Collaborative education in Malaysia: a case study

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PART 1 – DOCTORAL RESEARCH: ACHIEVEMENTS AND REALITIES

CHAPTER 1

The Contextual Setting for the Malaysian Doctoral Experience

James CL Nga and Tan Lin Lah

Summary

The Malaysian higher education system is responding to the increasing demand for tertiary education. In 2009, there were 20 public universities, 19 private universities, 18 university colleges, six foreign university branch campuses, 485 private colleges, 22 polytechnics and 37 public community colleges with a total enrollment of 942,000 students.

A traditional importer of higher education, the country has now become a significant exporter of higher education following the liberalisation of higher education sector in 1996. An estimated 80,000 international students were enrolled in Malaysian higher education institutions in March 2010 (The Star 18th March, 2010).

All private higher education institutions (PHEIs) are regulated by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) and their courses require approval by the Malaysia Qualification Agency (MQA) to ensure that they conform with quality standards. The National Higher Education Action Plan (NHEAP) 2007 and the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) 2007 are aimed at transforming the higher education system. The emphasis is on research and development (R&D) capabilities, the privatisation of private higher education, quality assurance and increasing the output of doctoral graduates. The target is to produce 100,000 high quality graduates with doctoral degrees by 2022.

In Malaysia, the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) is currently being offered by five Malaysian public universities, two private universities, two university colleges and Southern Cross University (SCU) through the City University College of Science and Technology (City U).

Key words: Higher education, PHEIs, MOHE, MQA, NHEP, NHESP, DBA, SCU, City U
Introduction

Malaysia’s goal is to become a developed nation by 2020, as reflected by the National Vision Policy 2001-2010 and the New Economic Model 2010-2020 (GOM, EPU, 2009). Emphasising higher education for building on the knowledge and innovation capabilities required for international competitiveness (GOM, MOSTI 2006), these policies have triggered a rapid expansion of tertiary education places for internationally acceptable and negotiable global qualification (Huang, 2006). The total enrollment in the public and private higher education institutions (PHEIs) was 942,000 students in 2008 (GOM, MOHE, 2009).

The Government’s National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) 2007 is aimed at transforming the country into a regional centre of educational excellence. Consequently, the international activities of Malaysian institutions of higher education have dramatically expanded in terms of volume and scope over the past decade (Morshidi, 2006a). Although 38,000 Malaysian students were studying abroad in 2004, Malaysia is now emerging as a significant exporter of higher education with 69,154 students, from more than 100 countries, enrolled in Malaysian institutions in February 2009 (GOM, MOHE, 2009).

National educational policies called for increasing the access to higher education, improving quality assurance for conformity with international best practices, promoting good academic governance, encouraging academic research and exporting higher education through privatisation and internationalisation (Middlehurst and Woodfield, 2004). These have led to Malaysian universities and colleges increasing their educational exports by internationalizing their curricula and increasing international student enrolments (Tan, 2006). They are also taking advantage of the different modes of transnational education through twinning programmes, distance education, franchising arrangements and the establishment of branch campuses by leading international universities (Altbach and Knight, 2007; OECD, 2004). These include the delivery of the Southern Cross University (SCU) Doctor of Business Administration (DBA). Introduced in 1997, this was the first offshore professional doctorate programme in the country.

This chapter provides the backdrop for the professional doctorate experience in Malaysia. It outlines the evolution of higher education, highlights policy trends, discusses Malaysian educational exports and then provides a snapshot of doctoral programmes in Malaysia.

The Evolution of the Malaysian Public Higher Education Sector

Malaysia (then Malaya) achieved independence on 31 August 1957. In August 1963, the country merged with Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak to form Malaysia. Singapore exited in September 1965. The Government’s initial developmental efforts were therefore directed at rural development, agricultural diversification, industrial development, and improving physical and social infrastructure. Emphasis was given to education; through the building of new primary and secondary schools, particularly in the East Coast, as it was one the least developed areas (GOM, Third Malaysia Plan, 1971).
‘Higher education was treated as a global public good because of the positive externalities associated with its provision’ (Sivalingam, 2007, p. 3). Accordingly the Government emphasised the higher educational sector and addressed two interrelated issues. The first was to increase the access to tertiary education in the context of a multi-ethnic Malaysian society. The second was to expand the available places in the higher education institutions to meet the growing demand for tertiary education (Had Salleh, 2000).

After the formal separation from Singapore, the University of Malaya located in Singapore, became the National University of Singapore. The University of Malaya was relocated to Kuala Lumpur in 1962 as the country’s sole national university with English as the medium of instruction (Shukor, 2000).

Treated as a global public good and a monopoly of the state, the higher education institutions grew slowly in the early 1960’s with only two universities being established in the succeeding decade (Psacharpoulos, 1972; Sivalingam, 2007). They were the Science University of Malaysia (Universiti Sains Malaysia) in 1969 and in 1970, the National University of Malaysia or Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (Adnan, 1973).

