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PERCEIVED FACTORS INFLUENCING INTERNATIONALISATION OF MALAYSIAN PUBLIC HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Higher Learning Institutions(HLIs) throughout the world has been facing challenges from globalisation. Malaysia is not left behind in the challenges and striving to be successful in the internationalisation of its HLIs. Little is known on how far is Malaysian Public Universities to be successful in internationalisation of its HLIs and what are the factors affecting internationalisation of Malaysian Public HLIs. By analysing several models and concepts from prior literatures, this paper presents a conceptual framework which draws internal and external factors that affects internationalisation of Malaysian public higher education. The internal factors analysed in this study are leadership and governance, human resources and technology integration while the external factor is government policy. All these factors have a strong effect on internationalisation of HLI and need to be analysed in order to understand the actual barriers to internationalisation of HLI. The method used to arrive at the conceptual framework is through analysis of current literatures.

Keywords: Internationalisation of Higher Learning Institutions, Malaysian Public Universities, internal factors, external factor.

1. Introduction

Higher Learning Institution (HLI) all over the world has been facing many difficulties as a result of globalisation. Education is the basis to knowledge, the "utilisation of technologies", "cross border association" and "sustaining complex communities" and therefore it has become one of the key element in the formation of global environment (Marginson, 2016). Forces of globalisation have resulted in numerous push on HLI in the last decade. Internationalisation of HLI is one of the results of the push from globalisation and has impacted many HLI around the world. HLI around the world have been rapidly taking actions towards internationalisation of their institutions.

Among the key issues that has been studied in most literatures in internationalization of higher education around the world are internationalization of the curriculum, internationalisation at home, research, senior management leadership, staff involvement, internationalization strategy and resources. There are many positive impact of internationalisation which benefits the less devoleped countries by improvised quality of academic, students and staff with international orientation and "national and international citizenship" for student and staff, while gaining "revenue generation" and "brain gain" for the developed countries (Jibeen & Khan, 2015).

The study of internationalisation of higher education keeps evolving and more focus has been given to benchmark set by Western countries without much of focus on the real issues faced by less developed and developing countries. Malaysia being one of the developing country often follow the benchmark set by Western countries and has been striving to be international by taking actions based on the set indicators. Malaysia also been promoting the higher education at international level. It is highlighted that Malaysia is competing with South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong to become an excellent international education hub in Asia (Munusamy & Hashim, 2019).

This study has several limitations. Firstly, it only examines Malaysian Public Universities under Malaysian HLI and does not include other public institutions such as Polytechnic and Community Colleges. Secondly it does not focus external factors other than government policy. There are other factors such as world economy situation that might affect internationalisation of HLIs. These areas are recommended to be included in future research in this field.

1.1. Internationalisation of Malaysian Higher Learning Institutions(HLI)

Malaysian HLIs is concerned in the push towards internationalisation of higher education. Malaysian HLI is making its way towards internationalisation of Higher Education by taking actions such as looking at new ways of conducting courses which includes international aspects in the syllabus and hiring more international students. Internationalisation of higher education is incorporated as part of government strategy under the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) Malaysia has five research HLI but only one HLI made it to top 100 in the world ranking in 2019. In the Times Higher Education, nine HLIs were listed in impact rankings. Four of it came from Research Universities, only one is at the top 100, which is USM ranked at 49 (Rajaendram, 2019). The output for the investment in HLI is low as Malaysia is ranked 42 out of 50 countries (Munusamy & Hashim, 2019).

There are at present 20 public universities, 34 polytechnics, 94 public community colleges, 52 private universities, 10 foreign universities branch campuses and around 433 dynamic private colleges in

Malaysia. Aside from that, different other instructive foundations from the UK, US, Australia, Canada, France, Germany and New Zealand offer twinning and diversified degree programs through associations with Malaysian higher learning institutions (Muthu & Chelliah, 2018). Malaysian public universities are arranged into three unique classes. These three are "Research Universities" (RU), "Comprehensive Universities" (CU) and "Focused Universities" (FU). Right now, there are 20 Public Universities in Malaysia which are partitioned as 5 Research Universities, 4 Comprehensive Universities and 11 Focused universities. The National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2007-2020 governs the HLIs structure in Malaysia. One of the plan principles in the Strategic Plan is to become an education hub intensifying internationalisation, which is in thrust number 5. The internationalisation Policy of Higher Education Malaysia focuses on six core strategies namely, "student mobility", "staff mobility", "academic programmes", "research and development", "governance and autonomy" including "social integration and cultural engagement" (Abdul Aziz et al., 2011).

