REVIEW ARTICLE

Globalization and Higher Education: A Malaysian Perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the term globalization and higher education from the perspectives of the Malaysian educational system. First, the paper aims to review the concepts of globalization and internationalization, rationale for globalization and relations between globalization and higher education. Second, the author describes a historical synopsis regarding internationalization and higher education in Malaysia. Third, Malaysian government policies on internationalization in education are discussed. Fourth, the paper illustrates the challenges of globalization in Malaysian higher education and conclusion to the discussion.

Keywords: *Challenges, Globalization, Higher education, Internationalization, Policies and barriers.*

Globalization and Internationalization

Notions of globalization have grabbed many an intellectual imagination over the past two decades. In academic and lay circles alike, many have pursued an intuition that this concept could provide an analytical lynchpin for understanding social change in the contemporary world. 'Globalization' is not the only entry point for such an enquiry, of course, but it has seemed a pretty good one. At the outset of the 21st century, one of the most frequently utilized terms is globalization regardless of nation, region or race. This term is used extensively in various sectors, including politics, economics, culture and education. The term "globalization" has been used as the meaning of "becoming global". It refers to the "development of increasingly integrated systems and relations beyond the nation"[1].Globalization causes internationalization to occur, or more accurately, internationalization is the result of globalization. The result of bringing cultures, people, economics, laws and governments into direct interaction and influence or the preparation of the countries to adjust to accommodate the changes associated with globalization. By its nature, globalization spans a multitude of disciplines, communities, and cultures. This, of course, allows for a variety of viewpoints, be they economic, social, or political. The definitions presented here reflect some of those viewpoints. It is also vital that these definitions be presented against the reality of the global situation, as Vidya S. A. Kumar rightly points out in his article

"A Critical Methodology of Globalization: Politics of the 21st Century?. It is, however, beyond the scope of this paper to assess the extent to which each of the statements captures reality. First, the prefix "inter" of "internationalization" comes from a Latin word which originally means "between, mutual" and others [2] When a "nation" is taken as a country, "international" can be interpreted as "between or among countries", and its verb form "internationalize" can be translated as "making relations, effects or scopes international," or specifically, "bringing under international control or protection". It is safe to say that "internationalism", "internationalize" and "internationalization" all derive from "international". It is also important to differentiate globalization and internationalization, when trying to understand the internationalization of higher education. The term globalization has been used since the latter half of the 1960s. The drastic rise of globalization in the fields of economy, politics and culture, following the dismantling of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the development of information technology in the 1990s, has come to exercise a considerable impact on higher education. Although many scholars have disclosed various views on globalization since the 1990s, there have been relatively fewer discussions on the distinction between globalization and internationalization. The author outlines the following three arguments on the relation

between globalization and internationalization, based on earlier studies. Firstly, there is an argument that the globalization of higher education concurrently means the internationalization of higher education and that both can be used interchangeably. In Japan, many scholars seem to support this argument. For example, Kazuhiro Ebuchi analyzed the definition of the globalization of higher education in the report entitled "Summary of Discussions by the Higher Education Planning Committee" in 1990, and stated in this analysis that "the 'objective' of internationalization may be 'international coalition' (globalization)" and that the "globalization of higher education is almost equal to the 'internationalization of universities, which has been generally referred to. It may be concluded that both are exchangeable and used with the same meaning."Secondly, since the 1990s, in response to the above perspective, many scholars have strongly argued that globalization and internationalizations are different ideas, and been careful not to use them as identical concepts. To put it simply, "globalization" means "diminishing the world's social dimension and expansion of overall world consciousness." Therefore, this concept "can be clearly distinguished from internationalization, which means the desire to be a member of the international society by satisfying a certain standard, or strengthening the influence of a nation on other nations"[3]. According to Alderman, while the former is a product of the development and impact of economic and cultural globalization, the internationalization of higher education is an inevitable and significant counter measure and action, especially against economic globalization (especially against influences resulting from economic globalization).Thirdly, there is another interpretation; namely, that globalization and internationalization differ in concept but are essentially the same in terms of dialectical relations. For example, Peter Scott, a British scholar, pointed out that internationalization of higher education only occurred after the modern age when national universities emerged or universities founded by national governments came into existence, and that their internationalization did not involve linear or cumulative relations, but rather dialectical relations with their globalization. More specifically, he stated that "globalization is neither a simple reiteration of old internationalism nor the highest stage in the development of internationalization. The new globalization is, in a sense, a competitor to the old internationalization". As a result, it is inevitable that various conflicts and inconsistencies arise between internationalization, which is implemented on the premise of the existence of nation-states, and globalization, which is implemented across national borders in a natural manner. Globalization is sometimes used interchangeably with internationalization, although both the definition and the difference between the two terms are unclear. According to Knight's [4] assertion, globalization can be thought of as the catalyst while internationalization is the response, albeit a response in a proactive way. In addition, internationalization as one set of behaviours influenced by globalizing processes. These processes include not only political and economic globalization but also social and cultural, including educational globalization. Based on these assertions, globalization refers to no single or simple phenomenon but to a world system incorporated with multi-phenomena such as political, economic, social, cultural and technological [1]. On the other hand, internationalization views as a response to the impact of globalization or a set of behaviours influenced by globalization processes [5].