In the early 1980s, the country, as shown in figure 1.1, progressed to a ‘productivity driven technology era’ in order to sustain export earnings growth. However, the country faced severe shortages of high level labour (Selvanathan, 1999) and the ‘professionals and senior management staff’ category accounted for only 10% of the total workforce (Business Times, 1997). A regional survey of business executives viewed high level labour shortages in Malaysia as the biggest problem in business operations (Asian Business, 1995). The public universities also faced difficulties in recruiting staff with doctoral qualifications (GOM, Seventh Malaysian Plan, 1996).

Figure 1.1 Malaysia’s Economic Transition

Source: Adapted from GOM, EPU (2009)
The Government therefore expanded the available places in the higher education institutions to meet the growing demand for tertiary education (Hadj Salleh, 2002). The initiative resulted in the doubling of enrolments and the number of public universities between 1971 and 1998. Total student enrolments in tertiary education grew from 7,677 in 1970 to 60,030 in 1990 largely due to the establishment of six new universities during this period. As shown in Table 1.1, the new public universities were largely located in the less developed states of Sabah, Sarawak, Terengganu, Kelantan, Kedah and Perlis to increase the access of rural Malaysians to tertiary education. Some of the new universities were also directed at meeting the growing demand for skilled professionals in the technology, science and agricultural sector.

Despite this increase, only 7.2% of Malaysians of university age were enrolled in local tertiary institutions as compared to the 35.8% in Argentina or 58.4% in South Korea (Ziguras, 2005). Accordingly, an additional 13 universities were established over the period 1990 – 2006.

Table 1.1 Public Higher Educational Institutions in Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Institution Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Universiti Malaya, 1962</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1969</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1970</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Universiti Putra Malaysia, 1971</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 1975</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia, 1983</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Universiti Utara Malaysia, 1984</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 1992</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Universiti Malaysia Sabah, 1994</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, 1997</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 1998</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Universiti Teknologi MARA, 1999</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, 1999</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka, 2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Universiti Malaysia Pahang, 2002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Universiti Malaysia Perlis, 2002</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Universiti Darul Iman Malaysia, 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, 2006</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The public universities fall into three categories of research, broad-based and specialised. There are four which have been designated as research universities, namely, Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

The rapid expansion of the public universities was in tandem with the Government’s policy of the ‘massification’ of higher education. This reflects the global trend of improving higher education access for all by ensuring that the higher education system provides for mass participation across different social, income and geographical groups (Lee and Healy, 2006). However, higher education is an expensive undertaking. Currently, public higher education institutions receive as much as 90% of their funding from Government sources and the Government spent more than RM6 billion to fund their operating budgets in 2006 (GOM, NHEAP, 2007).

There is therefore an ongoing debate as whether higher education should continue to be created as a public good or for the users to pay for the cost (Davis et al. 2000). For this purpose, the Government established the National Higher Education Fund Corporation or Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional (PTPTN) to provide low cost educational loans to students. Since its inception in 1997 to 2006, PTPTN has enabled 890,500 students to pursue their studies in approved higher education institutions (GOM, MOHE, 2007).

**Importing Higher Education**

Despite the expansion of public higher education, the demand for tertiary education continued to increase rapidly due to the rapid growth of the high school population and rising economic levels. As such, demand exceeded supply and Malaysia remained a major importer of higher education.

In 2001, Malaysia was one of top 20 countries of origin for students in the OECD with 32,079 or 2% of the total of 1.5 million foreign students pursuing higher education (Hatakenaka, 2004). Significantly, the United States with a far larger student population came next to Malaysia with 30,103 students studying abroad (Morshidi, 2006b).

In 1995, the 20% of the Malaysian students who were studying abroad cost the country around USD800 million in currency outflows and became a major public concern. Another was the brain drain which occurs when students, academic staff and researchers do not return to the country upon completion of their overseas studies (Kirtz, 2006). Malaysian students benefitted from the choice of whether to seek employment in their country of studies or to return home. Almost one third of the Malaysians studying in Australia in 2007 stayed on after their graduation (Nga, 2010).

The country was hard hit by the Asian financial crisis in 1998, which resulted in
negative GDP growth rates, major corporate losses and a much depreciated Ringgit, the Malaysian currency. Despite these adverse circumstances, the number of Malaysians studying abroad increased to 38,000 in 2004. The largest numbers (16,904) enrolled in Australian higher education institutions as shown in table 1.2. This was followed by 11,806 in the United Kingdom and another 6,483 in the United States. The rest were largely in Japan, New Zealand, India, Ireland, Germany and France (UNESCO, Institute of Statistics, 2005).

