation for this country is that the government has acquiesced public funded universities to enlist staff with international background such academic expatriates and apportion places in the moderate and non-competitive undergraduate academic curriculum designated to cater international students. Accordingly, the critical element that cannot be ignored by Malaysian Higher Education Institution is the recruitment of international academicians needed in ensuring to improve the position of local universities at the international arena (Enders and Fulton, 2002; 2015d; Teichler, 2004; Machi, 2005; Grossman and Stadelmann, 2011; Irma Wani *et al.*, 2015c).

With particular reference to Irma Wani (2014), the study of academic expatriate experiences on Malaysian Public Higher Education Institution developed a strategic plan for internationalization. Her study on expatriate academic experiences on five selected public universities of Malaysia Public Higher Education identified an approach that is fundamental to strategy planning activity. First, her study unwind the higher learning institution scenarios in Malaysia that tries to choose this path through the experiences of its international academic staff from different cultural perspective by interpreted the thrust that has been influenced the academic expatriate to expatriate. Consequently Irma Wani (2014) showed evidence that the long-established ethics of sovereignty and academic independence incorporated with the divergent professionals (academic and managerial) who have wide-ranging, yet dissimilar purpose and goals, do not conferred themselves to consolidate and beneficial planning of internationalization.

To enhance the effectiveness of internationalization process, Irma Wani (2014) suggested the leadership role from experienced academic expatriates is crucial in order to nurture and affiliate culture equivalence with the internationalization initiatives and the strategic planning of human development of the universities. Irma Wani (2014) also has exemplified a compelling argument on the significance of academic expatriate experiences in influencing management initiatives in higher education. She, therefore, sets a distinct importance on the value of leadership in the evolution of international initiatives by employing and involving academic expatriate experiences (Irma Wani, 2014). In her study, she concluded by arguing that the cultural differences of a university can be hindering or hastening the internationalization exercise.

Issues and Questions

The potential benefits of internationalization in the pursuit of academic excellence cannot be underestimated and considered significant to a number of parties including expatriate academics and policy-makers related to international human resource management and study of expatriates by providing data and information in guiding an academician who desires expatriation. The strategy is in tandem with the shift in contemporary higher education and suggestions that Malaysian Higher Education Institutions recruit international staff in efforts to improve their reputation at home and abroad. In fact, many are of the opinion that the existence and establishment of a new university leads to the recruitment of expatriates at the international level, in line with the efforts to strengthen their own position and status as a prestigious education institution.

Nevertheless a number of key questions explored during the process of reviewing the meaning of internationalization, strategies, policies, rationales and actors. The following questions are not listed in any order of priority and merely an attempt to illustrate the complexities and the implications facing the international dimension of higher education and illustrate what many would label the revolutionary aspects of internationalization.

- To ensure that this internationalization is successfully applied, does Malaysian Higher Education Institutions need to embrace different aspect in internationalization process itself and hired international academician? Is this phenomenon true in all regions of the world, be it developing countries such Malaysia and what are the implications for higher education policy in general – funding, access, quality, role in society, research, curriculum and regulatory frameworks?
- The complexities involved in working in the field of internationalization that requires additional set of knowledge, attitudes, skills, understanding about the international/intercultural/global dimension of higher education. How are these competencies developed and recognized for those academics working for the internationalization of higher education? How does internationalization deals with the intersection of international and intercultural? In what ways have ‘experiences’ provides the academic expatriate opportunities to be intercultural and multicultural? Is there a subtle but discernible shift away from the social and cultural rationale towards the economic and commercial interests of internationalization?
- What are the implications of increased mobility for academic and professional recognition of credentials? How is internationalization contributing to brain drain or brain gain? What are the mechanisms that can help to enhance the benefits of increased academic and professional mobility but mitigate the negative impact of the imbalances in the talent flowing out of countries especially in the case of Malaysia?