Rationale for Globalization

As it is known globalization, no doubt, promises dramatic and rewarding change to the higher education systems of the developed countries. Whereas for the developing and the underdeveloped countries, where the system is facing the scarcity of resource, it threatens the stability needed to build the well performing system. Developing countries often have to adjust willingly or unwillingly both to the quickening pulse of international change, and accordingly, reform on several fronts simultaneously, which may not be possible under the given resource status of higher education. Globalization is expected to be a process through which an increasingly free flow of ideas, people, goods, services and capital would lead to the integration of economies and societies. It is characterized by an accelerated flow of trade, capital, and information, as well as mobility of individuals, across geographical borders. It reflects comprehensive level of interaction than that has occurred in the past, suggesting something beyond the word "international". It implies a diminishing importance of national borders and strengthening of identities, that stretch beyond those rooted in a limited locale in terms of particular country or region. It can also be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring at any distant place and vice versa. It is this construction of time-space compression that has given rise to popular notion of "One-World"

"Global Village", etc. Globalization can be discussed using three major domains: politico-economic, socio-cultural, and educational [6]. Politico-economic rationale has become more important since the beginning of this century. In particular, the economic rationale is more prevalent than political one, with building an international labour market, as well as with growing information-communication technology (ICT) competitiveness. Globalization is a significant force reorganizing the world's economy through new knowledge and technology [6]. Owing to the intensive trend of economic globalization, as [4] point out, sociocultural and academic rationales seem to be secondary, and these rationales are inclined more to the institutional and individual level than the national level. From the viewpoint of human resource development, socio-cultural and educational rationales seem to be regarded as subsidiary factors to enhance and strengthen the economic rationale. In spite of this economic or commercial-oriented tendency, the socio-cultural rationale is of importance because a national identity and culture is considered as a core element not merely to maintaining the nation's own culture but also to living in cooperation with other nations. If a nation loses its cultural identity, globalization may be nothing but homogenization. Finally, educational rationale is also an important domain because the globalization of higher education can provide people with an opportunity to meet international market demand and work environment.

Globalization and Higher Education

The concept of globalization is referred to in most of the current literature about the internationalization of higher education. There seems to be no single theory or definition of globalization but many discourses are developed, grounded in broader theoretical traditions and perspectives, involving a number of distinct approaches to social inquiry [7]. On the other hand, there also seem to be some commonalities among theories. For example, Robinson states that most scholars agree that the pace of social change and transformation worldwide have quickened dramatically in the latter decades; this social change is related to increasing connectivity among peoples and countries worldwide and an increased awareness of these interconnections; the effects of globalization are omnipresent and the dimensions of the concept are interrelated. Globalization is thus a multidimensional concept. In the context of higher education therefore; internationalization would normally manifest itself in many different types of provision and modes of delivery. At the level of the universities