1.2. Challenges in Higher Learning Institutions (HLI)

HLI have been facing challenges due to globalisation. The challenges are classified into two categories which are individual and institutional (Mohammad Shatar Sabran, 2009). Individual challenges refers to a "lack of competency", "negative attitudes", "absence of incentives", "lack of personal knowledge and expertise" while institutional obstacles refers to "lack of financial sources", "scarcity of "human resources', and "educational structure" (Mohammad Shatar Sabran, 2009).

Many researchers believe that internal resources possessed by organizations may determine the performance level and success within their environment that they are competing with, there are less studies conducted on which resources can translate into superior performance in a specific organization. The possession of specific resources that are superior to those competing firms and how they are integrated and utilised can lead to superior outcome (Barney, 2014). Possession of superior resources and its competencies are not indicated clearly in prior studies conducted within internal resources within HLIs.

Technology integration and human resources as discussed by Ramanathan, Thambiah, and Raman (2012) are important factors that contributes to internationalisation. The role of management is vital in internationalisation path as it is discussed as being responsible for the mode, direction and speed that shapes towards the internationalisation (Hutchinson et al., 2006). Leadership and governance and HLI Policy are identified as part of important factors in internationalisation (Ramanathan et al., 2012).

Paige Internationalisation model outlines ten important categories as that are important in internationalisation of higher education (Paige, 2005). The indictors for measurement of these categories are also given. Over time, higher education institutions in Malaysia has incorporated some of the categories in the internationalisation process. Among the important indicators that still needs to be studied in Malaysia from Paige Model are mission, leadership and faculty support.

Davies model was introduced previously in various studies to study internal and external elements as shown in Figure 1. The internal elements focus on university mission, traditions, self-image, program personnel and finance and organisation leadership. The external elements focus on perception of image and identity, evolution of trends and opportunities in international marketplace and assessment of competitive situation.
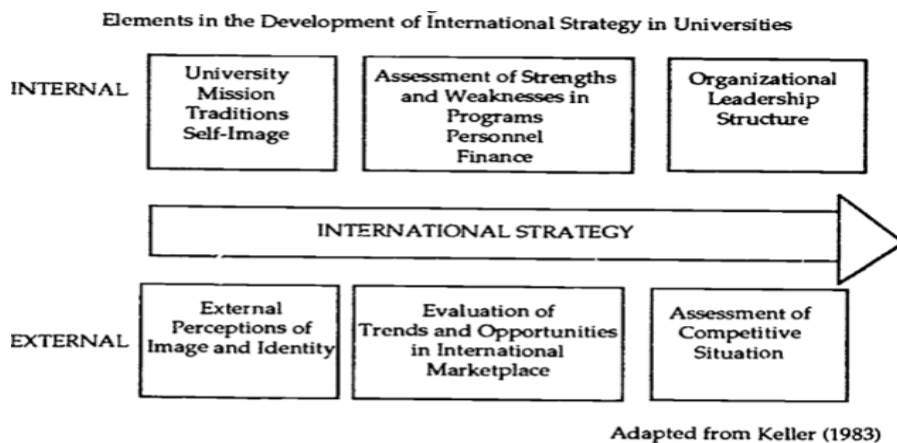
Elements in the Development of International Strategy in Universities

INTERNAL

| University Mission Traditions Self-Image | Assessment of Strengths and Weaknesses in Programs Personnel Finance | Organizational Leadership Structure |

INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY

EXTERNAL

| External Perceptions of Image and Identity | Evaluation of Trends and Opportunities in International Marketplace | Assessment of Competitive Situation |

Adapted from Keller (1983)

Figure 01. Elements in the Development of International Strategy in Universities. Source: (Davies, 1992)

2. Problem Statement

Malaysia economic policy sees a shift from production based towards knowledge-based economy due to arising need and push from globalisation. Malaysian education system needs to produce competent graduates to become a knowledge driven economy. The Malaysian government has taken initiatives to achieve this by launching Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 in September 2012. Its motive is to transform Malaysian Education system to be able to produce graduates who are innovative and have thinking capabilities to meet the knowledge economy. As this emerges, importance has been given on increasing global ranking of HLI rather than sustainable internationalisation of Malaysian Public HLIs.

Universities and higher education institutions are facing challenges as they need a meaningful contribution to be sustainable (Tilbury, 2011). There are many studies conducted on internationalisation process of HLIs and sustainability of HLIs in meeting the demand from globalisation. Pressures are increasing to fulfil more roles in effort of getting a place in the global higher education market where the key performance indicators are based on rankings and positions (Altbach, 2008). Most of the studies looks into Knight's Internationalisation Theory in relation to Internationalisation process. While the process of internationalisation is important, it is also vital to study on the internal and external resources of an organisation and how it influence the performance of HLIs.

