

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN MALAYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION;

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to focus on international cooperation in Malaysian higher education sector, which knew an important expansion in the last decade, and in order to explore the different levels of international cooperation in Malaysian HEIs, we used a qualitative approach. And we found that Malaysian higher education sector became one of the leading higher education sectors in the southeast Asia region, besides that Malaysian HEIs are now an attractive destination for international students, due to the internationalization of the higher education sector which impacted HEIs and imposed many changes on their functions and made them adapt to international standards.

Key words: Malaysia; higher education; international cooperation

Jel Classification Codes: I230;

الملخص: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التركيز على التعاون الدولي في قطاع التعليم العالي الماليزي ، الذي عرف توسعا مهما في العقد الماضي ، ومن أجل استكشاف مستويات التعاون الدولي في مؤسسات التعليم العالي الماليزية ، استخدمنا النهج النوعي ووجدنا أن قطاع التعليم العالي الماليزي أصبح أحد قطاعات التعليم العالي الرائدة في منطقة جنوب شرق آسيا، إلى جانب أن مؤسسات التعليم العالي الماليزية أصبحت الآن وجهة جذابة للطلاب الدوليين، بسبب تدويل قطاع التعليم العالي الذي أثر على مؤسسات التعليم العالي وفرض الكثير من التغييرات على وظائفهم وجعلها تتكيف مع المعايير الدولية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ماليزيا ، التعليم العالي ، التعاون الدولي

I230 : JEL تصنيف

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1. Introduction:

in the last decades higher education institutes knew a big shift due to the changes that the world knew in different fields, which impacted their practices and policies, and industries needed more highly qualified workforce, as a result the interest in higher education increased worldwide, and Malaysia was one of the countries in southeast Asia that reacted to these changes and responded to the market's needs via different strategies and one of them was the internationalization of its higher education sector, and the main tool for this strategy is international cooperation between local HEIs and foreign institutes. which led to the attraction of an important number of international students and it gained also an international reputation for the quality of its universities. So, in this study we are going to highlight on the international cooperation in Malaysian higher education system.

And in order to understand the internationalization of Malaysian higher education sector we are going to answer this question: what are the levels of international cooperation in the Malaysian higher education institutes?

Other questions were presented to clarify this study: what are the rationales for international cooperation in Malaysian HEIs? And what are its advantages?

1-The education system in Malaysia: (UNESCO, 2014)

The education sector in Malaysia ensures lifelong learning from early childhood care and education to tertiary and post-graduate education. Children start their education from the ages of 4+ to 5+, followed by 6 years of primary education, for which enrolment is compulsory. And the official entry age to primary education is 6+. Automatic promotion is applied in primary education, so there are virtually no repeaters and, thus, few over-aged children in primary education as a result .

After completing primary education, students start their secondary education which comprises of three years of lower secondary and two years of upper secondary education.(with a total duration of 5 years) .So primary and secondary education sums up to an amount of 11 years. At the end of Form 5, students are required to take the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) or Malaysian Certificate of Education examination, before graduating from secondary school.

After that it comes Post-secondary education which maybe pursued through a two-year Form 6 program leading to a certificate or through a one or two-year matriculation program, which is considered a preparatory year for entrance to university.

In total, the 12-13years of schooling serves as the basic entry requirement into the first year of a bachelor's degree program in higher educational institutions. Universities, as well as colleges and polytechnics, offer diploma level programs. Diploma level graduates can either enter the labour market or proceed to degree programs at universities.

Malaysian students are assessed through public examinations offered at the end of each level of education which are :

- The Primary School Assessment Test (UPSR) at the end of year 6 ;

- Lower Secondary Assessment (PMR), the Malaysia Certificate of Examination (SPM), equivalent to General Certificate of Education (GCE O-level) at the end of Form 5 (secondary education);

- The Malaysia Higher School Certificate Examination (STPM), equivalent to GCE A-level, or the Malaysia Higher Certificate for Religious Education (STAM) at the end of Form 6.