Table 1.2 Malaysian Students Abroad (1999 – 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>16,482</td>
<td>12,869</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>17,574</td>
<td>19,431</td>
<td>16,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>12,924</td>
<td>10,351</td>
<td>9,193</td>
<td>9,011</td>
<td>9,715</td>
<td>11,806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>10,639</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6,760</td>
<td>7,395</td>
<td>6,595</td>
<td>6,483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1,960</td>
<td>1,956</td>
<td>1,747</td>
<td>1,613</td>
<td>1,612</td>
<td>1,841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1,489</td>
<td>1,178</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>1,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>43788</td>
<td>806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2005)

Increasing Domestic Tertiary Education Capacity

While Malaysia remains as one of the ‘top ten source countries’ for higher education institutions in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007), there is now a downward trend (Morshidi, 2008). This is largely due to increased domestic capacity generated by the establishment of private universities and the Higher Education Act 1996 which liberalised the educational sector. Consequently, there was a sharp increase in PHEIs. In 2000, there were seven local private universities, three foreign university branch campuses and more than 400 approved private colleges (Ziguras, 2005). In 2010, these numbers increased to 20 public universities, 19 private universities, six foreign university branch campuses, 18 university colleges, 485 private colleges, 22 polytechnics and 37 public community colleges with a total enrolment of 942,000 in 2008.

Private Universities

There were 19 private universities in March 2010 as shown in table 1.3. Four of them, namely, the Multimedia University, Universiti Tenaga Nasional, Universiti Teknologi Petronas and the International Medical University were initiated by government linked companies. The fifth, Universiti Tun Abdul Razak, is linked to the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO), the lead party of the Barisan Nasional, political party which is now in power.

The remaining private universities include:

- The Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) and AIMST University which are affiliated respectively to the Malaysian Chinese Association and Malaysian Indian Congress, which are also components of the Barisan Nasional.
• The Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, formerly a university college, has now become a full university with branch campuses in the United Kingdom, Botswana, Vietnam and other overseas locations.

• The Asia e University (AeU) which was established in 2007, following an initiative taken by Malaysia at the Asian Corporation Dialogue. This university offers a range of programmes including doctoral programmes focuses on online distance education.

Table 1.3 Private Universities in Malaysia

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Multimedia University, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Universiti Tenaga Nasional, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Universiti Tun Abdul Razak, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Universiti Teknologi Petronas, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>International Medical University, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Universiti Industri Selangor, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Open University Malaysia, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Malaysia University of Science &amp; Technology, 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>AIMST University, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Universiti Kuala Lumpur, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Wawasan Open University, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Albukhary International University, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Asia e University, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Al-Madinah International University, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>International Centre for Education in Islamic Finance, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Management and Science University, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>UCSI University, 2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from GOM, MOHE data (2010)

The Private University Colleges

The amended Private Higher Education Act 2003 paved the way for PHEIs to be upgraded to university colleges with degree awarding powers. A recognition by the Government that the PHEIs had to expand and do more, the Act also addressed the reality that the Government could no longer provide the resources for new of expanded public institutions to cater to the increased demand for tertiary education
As shown in Table 1.4, the seven year period between 2003 and 2010 witnessed the establishment of 18 university colleges. The first during this period was the International University College of Technology Twintech and the most recent, in 2010 is the City University College of Science and Technology (City U), which was formerly Unity College International. The majority of these university colleges were established by large public listed companies. They include the Asia Pacific University College of Technology, which was set up by the Sapura Telecommunications Group, Sunway University College, a subsidiary of the Sunway Holding Group and Taylor’s University College, previously a subsidiary of MBF Holdings Bhd.

Table 1.4 University-Colleges in Malaysia

| 1. | International University College of Technology Twintech, 2003 |
| 2. | Kuala Lumpur Infrastructure University College, 2003 |
| 3. | HELP University College, 2004 |
| 4. | Sunway University College, 2004 |
| 5. | Binary University College of Management and Entrepreneurship, 2004 |
| 6. | Asia Pacific University College of Technology and Innovation, 2004 |
| 7. | Selangor International Islamic University College, 2004 |
| 8. | Cyberjaya University College of Medical Sciences, 2005 |
| 9. | INTI International University College, 2006 |
| 10. | Cosmopoint International University College, 2006 |
| 11. | INSANNIAH University College, 2006 |
| 12. | Taylor’s University College, 2006 |
| 15. | International University College of Nursing, 2008 |
| 16. | Linton University College, 2009 |
| 17. | MAHSA University College, 2009 |
| 18. | City University College of Science & Technology (City U), 2010 |

Sources: GOM, MOHE data (2010)

Branch Campuses of Foreign Universities

An amendment to the Act in 2003 permitted foreign universities to establish branch campuses in Malaysia. A branch campus is a subsidiary of a foreign university or
jointly own with a local partner for the local delivery of the foreign university’s degree programmes (Knight, 2005). It signals ‘a deepening commitment to international provision, moving away from dependence on local partners for delivery and towards a corporate presence, with quality assurance as one of the primary driving forces among certain pioneering providers’ (OBHE, 2002, p. 5).

