



***MEDIATING EFFECT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY ON THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KEY INTERNATIONALISATION FACTORS
AND MALAYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS'
INTERNATIONALISATION PERFORMANCE***

NUREEZAN DAUD

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By

NUREEZAN DAUD

**Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

June 2019

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Abstract of a thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment
of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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June 2019

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In light of the increased globalisation and rapid transformation of the higher education sector, countries and HEIs were forced to address the challenges of global higher education in order to build their reputation, compete and sustain at the global level. One of the effective and pertinent strategies to enhance the higher education institutions internationalisation performance is to attract more international students into the country.

In this regard, the current study is designed to determine the key factors that profoundly influence Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance. This study also focused on investigating the relationships between financial conditions, marketing strategies, HEIs' reputation, and HEIs' international student management towards government policy and Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance. The relationship between government policy and the Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance was also examined. The mediating role of government policy on the relationships between the variables namely, financial conditions, marketing strategies, HEIs' reputation and HEIs' international students' management and the Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance were also studied.

The current study adopted a non-probability sampling survey method involving convenience sampling and snowball sampling to answer the research questions that have been developed. Results of the study proved that financial conditions, marketing strategies, HEIs' reputation and HEIs' international student management had significant relationship towards the Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance. Results of the study also showed that, except for marketing strategies, all other independent variables, including financial conditions, HEIs' reputation and HEIs' international student management had significant relationship towards government policy. Results also proved that government policy is significantly related to Malaysian HEIs'

internationalisation performance. Finally, results also indicated that government policy strongly mediated the relationships between financial conditions, marketing strategies, HEIs' reputation, and HEIs' international student management with Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance. However, as this study uses the convenience sampling method, the findings may not be appropriate to be generalised to all population of international students studying in Malaysia.

The current study's research framework highlights the importance of considering the identified influential key factors of Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance, for Malaysian HEIs to design and implement their internationalisation strategies effectively. The findings of this study are also pertinent for policymakers of higher education in designing, executing and enhancing higher education policies conducive for Malaysia to achieve the target to become the international hub of educational excellence in the year 2025.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**KESAN PENGANTARA DASAR KERAJAAN KE ATAS HUBUNGAN
ANTARA FAKTOR PENGANTARABANGSAAN UTAMA DENGAN
PRESTASI PENGANTARABANGSAAN INSTITUSI PENGAJIAN TINGGI
MALAYSIA**

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Impak dari globalisasi dan transformasi yang pesat dalam sektor pengajian tinggi global membawa cabaran yang besar kepada kebanyakan negara dan institusi pengajian tinggi (IPT) untuk membina reputasi, bersaing dan kekal relevan dalam konteks persaingan global. Justeru itu, salah satu strategi pengantarabangsaan yang berkesan dan amat penting bagi meningkatkan prestasi pengantarabangsaan IPT ialah dengan menarik lebih ramai pelajar antarabangsa.

Kajian ini dilaksanakan dengan tujuan untuk mengenalpasti faktor-faktor utama yang mempengaruhi prestasi pengantarabangsaan IPT di Malaysia. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk menganalisa hubungkait di antara faktor-faktor kedudukan kewangan, strategi pemasaran, reputasi IPT, dan pengurusan pelajar antarabangsa di IPT terhadap dasar kerajaan dan prestasi pengantarabangsaan IPT di Malaysia. Selain itu, analisa terhadap hubungkait di antara dasar kerajaan dan prestasi pengantarabangsaan IPT di Malaysia, turut diberi penekanan. Seterusnya, peranan dasar kerajaan sebagai pengantara terhadap hubungkait di antara kedudukan kewangan, strategi pemasaran, reputasi IPT dan pengurusan pelajar antarabangsa di IPT dan prestasi pengantarabangsaan IPT di Malaysia, turut dikaji.