Preschool to secondary as well as post secondary education (matriculation and form 6) was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (MoE) while tertiary or higher education was the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE). In 2013 These two ministries merged and is now known as Ministry of Education. and this decision was taken in order to harmonize the different levels of education and it make the decision making more rational when it comes to planning and making budgets. But in 2015 they were separated.

2-Evolution of Malaysian higher education:

Before knowing its present structure, Malaysian higher education system has passed several changes.

2-1-Prior to independence: (Norliza Mohd Zain, 2017)

Before the British occupation, the education was informal and it aimed to the acquisition of basic living skills. However, from the early 20th century the Malaysian traditional system had been gradually replaced with a structure that was influenced by the British interests beginning in 1874. After the world war 2 British colonials provided an education for the colonized nation that was driven by interests, and only few students were selected in some areas of the country, and English language was highly promoted through education.

Malaysia's higher education system was divided into two streams, English and Malay. To prolong their political domination, British colonials introduced higher education only in the English medium in 1905 with the Establishment of the King Edward VII College of Medicine, followed by the Raffles College in 1928 ,Higher education in the Malay language began in 1901 with the Malacca Training College, and in 1913 with the Matang Training College, followed by SITC in 1922 .

-In October 1925 the technical school of Kuala lampur was opened

-In 1926, a school of commerce was established in Kuala Lumpur followed by an agricultural school established in May of 1931 at Serdang, Selangor

But in this period the main focus of the British was the development of schools of commerce and agriculture. in order to develop the skills of agriculture workers.

2-2-Higher education after the independence:

2-2-1-First Phase: 1957–1970

In this phase the focus was on getting skilled authorities to improve the agricultural sector, in 1962, the Higher Education Review Committee was instituted to create advances in education. This Committee determined a need for qualified professionals in science, medicine, dentistry, engineering, accounting, statistics and other technical and managerial fields. And that resulted the establishment of new universities in the 1970s to offer programs in scientific and technical disciplines.

2-2-2-Second Phase: 1970–1990

In this period the government made serious efforts to increase the number of professionals, semi-professionals, skilled and semi-skilled workforce that goes along with the economic development.). Four more colleges were built from 1969 to 1972 for the sciences, arts, agriculture and engineering.

These included Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM); Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM); Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM); and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). Two more universities were built during the 1980s: The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in 1983; and the Northern University of Malaysia (UUM) in 1984, which devoted significant efforts to administrative sciences and business and data innovation courses. These achievements increased Malaysian student enrolments, which expanded from 11,364 in 1970 to 38,125 students by 1980 and 69,700 by 1985 (Wan Kamal Mujani, 2014)

2-2-3-Higher education in the 90`s

More public universities were established, with two new universities in the eastern side of the country in order to balance the opportunities of higher education between east and west Malaysia. Beside universities the government established polytechnics and institutes to train semi-skilled professionals in engineering. And this decade was marked by the government giving chance to the private sector to form universities ,and it was inspired by the globalization and the liberalization ,and to control the quality of the programs and to

avoid unaccredited degrees, the national accreditation board (LAN) was created to monitor the programs of all the private universities and colleges. Another vision impacted higher education in Malaysia which is the education industry that assume that education is not a social service, and that people who want to get higher education should pay like any other economic sector. This concept engenders loans for higher education to help students from lower income and middle classes families to borrow funds to pursue their higher education studies. And this resulted the establishment of the national higher education fund corporation in (PTPTN) beginning from the year 1997/98.

The introduction of the private sector helped developing higher education and many private universities and colleges were established in this decade, And many foreign universities opened their branches in Malaysia such as: the Middlesex University, Northwood University, University of Nottingham, University of East London, University of Swansea and Western Michigan University, and this gave the chance to local students to have international education experience. And the main focus of private universities and colleges for programs and courses are those in high demand by industrial, commercial, electronic and electrical engineering, medicine, computer and information technology sectors, and the admission to these universities is international as they receive foreign students from different countries, and English language is the mean of teaching and learning (Norliza Mohd Zain, 2017)

2-2-4- National Higher Education: Plan (2007-2025)

On 27 March 2007, the MOHE's vision is to make Malaysia a hub of Excellence in Higher Education by 2020. MOHE has ten objectives of which one is to produce competent graduates that meet the needs of national and international employers;

The initial blueprint proposed the National Higher Education Plan (NHEAP) for 2007 to 2010 (KPTM, 2007). This constitutes the first series of short-term action plans for each phase of higher education transformation. The plan had five pillars that acted as the foundation for future developments. These were governance, leadership, academic environment, teaching and learning, and research and development (R&D).