Six universities have since opened international branch campuses in Malaysia as shown in table 1.5. This increase in domestic capacity made study in Malaysia more attractive and affordable (Nga, 2010).

### Table 1.5 International Branch Campuses in Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Branch Location in Malaysia</th>
<th>Year Opened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monash University</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Petaling Jaya (near Kuala Lumpur)</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtin University</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Miri, Sarawak</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Nottingham</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Semenyih</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Monfort University</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swinburne University of Technology</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Kuching, Sarawak</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinayaka Mission’s University</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Penang &amp; Johor</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GOM, MOHE (2009)

### Exporting Malaysian Education

Knowledge is now viewed as a commodity that moves between countries and as such can be commercialised to generate export earnings (Kirtz, 2006). Public policies are directed at reducing higher education imports and increasing educational services (Mok, 2003). Recognising the lucrative prospects of exporting higher education, several Malaysian PHEIs are internationalising their operations to become important contenders in the market for mobile international markets. The National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) 2007 and the National Higher Education Action Plan (NHEAP) 2007 introduced policies for PHEIs to increase their offshore student enrolments (GOM, MOHE, 2007). A target of 80,000 students was set for 2010 with each student expected to contribute at least RM30,000 per annum to Malaysia’s economy (The Star, 2009).

Malaysia is now an active player in transnational education. The term ‘transnational’ refers to a situation where international students are located in a different country to that of the institution providing education services (Davis et al. 2000). The delivery modes include twinning programmes, distance education, franchising arrangements and branch campuses. The foreign provider usually assesses the ability of the local partner to meet quality standard and provides guidelines, monitors student assessment criteria and assessment. The course belongs to the foreign provider which charges for the use of syllabi, course materials, examinations and the technical support to staff.
The Private Higher Education Act 1996 enabled the private higher education institutions (PHEIs) to conduct undergraduate and postgraduate programmes through collaborative or twinning programmes with local or foreign universities. The Act triggered a proliferation of agreements between Malaysia and overseas higher educational institutions. At least 70 UK higher educational institutions had either franchise or articulation arrangements with private Malaysian institutions by 1999 (QAA, 1999). Australian universities also extended their participation in the Malaysian higher education sector and Malaysian institutions had twinning programmes with 24 Australian universities in 1998 (Denman, 2002, Sohail, Jegathesan and Nor Azlin, 2002). It included an agreement between Southern Cross University and Stamford College for the conduct of the SCU MBA and DBA programs as offshore programs.

The list of partnership arrangements, which has since grown, has contributed to making Malaysia a significant exporter of higher education. Malaysian higher education institutions are now important contenders in the market for mobile international students. An estimated 45,550 international students were enrolled in public and private higher education institutions in July 2007. Accounting for a 2% share of the international students enrolled in Malaysia, they contributed a total of RM3 billion in foreign exchange earnings. More recent data show that foreign student enrollments increased to 50,789 in 30 March 2008 and to 80,000 in March 2010 (MOHE, cited in The Star, 2010).

Overseas student enrollments in Malaysian PHEIs, including the branch campuses of foreign universities, also increased sharply to 55,000 in 2007 (Verbik and Lasanowski 2007). Largely from China, Pakistan, Indonesia and the Middle East, these international student enrollments reflect the pivotal role of the PHEIs in attracting foreign students (Praphamontripong, 2007). Several factors contributed to the growth.

First, the award of internationally recognised qualifications from universities from developed countries. These appeal to foreign students, particularly from the developing countries, as they can enroll in a Malaysian PHEI and be awarded a degree by a reputable university from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom or the United States at affordable costs. It also enables such students to benefit from an overseas education at a low cost location (Sivalingam, 2007).

Second, the conduct of study programmes in the English language which is now acknowledged as the *lingua franca* for scientific communication and the growing international labour market for scholars and scientists (Altbach and Knight, 2007). ‘The role of English affects higher education policy and the work of individual students and scholarly English-language products of all kinds dominate the international academic marketplace’ (Altbach and Knight, 2007, p. 5). There is a growing demand for such programmes from foreign students who come from countries that attach a premium to programmes delivered in English.

Third, the global education landscape which is changing due to the interplay of political and economic factors. This creates opportunities for Malaysian PHEIs to internationalise their operations. On the global political front, Malaysia is being
viewed as a forward looking moderate Islamic nation with a stable and harmonious national setting (Nga, 2010).

The fourth relates to religious and cultural reasons. The country’s multiracial population and mixture of culture attracts students from a wide range of nations in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Malaysia is a preferred study venue for Indonesian students especially those who are unable to secure places in the local public universities. Chinese students find Malaysia popular because of the widespread Chinese influences in the country. Saudi Arabian students also find Malaysia a good alternative to the United Kingdom and the United States which have imposed stricter visa controls (Rashid, 2007).