Bagi menjawab persoalan dalam kajian, kaedah “persampelan bukan kebarangkalian” iaitu melalui strategi “persampelan mudah” dan “persampelan *snowball*” telah diaplikasikan. Hasil kajian ini telah membuktikan bahawa faktor-faktor pengantarabangsaan iaitu kedudukan kewangan, strategi pemasaran, reputasi IPT dan pengurusan pelajar antarabangsa di IPT mempengaruhi prestasi pengantarabangsaan IPT di Malaysia. Kajian ini juga membuktikan bahawa faktor-faktor kedudukan kewangan, reputasi IPT dan pengurusan pelajar antarabangsa juga mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan terhadap dasar kerajaan. Namun demikian, faktor strategi pengantarabangsaan

didapati tidak mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan terhadap dasar kerajaan. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa dasar kerajaan mempengaruhi prestasi pengantarabangsaan IPT di Malaysia. Selain itu, peranan dasar kerajaan sebagai pengantara terhadap hubungan di antara kedudukan kewangan, strategi pemasaran, reputasi IPT dan pengurusan pelajar antarabangsa di IPT dan prestasi pengantarabangsaan IPT di Malaysia juga telah dibuktikan melalui kajian ini. Walau bagaimanapun, disebabkan kajian ini menggunakan kaedah persampelan mudah, dapatan kajian ini adalah tidak bersesuaian untuk dijadikan sebagai asas pengukuran terhadap populasi pelajar antarabangsa yang sedang menuntut di Malaysia secara keseluruhan.

Rangka kerja kajian ini telah membuktikan betapa pentingnya bagi IPT-IPT di Malaysia untuk mengambilkira faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi prestasi pengantarabangsaan dalam merangka dan melaksanakan strategi pengantarabangsaan mereka dengan berkesan. Dapatan kajian ini juga adalah penting untuk penggubal dasar pengajian tinggi dalam merangka, melaksanakan dan memperkukuhkan dasar-dasar pengajian tinggi yang kondusif supaya Malaysia dapat mencapai matlamat untuk menjadi pusat kecemerlangan pendidikan tinggi antarabangsa pada tahun 2025.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------|--|
| CA | Cronbach's Alpha |
| EMGS | Education Malaysia Global Services |
| ETP | Economic Transformation Program |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| HEIs | Higher Education Institutions |
| HiCoe | Higher Institutions Centres of Excellence |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| IIUM | International Islamic Universiti Malaysia |
| KPI | Key Performance Index |
| MEB(HE) | Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) |
| MoA | Memorandum of Agreement |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| MOHE | Ministry of Higher Education |
| NHESP | National Higher Education Strategic Plan Beyond |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development |
| PHEI | Private Higher Education Institutions |
| PSO | Proactive Stakeholder Orientation |
| QS | Quacquarelli Symonds |
| ROI | Return on Investment |
| RSO | Responsive Stakeholder Orientation |
| RU | Research University |
| UKM | <i>Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia</i> |
| UM | <i>Universiti Malaya</i> |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UPM | <i>Universiti Putra Malaysia</i> |
| UTM | <i>Universiti Teknologi Malaysia</i> |
| USIM | <i>Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia</i> |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| US | United States of America |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Demand in globalisation had a significant impact on the higher education sector across the world. With the rapid economic growth especially among developing countries, dramatic developments in higher education and increased demand for academic and professional graduates in the labour workforce, have heightened the need for countries and higher education institutions (HEIs) around the world to address the challenges of globalisation in higher education. Hence, incorporating the best internationalisation strategies in the higher education system is a primary concern to stay competitive in the global higher education landscape.

1.1.1 The Globalisation of Higher Education

Studies of Knight (2004) suggested that motivation and rationales to internationalise differs between countries and countries intention to internationalise may be divided into four categories:

- i. political rationale (issues regarding national security and the national competitiveness position and role in the global market);
- ii. economic rationale (to accomplish the objectives of producing skilled human resources needed for international competitiveness and promotes economic growth from recruiting international students);
- iii. academic rationale (to enhance the international dimension of teaching, learning and research to increase the overall quality of higher education system; and
- iv. social/cultural dimension (improving understanding and respect towards intercultural differences).

On the other hand, Qiang (2003) argued that internationalisation of higher education is part of the globalisation process and should be given a more profound definition to complete its function. Thus, the researcher had provided conception and organisational framework of higher education, which stated four fundamental approaches to describe the concept of internationalisation, which is:

- i. the activity approach (describing activities such as curriculum, student/faculty exchange, technical assistance and international student's recruitment);
- ii. the competency approach (emphasises the development of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in students, faculty and staff to become internationally knowledgeable and intercultural skilled that will contribute to the labour workforce;
- iii. the ethos approach (emphasises creating a culture that supports international initiatives within an organisation); and

- iv. the process approach (integration of organisational culture, policies and procedures with academic activities to sustain internationalisation).

