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Globalization of Higher Education in Malaysia

Issac Taylor

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to highlight how globalization and the development of knowledge-based economy is effecting the higher education system of Malaysia. This reflective analysis examined the policies and practices, in the higher education of Malaysia that internationalizes its higher education systems; the impact of globalization and the development of knowledge based economy; the cultural landscape of higher education in Malaysia towards globalization; and any international organizations or resources to identify/critique the impact of globalization of Malaysia's higher education systems. As a result, quality assurance has been the key factor in promoting globalization in Malaysia Higher Education because English is becoming more prevalent in higher learning which is promoting more opportunity for foreign students. With quality assurance, the cultural landscape has changed from the aspect of teaching and learning in its traditional formality.

Introduction

Globalization is impacting higher education in so many countries. Globalization is rendering challenges for higher education in each country, region, and its locale. Because of the global economy and its competitiveness, higher education in Malaysia has become a knowledge based economy. When Malaysia gained independence in 1957, the country had no university at all. The first wave of establishing higher education institutions began after the establishment of the University of Malaya in 1959. Currently, the Malaysian higher education system is composed of 20 government-funded universities, 37 private universities and colleges, and about 300 private colleges (Chan, 2013). The impact of globalization and the development of knowledge-based economy have caused much dramatic change to the character and functions of higher education in Malaysia (Anantha & Krishnaveni, 2012). This reflective analysis will discuss policies and practices in the higher education of Malaysia that internationalizes its higher education systems; the impact of globalization and the development of knowledge based economy; the cultural landscape of higher education in Malaysia towards globalization; and any international organizations or resources to identify/critique the impact of globalization of Malaysia's higher education systems.

Policies and Practices of Malaysia's Globalization in Higher Education

The Ministry of Education serves as the jurisdiction of both private and public institutions of higher learning in Malaysia. The bulk of the higher education is carried out by the country's public institutions but the private education sector also complements the efforts of the government by offering the opportunity to pursue higher education at a more affordable fee than is available elsewhere (Anantha & Krishnaveni, 2012). Public universities were for a long time the dominant institutions compared to private ones, which gained legal acceptance and recognition after the passing of the Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEI) Act in 1996

(Chan, 2013). Public institutions consist of public universities, polytechnics, community colleges and teacher training institutes while the private institutions include private universities, private university colleges, foreign branch campus universities and private colleges (.Nathan, et. al, 2013). The Ministry of Education in Malaysia developed strategies and plans for Higher Education Institutions to become more competitive globally. The objective of these plans is to ensure that Malaysian universities achieve world-class status and operate as a hub for higher education in the Southeast Asia region (Grapragasem, et. al, 2013).

Two objectives of the Ministry of Education for Malaysia to become more global in higher education were the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) beyond 2020 and National Higher Education Action Plan (NHEAP) 2007–2010. The National Higher Education Strategic Plan-Laying the Foundation Beyond 2020’ provides the long-range direction and goals of higher education in Malaysia. ‘The National Higher Education Action Plan: Triggering Transformation 2007–2010’ outlines the implementation of the strategic plan in four distinct phases for higher education in Malaysia (Kaur Sidhu & Singh, 1999). The four distinct phases are: Phase One: Laying the Foundation (2007-2010), Phase Two: Strengthening and Enhancement (2011-2015), Phase Three: Excellence (2016-2020), and Phase Four: Glory and Sustainability (beyond 2020) (Kaur Sidhu & Singh, 2009).

The Impact of Globalization and Development of Knowledge Based Economy

Universities, now a day, are more actively involved to market their innovations which have opened the new doors for the higher education institutes to start entrepreneurial activities especially with reference to the economic growth. The role of university in the knowledge economy has been altered from knowledge producers to knowledge capitalizers for improved economic performance (Iqbal, et.al, 2011). The growth of the knowledge-based economy has led not only to competition among employers worldwide for the best brains but also among the institutions that train the best brains (Grapragasem, et. al, 2013). In order to compete in a globally competitive economy, the higher education system of Malaysia needs to be able to fulfill the demands of the economic sector, in terms of knowledge and skillful workers (.Othman et. al, 2011). For a country to be globally competitive, the development of human capital is essential. Education can be viewed as a capital good, which is used to develop human resource for economic and social transformation (2011). Globalization has demanded changes to be made in the Higher Education Institutions of Malaysia, to ensure that the education system can provide quality, creative, innovative and competitive workforce for the development of a knowledge driven economy (2011).