Fifth, the reduction in bureaucratic procedures with respect to the issuance of student visas for international students. This has enhanced foreign students’ perceptions of Malaysia as a preferred study destination; particularly for students from higher education importing countries in Southeast and East Asia (Sukumaran, 2002).

Sixth, Malaysian government agencies are giving more support to Malaysian PHEIs with their overseas marketing strategies. The Malaysian External Trade Development Agency (MATRADE) organises educational fairs and exhibitions in selected countries to showcase Malaysian PHEIs’ their courses. These proactive measures create opportunities for Malaysian PHEIs to expand the global outreach (Tan, 2008).

**Malaysia’s Educational Hub**

Malaysia is strategising to become a regional educational hub to capture a larger slice of the estimated USD2.4 trillion world education market (Nga, 2010). This is propelled by four drivers. First, by student pressures to study in educationally advanced countries. Second, the rising costs of overseas education in the developed country. Since an average of RM600,000 to RM700,000 is spent on each Malaysian studying abroad, a hub can stem foreign exchange outflows. Finally, a hub creates opportunities to generate export incomes by attracting overseas students (Wu and Yu, 2006).

Accordingly, the Government has created an educational hub termed EDUCITY in the Iskandar Development Region (IDR) in the south of Peninsular Malaysia, close to the border with Singapore. Two international universities are establishing campuses in IDR. The University of Newcastle is starting a medical campus in 2010 and the other is the Vinayaka Mission’s University which is establishing a campus to offer technology, engineering and management courses (StarBiz, The Star, 2009).

**Regulation and Quality Control**

The strong demand for international qualifications also resulted in some foreign providers offering low cost and poor quality programmes supported by misleading marketing and advertising. The outcome could be a high cost for a somewhat dubious foreign education. Another serious problem is posed by ‘fly by night’ educational providers, who operate for few days and leave students stranded. The weakness or lack of domestic licensing or quality assurance/accreditation measure is a contributing factor for these risks (Bashir, 2007). Another consequence of market and profit driven private education is an increase in the number of ‘diploma mills’, ‘canned
degrees’ and ‘accreditation mills’ (Nizam, 2006, p. 65).

Mindful of these concerns, the Government enacted the National Accreditation Board Act in 1966 to provide the regulatory frameworks for ensuring quality control process in PHEIs. The policies of this Board or Lembaga Akreditasi Negara (LAN) were premised on making higher education a profitable export industry and for establishing Malaysia as a regional centre of excellence in education (Middlehurst and Woodfield, 2004).

In 2002, LAN introduced the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) for assessing the standards and the delivery of study programmes offered by licensed providers of higher education (GOM, Ninth Malaysia Plan, 2006). The MQF requires all licensed PHEIs to evaluate all qualifications on the basis of criteria and standards that conform to international best practices. They are also required to review the curricula of all programmes offered every three to five years to make Malaysian institutions of higher education globally competitive for the export of the educational services (Morshidi, 2006b).

In 2003, LAN issued guidelines on the criteria and standards for courses offered by PHEIs. These emphasise quality assessments and set the academic qualifications framework for courses of study at the certificate, diploma, bachelor degree and postgraduate degrees. The guidelines also detail the curriculum component, the credit hour systems, and the entry requirements, and reiterate that the National Language, Malaysian Studies and Moral Education are compulsory subjects.

The Malaysian Qualifications Act 2007 led to the merger of LAN with the Quality Assurance Division of the Ministry of Higher Education to create a single quality assurance body named as the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA). The MQA has since issued the Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation (COPPA) and the Code of Practice for Institutional Audit (COPIA). These are the guidelines, standards and codes of practice to assist the PHEIs to enhance their academic performance and institutional effectiveness (GOM, MQA, 2008).

There were also changes in the educational structure. A new Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) was created in March 2004 to oversee all universities, university colleges, polytechnics and colleges. The Minister has the power to take action against errant institutions including the revocation of the registration and license of a college on valid grounds.

The MOHE has also evoked two important measures to enhance educational quality. First, the stipulation that all private universities and university colleges must fully complied with the MQA framework by 2011 in terms of curricula, delivery and assessment. Second, international students can only be enrolled in programmes which are fully accredited. The implementation of the rating system for Malaysian Higher Education Institutions to benchmark the performance of PHEIs against each other and the public higher education institutions. (The Star, 2009). The NHEP 2007 set up new policies to allied the Ministries’ delivery system with the strategic direction of higher education.