The researcher also suggested that a country's national policies for internationalisation are a mixture of various rationales such as political, economic, academic and cultural/social where changes in the past and possible foreseen changes in future interact with international and national forces. Hence, to make sure the internationalisation process succeeds and sustainable, academic activities (such as academic programs, research collaboration, extra-curricular activities and external relations and services) and organisational factors (such as governance, operation and support services) were essential elements in internationalisation that should be taken into consideration in implementing internationalisation strategies.

Next, in terms of the higher education context, previous studies have pointed out the importance of internationalisation. Knight and Morshidi (2011) pointed out that internationalisation of higher education matters most because it helps to increase national income, enhance national competitiveness, improve host's country international trade links and promote economic growth through employment opportunities for locals to sell goods and services to international students. Apart from that, internationalisation also helps to create a pool of well holistic talents equipped with expected competent and intercultural skills, have cross-cultural respect and understanding for differences and can cooperate well with people from various culture and education background. In returns, it enables the graduates to compete in the highly competitive global market workforce, to supplement the ageing and decreased population and contributes to the host's country's innovation, productivity and economic growth (Chen & Lo, 2013; Knight & Morshidi, 2011). In addition, internationalisation of higher education also helps to create national identities conducive to both competitiveness and regional cooperation through educating with graduates global proficiencies and have a sense of patriotism and loyalty to their home country (Zheng, 2014), which also contributes in promoting social and cultural diversity of a country Hammond (2016).

Moreover, in a specific area of research and development, internationalisation of higher education solved the problem of crucial specialisation and fund allocation matters through collaborative and intensive international cooperation (Qiang, 2003). It also contributes to increases in high impact research capacities and innovation in higher education through research and development activities. Furthermore, internationalisation of higher education helps to enrich social, cultural and intellectual diversity of the academic community. It also benefit the students and university's staff in terms of enhancing their communication skills, increase their skills, knowledge and understanding in handling global perspectives, increase the ability to appreciate ethnic and cultural diversity, promote team spirit in a multicultural environment, hence, improving the overall quality of higher education and the university's ranking on the global ranking measure (Chong, 2014; Shahijan, Rezaei, & Amin, 2015).

Therefore, it can be concluded that internationalisation of higher education plays an essential role for countries and HEIs to build their reputation, compete and sustain in the global market of higher education.

1.1.2 Challenges in Global Higher Education

Rapid changes in globalisation, growing global trends in the economy and the advancement in information technology had created new dimensions for a higher education system which creates challenges for countries and HEIs across the world to prioritise internationalisation of higher education to stay competitive and sustain in the global market.

To start with, societies today are faced with the transformation process from industrial to the globalised knowledge society, showing an increase in numbers of students pursuing tertiary education, across national borders (Sirat, 2010). The motivation for international student mobility differs according to individual perception and need. Therefore, many countries have emphasized on meeting the increasing demand for higher education and expansion of knowledge by providing greater access to higher education, offer a diversity and flexibility of programs that suits the international demand and strive to increase the research development and innovation capacities to stay competitive in the globalization of higher education landscape, locally and internationally (Azman, Sirat, & Ahmad, 2014).

Next, globalisation in higher education had reshaped the political views of education from the traditional transfer of knowledge to “knowledge economy” which affected education policies and practices across the world. The country uses education as a means for economic growth and creates global competitiveness, therefore encourage the inflow of international students to the country and restrict locals from going abroad (Byun & Kim, 2011; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007a). However, the cross border activity of students and fierce competition for skilful researchers and academic talents to the best HEIs with good quality and reputation will create risks of Brain Drain and harmful to the national research system to some countries (Davenport, 2004; Lepori, Seeber, & Bonaccorsi, 2015). To overcome this, inculcating national identities, instilling patriotism and sense of loyalty to home countries will be beneficial for countries to ensure patriotic graduates with a strong sense of national pride will return and serve towards the economic prosperity of their home countries (Hammond, 2016).

Also, from political aspects and national security, for some countries like Malaysia, the issue of Brain Gain may become a national concern. Although the Government encourages for international talents recruitment, in reality, this scenario may lead to the political instability of the country especially when the demand and unemployment rates among local graduates are high and employing international experts will be seen as decreasing the employability chances of locals (Lee, 2014; Sirat, 2010). The use of English language as a medium of communication and learning in universities is also seen as conflicting to national aspirations of the use of national language (Sirat, 2010).