Rationale for Recruiting Academic Expatriate in Malaysia Higher Education

In terms of academic content and elements of teaching and learning, quality assurance becomes an important weight in the assessment as it contributes towards the branding as well as reputation of the higher education sector (Knight 2006; Lee, 2004). The process involves a university staffs from a wider range of specialities to ensure that the goal of thoroughly internationalising the educational process is achieved.

Society building

Whereas numerous countries are attentive to commerce education, there are distinct countries i.e. Malaysia that keen to bring in education curriculums and establishments for the agenda of building its society. An erudite, knowledgeable and well-trained workforce competent to do research and bring into existence innovative knowledge is crucial constituent of one’s society building mission. Malaysia is shortfall the basis structural foundations of a society (physical/human infrastructure) and the monetary amenities to overture post-secondary education possibilities to their society. Conventionally, international academic workforce (known as “academic expatriate”) have been selected and hired as constituent of establishment and technological auxiliary work, hence have been contemplated as a vital handouts to the society building efforts of a developing countries such Malaysia. International establishment efforts derived from reciprocal-benefits amongst associate countries persist to be a vital feature of the post-secondary internationalization process. Nevertheless, there is a perceivable shift from a support/development method to international associates/partnerships, to one bring into focus on trade for commercialisation. This veer of paradigm is believable to become further pronounced.

Human capital and brain power development

There are indications of intensified persuasion and attentiveness to enlist the astute students and the brightest scholars from distinct countries in order to strengthen technological, scientific and economic competitiveness. An intensifying prominence on mobilizing the workforce which occurrence is motivating understanding to locate further eminence on recruiting and establishing brain power and human capital via international education efforts. Metamorphose in selection and recruitment strategies, immigration procedural and policies and Malaysia local government incentives are precedents of initiatives to tempt and conserve students and academic expatriates with prospective for strengthening the human capital of this country. Alike, there is further consideration being focused to magnifying the international feature of research and teaching in order for local students and academics be more advantageous and well-equipped to grant to the country's successful and combativeness on the international phase. Eventually, there is extending acknowledgement being grant to the need for additional establishment of intercultural awareness and skilfulness for not only on citizenship development, also individual and professional growth.

Strategic alliances

The eloquent challenges include intensifying research collaboration and diversifying academic collaboration and interchange programmes with leading educational and research institutions in the world. Institutions are oftentimes reciprocating to the numerous of options and possibilities to inaugurate international institutional networking attachment. These affiliations can be for dissimilar objectives – benchmarking, academic mobility, twinning curriculum or programme establishment, collaborative research initiatives and conference, seminar and convention. These establishments of efforts are being acknowledged as prolific strategies to build inwards geopolitical links and economic correlation. There has been an explicit veer from alliances for cultural motives to economic goals. This is principally verifiable at the regional variation whereby countries such Malaysia is moving towards and striving to attain sound political and economic alliances with neighbouring countries by means of expanding its international educational initiatives on a regional ground. The establishment of strategic alliances by virtue of internationalisation of higher education is consequently being comprehended as a mechanism to establish closer cooperation regionally or bilaterally and to secure a competitive advantage.

Concluding Remarks

As for today, Malaysian Higher Education Institution has a rather short but most definitely adequate experience of achieving excellence in selected areas of internationalization in its research, teaching and academic support activities. The main priorities of Malaysian universities today is to conceptualize their understanding, thus improve their commitment, and focus on, internationalization process. Taking into consideration that internationalization of Malaysian Higher Education Institution is going to provide a great benefit to the society of Malaysia as a whole, it is vital to redefine goals and objectives, to execute strategies for their attainment and assess the quality of the end result. Hence, establishing solidity and effectual networks to elevate recruitment of good quality international graduates and staff, and efficacious support services to sustain them once they have been enlisted is almost a requirement for many universities. In that context, the international education benchmark trend in Malaysia shifts by taking into consideration the background assessment of international academics known as 'academic expatriate' whom are experienced and of calibre.

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