3-The structure of Malaysian higher education: (MOHE)

The Malaysian higher education sector is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). And its mission is defined with the following principals: *To build and create a higher education environment that is conducive for the development of academic and institutional excellence and to*

generate individuals who are competent, innovative and of noble character to serve the needs of the nation and the world.

3-1-Structure of MOHE :MOHE comprises four departments / sectors:

- The Department of Higher Education
- The Department of Polytechnic Education
- The Department Community College Education
- The Management Sector
- The Development Sector

3-2-Providers of higher education:(Overview)

Malaysia hosts more than 100 institutions – both public and private – including foreign branches of reputable universities, and they offer programs leading to the award of certificates, diplomas as well as postgraduate qualifications.

Higher education providers in Malaysia can be grouped into two major categories :

3-2-1-Public higher educational institutions (government funded):

which consist of:

- **Public universities**-offer undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and sometimes pre-university foundation year and diploma courses. They can be divided into 3 major groups i.e. Research Universities, Focused Universities and Comprehensive Universities. There are currently 20 such institutions.
- **Polytechnics and community colleges**- which offer programmes at certificate and diploma.(30 polytechnics and 72 community colleges)
- **Public colleges** -which offer certificate and diploma level programmes.i.e Tunku Abdul Rahman College (Note: This college has been upgraded to private university college status in 2013)

3-2-2-Private higher educational institutions: which consist of :

- **Private universities**-There are currently 41 private universities, which award their own degree qualifications, diploma and foundation studies
- **Private university-colleges** university colleges usually have smaller-sized campuses and lower student numbers. Private university colleges usually run programmes at all levels, although

they usually have fewer faculties and have a stronger focus on undergraduate programmes, which award their own degree qualifications, diploma and foundation studies

- **Foreign university/ branch campuses** -Currently there are 10 foreign branch campuses that originate from Australia, United Kingdom, Ireland and China. These universities – some of which are in the top 100 of QS World University Rankings – offer programs identical in structure and content to those at their home campuses.
- **Private colleges**- There are about 403 active private colleges in Malaysia as of December 2011. These colleges award their own qualifications at diploma and certificate levels as well as 3+0 degrees, split-degrees, degree credit transfer program and provide tutorial support for preparation of professional qualification examinations.

4-International university collaboration :

International university collaboration is a part of international collaboration. And in recent years it has taken an important place in the university's activity. And this cooperation and is a form of working together to attain the best results in learning, training, and research. And with its growing role most universities have an office or administration in charge of international university cooperation, with a definite strategy and an action plan to carry out a series of international activities. (Al-Youbi, M. Zahed, & G. Tierney)

And these efforts made by universities and research institutes were made to develop knowledge and to help humans with the exchange of academic expertise.

Technical international cooperation is another form of international university cooperation. It includes activities whose primary aim is to increase the level of knowledge, technology, practical know-how or productive attitudes of the population, that is to say, to increase their reserve of human intellectual capital or their ability to use their current resources with greater efficiency.

Technical cooperation is often associated with actions intended to strengthen individual and organizational capacity by offering a wide range of technical opportunities to its beneficiaries. Technical cooperation can be strengthened via improving the following cooperative channels:

- Educational cooperation: student exchange, teacher exchange, language learning, joint degrees, and curricula developments
- Research cooperation: joint research activities
- Training cooperation: training programs and supplying training equipment and materials
- Cultural cooperation: social and cultural programs
- Scholarships
- Strategic partnerships

4-1-Motives for international cooperation :

Universities cooperate with each other for many reasons, but most importantly they form alliances to be able to compete in the global and mass higher educational market. so Universities have to find a place among their competitors, especially for newer universities, which do not have an established reputation and a large resource base.

For these universities, banding together will be one of the most efficient means to gain visibility and market share. Even older universities work together to maximize their advantageous positions and to raise their competitiveness.