Another big challenge of globalisation in higher education is that there is a gap of interpretation of the meaning of internationalisation between policymakers or stakeholders in a country and local institutional needs and capability. Moreover, in response to major cutbacks in funding by Governments, most HEIs, especially for private institutions, were forced to seek opportunities through internationalisation to survive in

the globalised knowledge-intensive economy. For some less prestigious or small private HEIs, recruiting international students to generate revenues is just a way to survive in the competitive market. However, to sustain in the marketplace, they need to have adequate resources and facilities. Scarce resources and limited facilities may result with not only they could not attract international students adequately but also faced with understaffing problems and created a high-stress level among employees. Means to achieve quantity in international recruitments to fill the unoccupied place by locals may result with the poor quality of education and service delivery; implying that internationalisation maybe is meant to survive rather than as a tool to pursuit overall quality excellence of higher education (Chen & Lo, 2013).

Besides, as governments encourage HEIs to become more business-oriented and give full autonomy to HEIs to direct their institutions, an academician in the university was forced to involve in managerial activities as well as teaching and research activities. The increasing burden may create conflicts and problems within the university's setting environment. Thus, the university's management plays an important role in determining the satisfaction level of the academicians as their teaching and research activities will be driven by their satisfaction level that will then determine their commitment level (Santiago, Carvalho, Amaral, & Meek, 2006). Thus, the primary motivation of internationalisation must be distinguished between emphasising on academic and socio-cultural values, or it is just for the sake of economic or political advantage only. To ensure maximum benefits of investment and resource allocation in the internationalisation process, both policymakers and stakeholders should possess greater understanding and synchronisation of policy initiatives implementation (Abd Aziz & Abdullah, 2014).

While this may be true, for HEIs, the primary challenge in attracting international student is to strengthen their research capacity and improve their role in establishing quality education services without compromising equality of opportunity and depending much on funding from Government (H. Gül, S. Gül, Kaya, & Alican, 2010). HEIs must develop a more effective quality assurance system and set up accreditation agencies to preserve the quality of education and diminish the number of academic fraud. Sirat (2010) added that HEIs must also ensure fair access of education to all particularly to the socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and the need to look at issue of promoting social participation of disadvantaged group into education system and gender mainstreaming issue in education where there is a disproportionately high extent by women whilst opportunities for allocation is still low.

In terms of building the brand name and reputation, apart from setting a clear mission and vision statement and implement internationalisation strategies accordingly to achieve organisation targets, HEIs need to address the issue of increased risk of local knowledge, culture, norms and values being internationalized as more international students being recruited into the country because it will cause the country to lose sight of its core values and derails the functions of higher education (Abd Aziz & Abdullah, 2014; Byun & Kim, 2011; Gül et al., 2010). Hence, to ensure the quality of higher education and gain global reputation, without neglecting the values of nation and society, HEIs need to provide means for students to increase international literacy by developing programs and curriculum that is internationally recognised and accepted.

Internationalized curriculum and programs that support cross-cultural differences and competence will enable students to prepare themselves to embrace competition in the globalised market, encourages networking and international collaboration, ability to solve the problem creatively and efficiently and respects the multicultural differences across the nation (Ardakani, Yarmohammadian, Abari, & Fathi, 2011).

Following, the sustainability and competitiveness of HEIs also depend on how the HEIs integrates their internationalisation strategies to attract international staff and student, increase their research capacity and innovation to gain global reputation and providing organisational support to all players in the institution. All these factors will determine the degree of perception of international students when choosing an institution (Ramanathan, Thambiah, & Raman, 2012). Therefore, due to strict competition in a domestic and global market and financial constraint, HEIs should consider their reputation and country's attractiveness when designing their internationalisation strategies in terms of hiring experts to attract international students. The decision whether to hire international experts as means to attract international students to their institutions or retain their best graduates to support and contributes in the reinforcement of higher quality of education will shape the future internationalisation of the particular HEI and to the country in general (Lepori et al., 2015).