**The National Higher Education Action Plan 2007**
At the turn of the century, Malaysia entered the knowledge era or ‘when competitive power is gained by leveraging the power of the intellect’ (Kaloo, 2010, p. 232) to develop innovation capabilities as these are critical for the economy to move up the value chain (GOM, EPU 2009). In support of this, the Government introduced the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2007 which articulates the government’s vision for the transformation of higher education in Malaysia over the period 2007-2020. The plan, with four phases aims squarely on holistic human capital development. The first three phases, until 2020 are guided by policy objective and strategies. The final phase is based on the outcomes of the first three phases and directed at meeting the challenges beyond 2020.

The implementation of first phase, labeled ‘laying the foundation’ is detailed in the NHEAP 2007. The emphasis is on research development, strengthening higher education institutions, doctoral programmes, standardisation and quality assurance as reflected by its seven strategic thrusts as shown in table 1.6.

Table 1.6 Strategic Thrusts of the National Higher Education Action Plan

| 1. Widening Access and Enhancing Equity |
| 2. Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning |
| 3. Enhancing Research and Innovation |
| 4. Strengthening Institutions of Higher Education |
| 5. Intensifying Internationalization |
| 6. Enculturation of Lifelong Learning |
| 7. Reinforcing the Higher Education Ministry’s Delivery System |

Source: Adapted from the GOM, NHEAP (2007-2010)

The NHEAP acknowledges that the Malaysian higher education system requires changes since the country had to create knowledge workers with high value-added capabilities. This was necessary as the country had only 21 researchers, scientists and engineers (RSEs) per 10,000 workers in 2003 which was well below the average of 100 RSE’s in the European Union countries. The plan set the target of 50 RSEs per 10,000 workforce and the measures proposed include increased doctoral enrollments.

Another approach is the creation of ‘Apex University’. The Plan defines this as ‘an Apex University is a conceptual construct that in due time will stand atop the pyramid of institutions’ (GOM, NHEAP, 2007, p. 34). The Apex Universities will be the nation’s centers of academic distinction.

In order to become an Apex University, four criteria must be met. The first is strong leadership committed to the ideal of excellence scholarship and with an excellence command of the English Language. Second is a highly qualified mixed of local and foreign academics with strong research capabilities. The third relates to the students. Only those who satisfied the highest standards of academic entry requirements will be admitted. The final criterion relates to the best facilities which include well stocked libraries, fully equipped laboratories for research as well as electronic resources.

Towards this end, the MOHE developed a rating system to enable the leading ones
Increasing Doctoral Level Graduates: MyBrain15

The National Higher Education Action Plan 2007 also stressed a change in the earlier national policy which focused on increasing the enrollment of undergraduates. This is reflected by a new initiative, termed MyBrain15 which aims to produce quality human capital at the doctoral level with research capabilities to enhance global competitiveness.

The target is to create a pool of up to 100,000 high quality graduates with doctoral degrees within the next 15 years with the breakdown being:

- 21,000 PhD holders by 2010
- Fast-track towards 100,000 PhD holders in 15 years in the following disciplines:
  - 60% doctorates in science, technology and medicine
  - 20% doctorates in the humanities and applied literature
  - 20% doctorates in other professional fields

An Overview of Doctor of Business Administration Programmes in Malaysia

Although the National Higher Education Action Plan signaled the reorientation of national educational policies towards increasing doctoral level graduate, there were only 1,146 enrolments at the doctoral level, as shown in table 1.7 in both public and private higher education institutions. While the numbers in the latter increased by 70% over the period 2003 - 2007, there was a sharper increase in the former which grew from 43 to 304. Consequently, the total enrolments increased three fold during the same period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>1,103</td>
<td>1,880</td>
<td>3,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,146</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,050</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,429</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from GOM, MOHE (2010)

In Malaysia, there are two academic doctoral level programmes in the business and management fields. The first is the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and the second is the more recent Doctor of Business Administration (DBA). Both offer options for specialisations in accounting, finance, marketing, management, human resources management, strategy and operations.

All doctoral programmes conducted by the PHEIs must be approved by the MOHE following scrutiny by the MQA. Since the PhD and DBA programmes are diverse in terms of curriculum, thesis requirement and structure, the MOHE programmes fall into three categories, namely, structures A, B and C.

Structure A comprises doctoral programs by research with little or no formal taught
curriculum. Under the guidance of an approved university supervisor, the award of the degree is based on the acceptance of a thesis ranging from 60,000 to 100,000 words. The thesis has to demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of the involved parent and immediate disciplines (Perry 2002) and an ability to conceptualise, design and undertake research at the doctoral level. Structures B and C relate to programs which are by either course work or the mixed mode which requires candidates to successfully complete a prescribed number of coursework units including research methodologies and then complete a thesis.

The PhD programs offered by the Malaysian public universities fall into Structure A with the exception of the Southern Cross University (SCU) DBA. Conducted in partnership with City University College of Science and Technology (City U), it is considered as a doctoral research degree and not a coursework program. All the other approved DBAs conducted in Malaysia are not considered to be research degrees as their coursework components are much higher. In some instances, candidates after completion of their course units are only required to submit a research report of 20,000 to 30,000 words.