HLIs should be know well on its internal strength, and also focus on external environment to achieve sustainable advantage that brings success. Many researchers have looked into internal resources as part of factors that contributes towards internationalisation of higher education using Resource Based View (RBV). Less perception-based studies had been conducted on how internal and external factors can affect the performance of HLIs.

3. Research Questions

This study determines the relationship among several independent variables that becomes the factors for a successful internationalisation of HLIs in Malaysia. In this research, international models drawn from several authors explained in theoretical framework is applied. The research questions are as follows: -

- What are the perceived internal factors that influence the internationalisation Malaysian Public HLI?

- What are the perceived external factors that influence the internationalisation Malaysian Public HLI?

- Is there any direct relationship between leadership and governance, human resources, technology integration and government policy and internationalisation of Malaysian Public HLI?

4. Purpose of the Study

Literature has shown that internal and external factors has an impact on the success of internationalisation of anorganisation. There are several studies on the role of internal factors within HLIs that contributes to the sustainable internationalisation process of HLIs. However, there are no studies, to the researcher's knowledge that has been clearly identified on specific internal and external factors in Malaysian Public universities and how these factors affect the success of sustainable internationalisation. This research aims to study the internal and external factors that affects internationalisation of Higher Learning Institutions in Malaysia.

5. Research Methods

This conceptual paper is based on secondary data review and analysis. Literature review were conducted based on secondary data from various sources. The main method used to collect and analyse the literature is by using Google search engine. Terms such as "internationalisation of universities", "factors towards sustainable internationalisation" and "internal and external factors towards higher learning successes were used. Quite a wide number of information were found on internationalisation of HLI. However very limited information internationalisation of Malaysian Public HLI. Information found on Knight Internationalisation study sounds more promising. Literature from various experiment study was used to further the research factors towards successful internationalisation of HLI. There were nearly none on internal and external factors specifically for Malaysian context.

Second, research on academic databases and some books were explored. Databases such as Science Direct, Palgrave-journals, SAGE-journals were explored using the keywords such as "internationalisation factors", "barriers towards internationalisation" and "internal and external factors towards internationalisation". Books with the topic relevant to Internationalisation of Higher Education were analysed too. This further added to the literature but still not many findings on Malaysian Context.

Finally, scientific databases were explored to obtain variables used in higher education studies and many models used were analysed. Two main promising models were drawn from these, which were the Knight Internationalisation Model and Davies Internationalisation Model which were the most prominent in research area in HLI and internationalisation. Figures and estimates were analysed from various sources of government websites such as MOHE and media reports.

6. Findings

The proposed study identifies internal variables in the Esman and Davies model and external variables from Davies model that is important in Malaysian HLI context by studying the perceived factors of internationalisation in public universities in Malaysia. For a successful of this process in HLIs context, both internal and external factors need to be focused.

6.1. Internal & External Factors

The factors for internationalisation of HLI is categorized in two, internal and external factors. For this study, internal factors refer to factors arising within institution itself and external factor refers to factors arising outside the institution that affects the internationalisation. A suitable environment that favors the activities and policies related to internationalisation is needed for easy internationalisation (Nuwagaba et al., 2018). A world class university has features of highly sought graduates, high level research and dynamic technology transfer and all these can be attributed to three sets of factors complementing each other (Salmi, 2009). Hanaa (2015) stated the alignment of these three factors is a requirement for any institution although the configuration of the results either research, learning and technology transfer relies on the nature and mission of individual HLI either research focused, teaching, applied science etc. (Ahmed, 2016).

6.2. Internal Factors

6.2.1. Leadership & Governance

Leadership and governance are identified as part of important factors in internationalization (Ramanathan et al., 2012). Research Universities are established with the goal to be innovation leader, focus on nation's important areas, produce world class research outputs along with high impact publications, attracting high standards' students and provide conducive research environment (Azman & Abd. Aziz, 2006). Leadership is an important factor for sustainable internationalisation (Green & Olson, 2003; Knight, 2004). A case study conducted in Florida International University (FIU) shows its current leadership's affects the change in the organisation. Leadership from the organization which includes "mission statements", "strategic plans", "institutional commitment" as well as "ethos" are listed as most significant organizational factors towards sustainable internationalisation (Aigner et al., 1992). From all these discussions, Proposition 1 is developed.