Furthermore, competing in a world of globalisation, education is no longer a process of transferring knowledge and attitudes to new generations by lectures, note-taking and memorising in classrooms or emphasises on the process of learning, preferably it is a process of self-learning where students learn through self-regulating, communicating and collaborating with others. Barriers to communication represented by distance is no longer a problem with the rapid advancements in ICT's technology through wireless and mobile internet access. The extensive use of the internet, video sharing portals, virtual social networking (Facebook, YouTube and Twitters) provides new means of providing and sharing of knowledge which connects millions of people around the world in just seconds. This new trend of borderless education enables a student to seek knowledge beyond classrooms and across the border, transforming students to be educators. Therefore, HEIs across the world must be ready to develop global learning competencies and provide a more diverse learning environment such as offering open course materials and broadcasting lectures and conducting webinars and need to re-strategize their internationalisation efforts accordingly so that they could remain competitive in the global knowledge economy (Gül et al., 2010; Kahn & Agnew, 2016; Wit, Yemini, & Martin, 2015).

Finally, well-versed and knowledgeable cross-cultural competence scholars will create a diverse pool of talent in the labour market that will benefit the host countries. Thus, HEIs must address the challenge to prepare and develop students to become knowledgeable and skilful graduates who can reason outside the box and possess cross-cultural competence so that they could compete in the globalised knowledge market. Being able to do so will increase HEIs' reputation in global university ranking, which is vital to attracting prospective students (Hammond, 2016; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007b).

1.2 Higher Education Internationalisation Strategies in Developing Countries

The need to internationalise has become a part of developing countries agendas due to globalisation and rapid growth of international trade of higher education that impact its domestic higher education systems, economics and political aspects. For most developing countries, policy-makers view internationalisation and cross border higher education as a tool to promote human talent that contributes to the diversification of host countries skilled labour forces and strengthening international market competition activities (Knight & Morshidi, 2011). The graduates' involvement in trade and business links and immigration of skilful and knowledgeable international students will increase human capital assets to a host country and increase national innovation, productivity and competitiveness of economic growth in the long run (Zheng, 2014).

Consequently, higher education is also regarded as a powerful tool to reduce the social and economic inequalities among citizens and boost the country's economic growth by producing high skilled workers and increase innovation in research and technology development. Hence, maximising the potentials of internationalisation in higher education are the core objectives that countries are seeking to stay competitive in the global higher education market and as a strategy to become the global education hubs. Therefore, most countries and HEIs in the world had allocated huge investment and resources to improve their performance and capability at both domestic and international level, strive to increase research and innovation to build international competition (Hammond, 2016; Lee, 2014).

Subsequently, Bashir (2007) stated that for some developing countries, trade is more important than bilateral aid for higher education due to limited funding. Thus, HEIs must develop new business models to attract more international students and gain more profit from tuition fees and help to increase the spillover effects of other services in the economy. Business models such as offering more choices of high-quality programs at lower costs than existing providers from developed countries, establishing foreign HEIs in the home country and joint venture with reputable HEIs around the world were also implemented. However, the increasing number of student's mobility could also lead to adverse economic effects due to the migration of highly skilled labours to countries that offer higher wages and difficulties in monitoring education qualities from foreign HEIs. Hence, to compete in the global market and maximise Return on Investment (ROI) from trade in higher education, public HEIs in developing countries need to restructure their internationalisation objectives, policies and regulations, funding capabilities and governance issues in line with the country's agendas to promote economic and social development.

As a country's ability to develop and apply technical and socio-economic knowledge is a link to its economic development, the ability to attract and acquire skilful talents has also become crucial for developing countries. Thus, understanding that a country's wealth and strength of the national research system largely influences international talents mobility decision. Therefore, in order to sustain and compete in the globalized knowledge economy beyond national borders, most HEIs had enhanced their effort to maximize the potentials of internationalisation in higher education through

simplification of international talents recruitment policy, offered better perks and opportunities, upgrade facilities and research labs and enhanced international networking to increase their brand name at global market (Lepori et al., 2015).

Besides, in most developing countries, the government uses the performance of higher education internationalisation as a measuring tool to monitor the key performance indicators (KPIs) of HEIs. HEIs must meet the series of KPIs outlined as a means to measure the productivity produced to continue receiving government funding (UNESCO, 2014). Therefore, HEIs were forced to respond quickly and strategically to the rapid change of developments in higher education. To stay abreast and compete in the global competitive higher education market and foster global competitiveness, HEIs need to develop strategic internationalisation strategies to enhance their performance. Attracting international students is considered as one of the effective internationalisation strategies as their presence will not only be beneficial in increasing national income and boosting economic growth through revenue generation but will also create a global, international and intercultural dimension in the higher education environment (Knight & Morshidi, 2011).