for instance the internationalization process refers to massification of universities in general; a reaching out further afield to increase an institution's influence, visibility, and/or market share on the international scene [8]. Acknowledges [7] that Transnational Higher Education (TNHE) could be regarded as potentially the most significant form of internationalization of higher education. [9] defines TNHE as follows: "all types of higher education study programs, or set of courses of study, or educational services in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the institution providing or sponsoring the services is based. Such programs may belong to the education of the State different from the State in which it operates, or may operate independently of any national education system". Globalization cannot be regarded simply as a higher form of internationalization. [10] suggests that globalization transcends national identities and carries the potential to be actively hostile to nation-states. In some respects globalization in higher education is an alternative to the old internationalization, even a rival to it. Yet they do not necessarily exclude each other. Internationalization is by no means obsolete and it continues and multiplies greatly in a more global age. It is fostered within inter-dependent global systems and encourages their extension and development. Much of what begins as internationalization has implications for globalization, and adds to the accumulation of challenges to national policy autarky. One difference between globalization and internationalization is whether national systems become more *integrated* as suggested by globalization, or more *interconnected* as with internationalization [11]. But thickening connections readily spill over into the evolution of common systems. Despite the fact that some authors [4, 12] argue for a strong differentiation between the concepts of internationalization and globalization, in the current higher education literature, the relationship between the two concepts remains unclear. [13] even state that a major shift in research themes is emerging; from that of internationalization to globalization. Research about international higher education is sometimes found under the heading of globalization of education. It is possible to conclude that conceptual confusion reigns between the two terms [14]. Globalization has forced institutions to develop a higher degree of standardization, not only in the curriculum but also in admissions administration, and the qualifications of instructors. Transparency has caused institutions to examine long-standing

policies and practices in light of international standards of equality of opportunity, professionalism and ethics in teaching and research. It requires benchmarks and a set of measurable indicators of quality. As university web pages and printed materials, we can easily access information and become available to allow outside observers to access the quality of the academic programs, facilities and research activities. As for universities expand international exchange programs, students and faculty members are able to compare the quality of their programs against those of their exchange partners. Increased participation in international conferences and symposium provides another platform for accessing quality. Globalization has a great potential for strengthening intercultural understanding. Intercultural understanding requires an awareness of what are values, what is considered proper behaviour and what is acceptable in another culture. In addition to understanding one's own culture, students must learn that there are other cultures and other beliefs, and that those cultures are not wrong, just different. The tremendous experience of academic exchange in another part of the world promotes intercultural understanding, develops language facility and accelerates maturity. Though, the opportunity for participation in international exchange program is limited, university should be encourages to sponsor and support these exchange program. Globalization provided a more level playing field for the development of higher education. If students are learning the same materials no matter where they are receiving that education and the quality of the instruction is of the same high quality, graduates from institutions throughout the world will have more equal opportunity for success in all fields.

Challenges to Internationalization of Higher Education

One of the challenges that are common for the new borderless world is the introduction of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), an offshoot of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Under GATS, there should be progressive liberalization in services that include education. If Malaysia decides to subscribe to GATS then our education industry will face tough competition from international providers such as Universitas-21 (which is a consortium of research-based universities), which are developing an e-learning programme in collaboration with the Thompson Organization. Under GATS all trade barriers must be removed and in education this will mean no subsidies for local providers, no delay in approvals, no tax discrimination and many other incentives that will provide advantage to the local

providers. The process of student intake must be made more transparent especially in matters connected to visa issuance. Specifically, the GATS aims to create a "level playing field' so that there is no discrimination against foreign corporations and no advantage given to local providers [4]. To sum up, internationalization seems to take the form of both competition and co-operation at various levels of the higher education system, and seems to be related to the re-conceptualization of the task of higher education and higher education organizations or ministries in the society. While major strides have been made in the last five years since the strategic plan was issued, significant challenges remain. [15-35]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.
- Involving a broader range of university staff in the process so that the goal of thoroughly internationalizing the educational process will become a reality.
- Finding resources to support special projects and new initiatives in an era of declining government spending for universities.
- Strengthening research collaboration and expanding academic collaboration and exchange programmes with best educational and research institutions in the world.
- Building stable and effective networks to facilitate recruitment of high quality international students & staff, and effective support services to retain them once they have been recruited [36-61].

Conclusion

This paper has reviewed the reform of higher education in Malaysia, addressing three questions. What changes have taken place? How have they been managed? How to look at the changes? The reform originates from re-conception of education in the context of globalization and the emergence of knowledge economy. Globalization and internationalization in higher education are potentially conflicting, while at the same time interactive and mutually generative. For example in higher education policy, one possible response to the globalization of societies, cultures, economies and labour markets is to take measures encouraging a more controlled internationalization of higher education, rendering institutions more effective in response to the global challenge; as by definition, internationalization is a process more readily steerable by governments than is globalization.

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