Globalisation has also led to more strategic alliances straddling across national borders. As such, the number of international university organizations has greatly increased since the 1980. International university cooperation became a key in today's global market. Graduates most likely will work across national boundaries and deal with people from different cultural background. Hence, academic alliances that enable students to gain international exposure and credentials will give their members an advantage in student recruitment.

4-2-Success Factors for international cooperation :

Mission and objectives: It was suggested that a shared identity would provide a better base for a successful partnership. Goals should be realizable and appropriate to the level of development of the partner institutions, and formulation of clear objectives for the short to long term is essential. There should also be a clear commitment to the same goals, with advantageous returns to all members.

Partners: Partners should be selected in accordance with the mission and objectives of the network. Cultural and other differences between partners should be acknowledged.

People: Many networks fail because of the lack of commitment and continuity of support. Therefore, it is important to identify people who have the relevant expertise and who support the project.

Projects: leaders should balance the needs of their partners and those of their institution.

Time and resources: Investments in both time and money are necessary to realize a project. For instance, time and energy are needed before the network objectives and goals can be made known, accepted, and worked out within and among partner institutions. On the other hand, it is also important to control the cost of the network organization, which should not become the main drive for maintaining the network.

Communication: is a crucial factor for the success of the network, as it keeps members connected. (chan, 2004)

5-Internationalisation of higher education in Malaysia :

Malaysia has a target to internationalize its higher education system. and it is shifting from being a sending to a receiving country for students and it has an ambition to be a regional hub for higher education. Since the mid-1980s, Malaysia has supported Transnational Higher Education (TNHE) to achieve these goals. in 2006 Malaysia already had 490 TNHE programs with foreign higher education institutions mostly from Australia, United Kingdom, Canada, Ireland and New Zealand. International branch campuses in Malaysia that have the aim of recruiting local and regional students are also one of the components of TNHE. Cooperation and competition are a part of the internationalization process at national and institutional level. Malaysia is focusing on cooperation strategy as an internationalization tool to transfer and learn best the practices from foreign partners to further enhance the quality of higher education and institutions. (Munusamy & azirah, 2019)

5-Types of international collaboration in the Malaysian HEIs :

5-1-Foreign Branch Campuses :

Foreign institutions collaborate with local alliance partners in obtaining licensing rights for branch campuses opening in Malaysia. The arrangement requires local alliance partners to provide land, facilities and cash investments to develop physical infrastructure for the branch campuses, while the foreign institutions provide its intellectual property, brand presence and human capital.

There are currently 10 FUBCs in Malaysia that originate from host campuses in Australia, China, the UK and Ireland. FUBCs award their own degree (undergraduate and postgraduate), diploma and foundation studies qualifications. The qualifications are identical to that of the host universities.

5-2-Cross border Arrangement of Degree Programs:

Local and international students are drawn to Malaysian private higher education institutions arrangement of cross border programs with foreign institutions. The crossborder courses have high market demand such as management, business, ICT, engineering, tourism and hospitality, to name a few. There are three types of cross border arrangements: twinning degree programs, advanced standing or credit transfers for bachelor degree programs, and 3+0 foreign bachelor degree programs. The twinning modes vary from 1+2, 2+1 and 3+0, where students spend a number of years in private institutions following partner institutions syllabus locally, before completing the degree overseas. The 3+0 mode, for example, enables students to obtain a foreign institution's degree in Malaysia without going to partner institution overseas, reducing the cost of education substantially. In terms of quality regulation, the government controls the number of institutions offering twinning arrangements with foreign institutions, and partner institutions abroad are responsible in managing the content delivery of twinning programs. The cross-border collaboration is affordable to both local and international students; as a result, the country is able to reduce the outflow of funds for overseas education and promote Malaysia as a prime destination for affordable and quality tertiary education.

6-3-Research collaborations: One in five of the world's scientific papers are co-authored internationally. As a result of the expansion of communication methods and the ease of international travel, academics and researchers are finding it easier than ever to collaborate with their foreign counterparts, making the exchange of academic ideas much simpler to organize. The ability to share experiences among researchers is key for the development of this field. And this is manifested through international research collaborations attracting funding through national-level research evaluations which determine the levels of research funding across the research-active HEIs.