Moreover, in response to cultural changes and financial reduction from government, while resolving the increasing demand for higher productivity and quality of higher education issues and trying to change from traditional to entrepreneurial university-based, Salmi (2002) proposed that HEIs should increase their innovation. Strategic internationalisation measures such as developing corporate identity with clear institution objectives and priorities, introducing new accreditation methods that allow university to suit their course structure with the market's demands, involved the non-academic professionals into the management team to increase the effectiveness of university administration and create better internal incentives system and academic staff structures, should be incorporated. Likewise, HEIs should also offer study abroad program in collaboration with the international partnership in other countries, recruit international students and internationalising the faculty and programs curricula because it was considered as the most effective internationalisation strategies Cantu (2013).

Also, HEIs may maximise marketing tools by using a differentiation strategy to attract international students. For instance, as more postgraduates are being recruited into Malaysian HEIs, recruiting potential graduates with more significant research and academic capacity to boost the research development and innovation process especially among Research Universities (RUs) (Abd Aziz & Abdullah, 2014; Dahari & Abduh, 2011) and carefully selecting cross-institutional collaborative partners and institution location in order to set high value in market positioning and maintain attractiveness to prospective international students (Jeptoo & Razia, 2012) may be applied.

Apart from that, as demand and needs of international students differ according to their preference, background and culture, maximising marketing tools by focusing on market segmentation and catering to different needs, requirement and expectation may be beneficial to attract international students. Plus, facilities and services offered should be tailored and enhanced according to the factors that are important in the mobility decision of international students (Padlee, Kamaruddin, & Baharun, 2010).

Next, another effective form of marketing strategy to attract international students is by using different language mode as a medium of teaching and learning, apart from English language (Roga, Lapiņa, & Mütürsepp, 2015; Yee, Hazlin, & Mokhtar, 2014). As many countries have loosened restrictions towards the opening of international branch campuses and develop curriculum in to be taught in English, HEIs should consider minimising the drastic change to learn in English especially for students who came from the non-English speaking country because difficulties for some international students in mastering English communication may prevent them from excelling in their studies. Introducing the changes in the delivery of education in a foreign language will provide equal opportunities and promote competitiveness to both local and international students and let them integrate well. It will also be beneficial to attract international students and reduce the emigration of local students. However, Abu Bakar and Abdul Talib (2013) on the contrary stated that the use of English language as a medium of communication and learning might also create confusion and disappointment among international students if the lecturers mix the English language with local language during classes for local students to catch up with the lessons. Hence, the university's management should design proper internationalisation policy and regulations and communicate it well to all the administrative staff to gain full commitment to the internationalisation process.

Lastly, to ensure the effectiveness of internationalisation, Alpha and Vincent (2015) indicates that managerial expertise in developing export strategies, dynamic capabilities of the organization to define strategic management planning to maximize internationalisation strategies profits, ability to manage risk, alliance capabilities in terms of products and services development, foreign market orientation and markets knowledge were vital factors in influencing internationalisation strategies formulation. Managerial expertise was said to have a significant role in determining organisational success and business performance. Hence, to compete and sustain in the global market as well as increasing innovation and quality in their product and services, HEIs must hire the best human resource and carefully design and formulate their internationalisation strategies.

1.3 Malaysia as an International Education Hub

Malaysia aims to become the international hub of educational excellence by the year 2025. The primary motivation to become global education hub is to develop skilled human capital, to promote knowledge creation and innovation and to generate income through the inflow of international students into the country (Abd Aziz & Abdullah, 2014).

Knight and Morshidi (2011) stated that the term 'education hub' is being used by the Middle East and South-East Asia countries who are working to raise their profile and competitiveness in their region to become as regional hubs for international networking, student recruitments and increasing research development and innovation. According to the researchers, countries aims to become an education hub for different motivation and priorities that can be divided into the student hub (aims to attract a number of international students and build a reputation as a quality higher education provider), the skilled workforce training hub (aims to educate and train students to be skilled

knowledge workers and provide increased access to education and professional developments for both local and international students) and the knowledge and innovation hub (aim to build a piece of knowledge and service-based economy, educate and train a skilled workforce and increase knowledge and innovation to attract foreign direct investment and increase regional economic competitiveness).