The DBA is currently being offered by:

- Five Malaysian public universities, namely, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) and The International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

- Two private universities, namely, Multimedia University and Asia e University;

- Two private university colleges, Binary University College and HELP University College; and

- One Australian university, namely, Southern Cross University (SCU) which offers its DBA through City University College of Science and Technology (City U). The University of South Australia, the RMIT and the University of Newcastle are no longer offering the DBA through their local partners.

**The Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) DBA**

The first DBA programme in Malaysia, it was launched by the Graduate School of Business, UKM in 1989. Adapted from the North American model, it catered to applicants with a master’s degree in the business fields who did not have any research experience. This program of three and half to four years full time study or four to five years of part time studies requires candidates to complete five subjects on research skills, two core courses as well as subjects in their area of specialization which are marketing, accounting, finance and management. After completion of the coursework, they are required to submit a thesis of 80,000 words which could be written either in English or the Malay language. Admission requirements are a good Masters degree and the classes are held during office hours (www.ukm.edu.my).

**The Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) DBA**
This DBA has a full time study duration of three and a half years to five years for full time candidates and up to seven years for part timers. Its primary aim is to produce ‘capable leaders accountable for strategic sustainability’ whilst upholding high moral and ethical values in their business practices. The admission requirements stipulate either a first degree with honors or a master’s degree in a business or management fields as well as a minimum of five years of working experience.

The 81 unit program is delivered in three parts through a series of lectures, seminars, consultancy, teaching, practicum and independent study. The first part of 18 units comprises six seminars in the fields of management, human resources management, financial decision making, managing technology, marketing and business strategy. The second, of 15 units, requires the candidate to conduct consultancy and training in a field of their choice. The final part is the dissertation which carries a value of 42 units (www.usm.edu.my).

The International Islamic University (IIUM) DBA

This five year DBA program incorporates Islamic perspective in addition to developing business skills. Conducted at weekends, it is a five year programme with the total of 78 credit hours. All candidates are required to successfully complete 13 course units during the first two years of the program. The third year is devoted to a consultancy practice report and the final two years are for the preparation of the thesis which carries 42 credit hours. The admission requirements are a master’s degree in the business or management fields with a minimum of two years working experience (www.iiu.edu.my).

Universiti Teknologi Mara Sarawak (UiTM Sarawak) DBA

This new doctoral program will commence in July 2010 for applicants with a masters degree and relevant work experience. The aim is to produce qualified Bumiputera professionals who are equipped with the knowledge to serve in leadership positions. All candidates have to take the core units of research methodology, strategic financial management and economic policy analysis as well as four elective units. They are also required to undertake industry based research in the fields of entrepreneur management, marketing, finance and corporate management (www.sarawak.uitm.edu.my).

The Multimedia University (MMU) DBA

This is a four year program combining course work and research. All candidates must complete 14 modules including research methodology during the first two years of the programme. They then enter the thesis stage which requires the preparation of the thesis which is equivalent to 42 credit hours. The admission requirements stipulate a Masters degree in the business or management fields with a minimum of two years of working experience (www.mmu.edu.my).

Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) DBA

This DBA requiring 66 credit hours of study is aim at providing specialist learning opportunities in business administration to accelerate the management workers. It can
be undertaken through a full or part time study. The admission requirements stipulate either a first degree with honors or a masters degree in a business or management fields as well as a minimum of five years of working experience.

The program has three parts. The first requires completion of 16 subjects including four in the research methodology fields. The second part of six credit hours is devoted to business consultation towards the preparation of the research proposal. The final part is the dissertation which carries a value of 24 credit hours (www.uum.edu.my).
The Asia e University (AeU) DBA

Asia e University (AeU) is a flexible, international e-education university under the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD). A Malaysian initiative, it is supported by 31 ACD Member Countries.

The primary aim of this four year DBA program is to promote leadership skills in business administration. It has open entry requirements as recognised by the MOHE and this includes being at least 35 years old and possessing a STPM/Matriculation/Diploma or equivalent.

The 62 credit hours program requires the completion of 10 core subjects relating to organisational leadership, economics, international business, finance, accounting, strategic marketing, business strategy and research methodology. The dissertation requires 32 credit hours and candidates have a choice of specialisations (www.aeu.edu.my).

The Binary University College DBA

This homegrown three year program which commenced in 2009 requires the completion of five core modules, one elective and a 40,000 words thesis. The core units are quantitative research methods, qualitative research methods, leadership practices, strategic management and global issues in entrepreneurship. Students have a choice of specialisation in entrepreneurship, logistics management, information technology, human resources management, e-commerce, quality management, marketing, finance and banking. Entry requirements are a recognised masters degree and a minimum of five years working experience (www.binary.edu.my).