The research activity in Malaysia is measured by the Malaysia Research Assessment Instrument (MyRA) developed by the Ministry of Higher Education. MyRA is composed of nine sections, each with corresponding indicators, which are used to score individual universities. Most of the assessment sections take into account international engagement and collaborations, (Ilieva, 2016) Malaysia focuses on increasing research output and quality under the plan Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025. With 1.3% of their GDP spend on Research and Development, they achieved an inspiring level of growth within the research sector, with a 4x increase in number of citations, 11% yearly

growth in number of patents and generated revenues of RM1.25 BN from Malaysia Research Universities as solution providers to industries, agencies and NGOs. A significant proportion of Malaysia's research is collaborated internationally.

6-4- Malaysia's approach to international student policies: The short-term target set by the Malaysian government is 200,000 international students by 2020. Currently, there are 130,110 international students in Malaysia from 136 countries, mainly in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The number of international students knew an important increase since 2001 especially in the private sector.

7-Malaysia and World University Rankings :

The Government of Malaysia spends around 5% its GDP on education – which is above the world and regional average, Other than grants from the government, Malaysian universities raise funds from industry collaboration which further enhances their research profile and their graduates' employability.

- Malaysia has a youth literacy rate of above 97%; gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education of 44.1% – higher than the global average; and boasts 10 universities among the world's top 500 of universities (a total of 23 in the top 1,000) according to Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings (WUR).(brief, <https://educationmalaysia.gov.my/>)

8-Advantages of international collaborations in Malaysian higher education institutes :

International university collaborations have brought to Malaysian HEIs so many advantages, and (shahijan and al 2016) cited these following examples :

- Higher number of international staff, students and researchers, who have been internationally trained and well prepared and they can contribute to the developing role of universities/organisations as international agents. It will also develop the multicultural aspects of the institutions
- Generating income and foreign exchange savings through the enrolment of international students, as they represent the most important source of income to universities.

- Increasing the ranking of the particular university/institute as well as creating the strong international recognition and reputation
- Creating knowledge sharing among the local and international staff, students and researchers: sharing and exchanging of knowledge can help to establish creative and innovative thinking skills .Higher education internationalization can generally be understood as sharing of knowledge, cultures, ideas and also values among international students, staff and their local counterparts. Therefore, this is a good opportunity for the local staff and students to learn from the values of other countries via knowledge exchange.
- Motivating the local admins/students/staff to improve their English language and enhance their communication skills: English is promptly growing among HEIs worldwide
- The growth of the university based on dynamics and innovation: one of the main reasons at the institutional level for internationalisation is to increase graduates who are internationally well educated, skilled and innovative, therefore ready to work and engage in culturally and linguistically diverse communities

9-Threats of international collaborations in Malaysian HEIs :

International collaborations can bring some threats to the local HEI such as:

- *Lack of corporate identity/organisational culture*: some of the institutions are building campuses abroad but often they have to obey with national legislation regarding the language of instruction as well as content of curriculum; therefore, the governments have decided to loosen this restriction which makes the universities to have lack of national identity. Similarly, internationalisation can create lack of university identity or organisational culture
- *Brain drain – losing prominent academic staff to institutions abroad*: Academic migration can happen via internationalisation of higher education, for example famous scholars or even lecturers can be absorbed by high salary at the world's best universities (shahijan, rezaei, & preece, 2016)

Conclusion:

Malaysian higher education system gained its reputation due to years of strategic planning and an ongoing enhancements through several action plans ,and among the factors that helped developing this sector was the openness to the world, and its internationalization plan that helped improving HEIs on different levels: learning ,teaching and research ,it also enhanced innovation and knowledge ,and these factors made Malaysian universities very flexible when it comes to international courses and programs. it helped also in attracting international students which became a source of income, international research collaborations knew also a raise in recent years and that impacted positively the quality of the outcomes of researches, but international cooperation in higher education can lead also to the lack of organizational culture of HEIs ,and the loss of prominent academic staff to institutions abroad .

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