Moving towards competing in a globalised knowledge-based economy has led to higher demand for research and innovation; thus, greater call for a skilled workforce and talented researchers (Gül et al., 2010). Hence, the major challenge for a country to become an education hub is in terms of its ability and capability to establish capacity building of human resources, not only in developing local talent but also be able to attract international talents and repatriate diasporic talents (Lee, 2014). Thus, the challenge here is whether Malaysia is ready to become a global education hub that focuses on the production of knowledge and innovation and will Malaysia stand competitive enough as compared to other Asian countries who have the same desire to become global education hub? To answer this critical question, let us look at the advantages of Malaysia and its current internationalisation strategies implemented to become the international hub of educational excellence in the year 2025.

1.3.1 Strategic Location

Firstly, Malaysia is located at a strategic location in the South East Asia region where it has direct access to more than 620 million of population and offers varieties of dynamic business opportunities, well-developed infrastructure, full of economic and human resources and excellent quality of life. Malaysia is expected to be one of the fastest-growing hosts of international student hub by the year 2020, alongside China, Singapore and India (British Council, 2012).

1.3.2 Higher Education Policy

Starting with Asian Financial Crisis took place in the year 1997, Malaysia had examined a comprehensive economic review to overcome its weaknesses and recover from the recession by exploring new promising sectors which include the internationalisation of higher education sector. Back then, Malaysia had sent many students to pursue higher education abroad so that the students could learn new experience and upgrade knowledge that will be beneficial for the student themselves and the country in general. However, after the financial crisis, continuing this strategy will worsen Malaysia's trade deficit and increasing the foreign exchange rate. Thus, Malaysia had revised this strategy and come out with the alternative to expand private universities with the hope to cater local demands and attract international student at the same time to generate revenue to boost its economic growth (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

Apart from that, way back in the year 2015, faced with the economic downturn that forced Ringgit Malaysia to be unstable due to the depreciation of the currency at that time, the higher education sector and tourism are significant sectors that are expected to help revive the economy in the short run. Zheng (2014) regarded international student as

a source of income, which helps to boost a country's economy and trade position and, plays an important role in influencing government policy on education. The total expenditure of international students in the country will generate more income and job offerings to the locals through spillover effects as demand for other support services such as in property, retail services and tourism industries increases. Revenue generated from international students through tuition fees can also reduce financial stress on HEIs with limited funding from the government.

Due to that, the Malaysian government emphasises extremely high commitment towards higher education. It is considered as one of the key economic sectors in Malaysia as it has one of the highest multiplier effect and exponential intangible impact where it generates income from within the industry and other support sectors that can generate income and favourable economic returns as outlined in the Economic Transformation Program (ETP). A substantial proportion for education is being allocated from the national budget each year because government believed that investments that can be generated from the enrolment of international students and tourists to Malaysia would encourage the recovery of currencies with a faster pace (Bergeron & Martin, 2015; "Boosting productivity key to Malaysian economic growth: World Bank," 2016; Lock, 2015).

On average, Malaysia had invested 7.7% of its national budget every year on higher education; relative to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is the highest percentage among Asian economies and south-east Asia neighbours according to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) benchmarking (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). GDP is a measure of national income with the output of a country. A relative lower exchange rate and GDP growth have a positive effect on international student's inflows to a country. The higher the host country GDP growth and the lower the home country GDP per capita, will push more international students inflow to the host country especially students from developing countries as value for money is higher (Zheng, 2014).

It was reported that the total GDP in Malaysia was 255.02 billion US dollars (USD) in the year 2010, reached the highest total of 338.06 USD in the year 2014 and the year 2017, it was worth 314.5 billion USD, which represents 0.51% of the world economy. GDP Malaysia growth rate is forecasted to grow at 3.7% worth 380USD billion in the year 2020 ("Malaysia GDP forecast," 2019).

Table 1.1 represents the percentage spends on education and GDP by the Malaysian government from the year 2004 until 2017. It showed that government expenditure on education has a fluctuate rates since the year 2014 where the lowest percentage was in the year 2008, continue rising in until the year 2011, then decreased until the year 2015 and eventually rose again in the year 2016. The highest percentage of government expenditure throughout the 13 years was in the year 2017 (21.06%).