Proposition 1: There is a positive relationship between leadership & governance and internationalisation of Malaysian HLI

6.2.2. Human Resources

Human resources are one important factor towards success of internationalisation of HLI. Alden and Lin (2004) included talent management as one of the essential features and characteristics of world-class universities (Alden & Lin, 2004). Training productive human resources is one of the goals of establishment and changing the university to the world class university (Hanaa, 2015). Thus Proposition 2 is developed to study the relationship between human resources and internationalisation.

Proposition 2: There is a positive relationship between human resources and internationalisation of Malaysian HLI.

6.2.3. Technology Integration

Technology integration provides great opportunities for innovative teaching learning and research. Malaysia's internet usage is athe the rise and subsequently the usage of smartphones for online access has also increased in Malaysia overall. As per statement from Statistic Department's website, Internet usage among individuals above 15 years has rose to 80% to 2017 compared to 71.5% in 2015 (Alias, 2018). Research in African higher education shows new ways of education by using open education resources, non-traditional education and online learning has risen from the development of technology (Jowi et al., 2013). From this discussion, it is important to study level of technology integration in HLI, thus Proposition 3 is developed.

Proposition 3: There is a positive relationship between technology integration and internationalisation of Malaysian HLI.

6.3. External Factor

6.3.1. Technology Integration

Government policy plays a crucial act in achievement of HLIs in specific country. The rise of some world class education institutions in United Arab Emirates is part of the outcome of Emirates government's development of authorities to act on good standard of education (Alsharari, 2018). Governmental barriers is one of the barriers identified by Roy in his study (Roy et al., 2016). Lack of funding from government also affects the success of internationalisation. Following the above discussion Proposition 4 is developed to include the government policy in the Conceptual Model that perceived well-structured government policy will have a positive relationship with towards internationalisation of HLI.

Proposition 4: There is a positive relationship between government policy and internationalisation of Malaysian HLI.

Conceptual framework as shown on Figure 2 is proposed to identify factors that affects Malaysian public universities to become fully internationalised
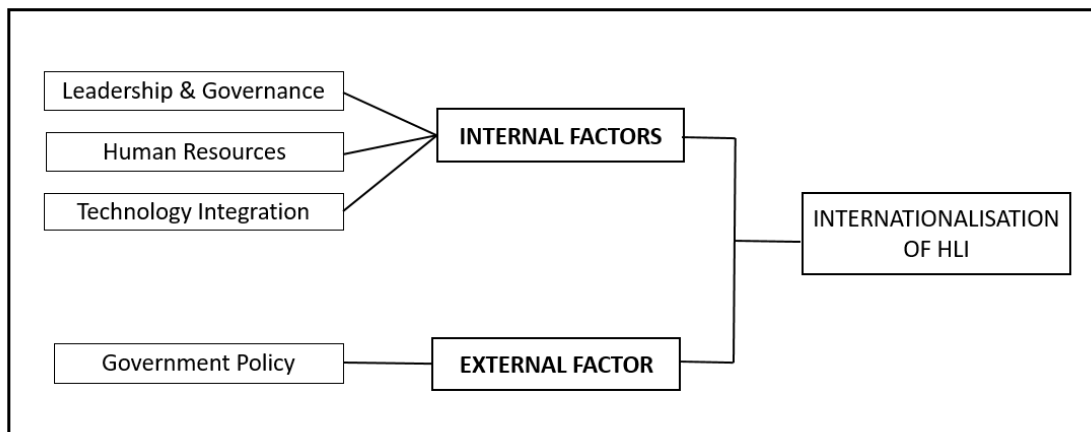
Figure 02. Internal and external factors towards internationalisation of Malaysian Public HLI

7. Conclusion

This study encompassed several approaches that were analysed from previous literature to develop the internal and external factors that affects internationalisation of HLIs. These factors are analysed based on international and applied to Malaysian context by choosing only the relevant variables for Malaysian context. Internal factors consist of Leadership and Governance, Human Resources and Technology Integration Government Policy is identified as the external factor.

This study extends to the prior literature in Internationalisation of Higher Education and probably one of the first to identify the factors towards internationalisation of higher education by highlighting the internal, external factors. The study is intended to focus on public HLIs of Malaysia as it is committed to building a reputation with dynamic, competitive capabilities while being prepared to act effectively in line with global developments as outlined by Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia.

This study also will be useful for policy makers and HLIs to develop the right strategy to be successful in internationalisation of higher learning overall and to be competitive in the global market.

Acknowledgments

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