Many comments have been made about the lack of soft or generic skills among undergraduates produced by higher education institutions in Malaysia. By instilling soft or generic skills among undergraduates, it will increase their employability skills, as wells as in producing productive and knowledge workers (Othman, et.al, 2011). One of the Ministry’s of Education objectives for Malaysia’s higher education system is to produce competent graduates to fulfil national and international manpower needs, with 75 per cent of the graduates employed in their relevant fields within six months of their graduation (Nathan, et. al, 2013)..

The Cultural Landscape of Higher Education in Malaysia towards Globalization

In order to attract international students to Malaysia, the government realizes the importance of branding Malaysian education (Grapragasem, et. al, 2013). In response to

globalization, Malaysia must be marketable in the English language in order to attract foreign students (2013). The Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education aims at intensifying globalization through increasing the number of international students (Othman, et. al, 2011). Cross-border institutional cooperation is solicited especially when it comes to other countries' resources and its relationship with locality. The restructuring of its education policy have given foreign stakeholders the opportunity to conduct twinning programs with local colleges and universities, as well as to open international branch campuses in Malaysia (Grapragasem, et. al, 2013).

Although the academic community is orientated to a Western academic value system, it also operates within a complex and distinctive mix of heritage and Asian cultural values (Harland, et. al, 2014). The role of social support is important on international students' adjustment is important because international students encounter many academic and cultural changes when they come to Malaysia (Othman, et. al, 2011). International students who decide to pursue studies in a foreign country have to overcome the challenges that are related to their adjustment experiences. They are required to deal with the differences between their own cultural values, norms, and customs and those of their hosts (Yusoff, 2011). Higher education in Malaysia has influence through bureaucracy which affect the academic scholarship and values of learning. The word "academia" can be translated as "the academic community". The government has formulated three well-planned education blueprints: Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025; the NHEAP 2007–2010; and the NHESP beyond 2020 (Grapragasem, et. al, 2013). These have transformed Malaysia into one the most sought-after countries by foreign investors and students in terms of its education sector. The Malaysian higher education institution have the responsibility for offering quality education. The excellence of any higher education institution can only be determined by competent and qualified academic staff (2013).

International Organizations/Resources

The higher education system of Malaysia has several organizations/resources which provide assistance in their endeavors in promoting academic excellence on a global level. Project Atlas is an organization that tracks migration trends of the millions of students who pursue education outside of their home countries each year. Data are collected on global student mobility patterns as well as leading countries involved in international higher education mobility (Project Atlas | Home, 2015). The Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia is entrusted with providing quality education for the people of Malaysia. Education in Malaysia begins from pre-school and continues to university. The vision of the MOE is to make Malaysia a center for education excellence (Grapragasem, et. al, 2013). Malaysia's Higher Education System is a part of United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which is known as the "intellectual" agency of the United Nations (<http://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco>). UNESCO exists to bring this creative intelligence to life; for it is in the minds of men and women that the defenses of peace and the conditions for sustainable development must be built. The higher education system of Malaysia is also a member of the International Association of Student Affairs and Services, International Association of Universities, and several others which support the upward mobility of higher education.

Conclusion

The current trend of higher education in Malaysia is based on four factors: globalization, knowledge based economy, cultural landscape, and its organizations/resources. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has formulated three education blueprints: The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025, NHEAP 2007–2010 and NHESP beyond 2020 in order to pursue the idea of becoming an “education hub” in the region, especially in South East Asia (Grapragasem, et. al, 2013). These initiatives have provided growth and sustainability for the private and public universities in Malaysia. Quality assurance has been the key factor in promoting globalization in Malaysia Higher Education because English is becoming more prevalent in higher learning which is promoting more opportunity for foreign students. With quality assurance, the cultural landscape has changed from the aspect of teaching and learning in its traditional formality. In conclusion, human capital is the most pertinent attribute of the Malaysian Higher Education System. To be more competitive globally, the establishment of foreign universities and colleges in Malaysia has provided skilled workers and economic development as well. The Ministry of Education in Malaysia has a vision that reflects the upward mobility of its higher education system and throughout this analysis it continues to grow in order to be known globally.

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