The HELP University College DBA

This is also a relatively new homegrown program which commenced in 2009. With a duration of two and half to four years, candidates are required to complete 10 subjects in the core business area as well as a thesis of 40,000 words. Entry requirements are a recognised masters degree and a minimum of five years working experience (www.help.edu.my)

The Southern Cross University (SCU) DBA

The SCU DBA, approved by the MOHE as a Structure ‘A’ research based doctoral program is offered through the City University College of Science and Technology (City U) previously, Unity College International (UCI).

The SCU DBA was first conducted in Malaysia as an offshore programme in 1996; initially through Stamford College, followed by the Cybernetics Institute of Technology and in 2007, by UCI. Despite the different partnership arrangements, Dr A. Selvanathan, currently, the Dean of School of Business, City U, has been actively involved with the program for the past 14 years.

All applicants are expected to have a recognised masters degree in the business fields
as well as proficiency in the English language. It usually takes two and a half to three years of study to complete the program.

During the past 14 years, 31 Malaysians have successfully completed the programme. They include industry leaders, academics and senior civil servants and their research areas are in the fields of information technology, education, human resources management, corporate governance, corporate social responsibility, small and medium enterprises, banking, finance, crisis management, Chinese business practices, government linked companies and corporate sustainability. Of these, 11 adopted a quantitative approach, two a qualitative approach with the remaining 18 relying on a mixed methodology.

There are currently 43 candidates enrolled in the program. While the majorities are Malaysians, they include candidates from the United Kingdom, Maldives, India, Iraq, Jordan, Bahrain, Tanzania, Bangladesh and Canada. All candidates have online access to the SCU library and benefit from high level Malaysian based supervisors approved by SCU. They also have the opportunity to participate in the Doctoral Symposia. Conducted bi-annually in Kuala Lumpur, the Symposia enables all candidates to meet with the senior academic staff from the Graduate College of Management, SCU, present their research proposals and enter into a dialogue on their research topics.

**Funding for Postgraduate Programmes**

The tuition fees for DBA programmes range from RM32,000 to RM70,000. Furthermore, the duration is relatively long, averaging four years. While the part-time mode appeals to large stock of Malaysian working professionals who have Masters qualifications, funding is an important issue.

Bank loans are one source of securing the required financing. However, the interest rates are high and most banks insist on collateral as a condition for providing bank loans. A more important source is the Employees Provident Fund (EPF). DBA applicants who have made adequate contributions to the Fund can draw on this for the full or part-financing of their studies.

**Conclusion**

The demand for Malaysian higher education is growing rapidly and the Government has introduced policies to increase domestic capacity. Accordingly, several new public and private universities have been established in the past decade. Committed to making the country a regional centre for higher education for generating educational exports, the Government is emphasising on quality assurance. All PHEIs are regulated by the MOHE and their courses require approval by the MQA to ensure that they conform to quality standards. The national education policies are aimed at transforming the higher education system and increasing the output of doctoral graduates. The target is to produce 100,000 high quality graduates with doctoral degrees by 2022. The demand for doctoral qualifications is increasing and the DBA is currently being offered by 10 higher education institutions.
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Dr James CL Nga

Recently a SCU DBA graduate, James CL Nga, is the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Commercialisation) of City University College of Science & Technology (formerly Unity College International) in Malaysia. In addition, he is a former graduate from The University of Western Ontario, London, Canada majoring in Political Science and also holding a Master of Business Administration qualification from the Heriot Watt University, Scotland, UK. James has nearly a decade of management and marketing experience in the private higher education industry. Presently, James is in charge of the university college’s marketing administration and strategic business direction which includes designing effective marketing strategies, partnerships with local and foreign universities; and international educational agencies.

Dr Tan Lin Lah

Lin Lah obtained her BCom. from the Australian National University in 1991 and the Master in Public Policy conducted jointly by the National University of Singapore and Harvard University in 1995. She completed her DBA at Southern Cross University, Australia, in 2008.

Currently, an Assistant Professor with City University College of Science and Technology and the Executive Director for UN Global Compact Network in Malaysia, she commenced her career as a Consultant with KPMG Peat Marwick in Malaysia in 1992. In 1993, she joined the United Nations Development Programme Malaysia and then re-joined the corporate world in 1996 as a Financial Analyst in Usaha Tegas. Given her strong interests in civil society issues, she joined an international NGO in 2003 at their Asia Regional Office in Manila.

In 2006, she joined MATRADE, an agency of the Malaysian Ministry of International Trade and Industry, as the Head of Strategic Branding Unit. She became the Executive Director of Caux Round Table Malaysia in 2009 focusing on working with companies on being good ethical corporate citizen. Her special interests are in public policy, developmental issues and corporate responsibility practices.