**Table 1.1: Malaysian government expenditure on education
(Total % of GDP) from the year 2004-2017**

| Year | Percentage of Government Expenditure | Percentage of the GDP |
|------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2004 | 21.01 | 5.924 |
| 2006 | 16.75 | 4.486 |
| 2007 | 16.12 | 4.373 |
| 2008 | 14.04 | 3.959 |
| 2009 | 18.46 | 5.974 |
| 2010 | 18.41 | 4.966 |
| 2011 | 20.98 | 5.763 |
| 2012 | 19.93 | 5.739 |
| 2013 | 19.45 | 5.481 |
| 2014 | 19.80 | 5.213 |
| 2015 | 19.81 | 4.976 |
| 2016 | 20.70 | 4.828 |
| 2017 | 21.06 | 4.744 |

Source: MOHE (2015), Malaysia GDP (2019), Malaysia : government expenditure on education (2019)

Following this, in analysing Malaysia higher education scenario, it is noted that since early 2000, Malaysia had aimed to become a regional education hub and gain maximum profit out of its higher education sector. Malaysia aspiration to become a global education hub was outlined in the fifth thrust of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan Beyond (NHESP) 2020, launched in the year 2007 regarding intensifying internationalisation, Malaysia targets to attract 200,000 international students and become the top six destinations of choice among international students by the year 2020 (Abd Aziz & Abdullah, 2014). Since then, strategies initiatives to become education hub were outlined in every national outline plan (Lee, 2014), embedded in the Economic Transformation Programme, New Economic Model and 10th and 11th Malaysian Plan which in general, focuses on strategic initiatives regarding the internationalisation of higher education including recruiting international students and experts.

Moreover, in its effort to position Malaysian HEIs to become a hub for higher education and establish global engagement, various international programs have been implemented by the government under NHESP 2020 and National Higher Education Action Plan 2007-2010. It includes bilateral and multilateral cooperation established between developed and developing countries including the establishment of the student's mobility programs between countries and introducing diploma/degree programs jointly with overseas universities, creating Education Malaysia Global Services (EMGS) under the Ministry of Education Malaysia. EMGS serves as a one-stop centre and affairs related to the promotion of international student enrolment to Malaysia, improving and ease the process of visa application and immigration procedures for students/foreign workers,

establish research-based universities to increase and strengthen innovation and research-based activities and provision of scholarships / grants to international students (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2007, 2011).

MOE is also actively engaged in signing Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between local universities and abroad to increased networking and collaboration with participating countries which aimed at enhancing networking and cooperation in terms of education planning, economics and political strengthening. Subsequently, to enable public HEIs to accept challenges of globalisation and compete in the global market and to match the investment with the output of higher education and reduce the dependency of government funding, Malaysian Government had empowered greater autonomy and accountability to most public HEIs. Local HEIs are required to seek an alternative in increasing revenue so that they become financially stable, have more resources and skilled workforce and be more flexible and prudent to run their business effectively and efficiently. Thus, it will allow HEIs to improve in offering quality programs to match both locals continuously, and international students demand and receive a global reputation. To widen the access of education for all qualified students, Malaysian Government also offers scholarships, grants and study loan to locals – revealing how serious the Government is in ensuring equality among locals and highly flexible access to education lane (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). It also encourages lifelong learning by providing various modular programs and collaboration with industry players to produce competent, experienced knowledge workers that have high values in the work market (Grapragasem, Krishnan, & Mansor, 2014).

Additionally, governed by Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEI) Act in 1996, The National Accreditation Board Act 1966 and Private Higher Education Act, the government had allowed local private institutions to cooperate with reputable foreign universities such as Monash University, Curtin University and Nottingham University to establish branch campuses in Malaysia. The establishment and vast expanding of Malaysian private education institutions enable Malaysia not only to attract more international students every year but also help to increase access of higher education for local students and reduce the number of local students to study abroad. Malaysia can now provide diversified international programs and different modes of teaching and learning environment in the Malaysian setting. The Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA) was later established to accredit all academic programs offered by private HEIs and ensure the quality of programs offered and recognition of the qualification awarded. The higher education business had provided a major source of income to the national GDP and increase foreign exchange and trade deficit (Abd Aziz & Abdullah, 2014; Knight & Morshidi, 2011; Lee, 2014).

Next, proving its seriousness and high commitment to become the global education hub, Malaysian Government had also established learning regions in Iskandar Educity and Kuala Lumpur Education City (KLEC) with the objectives to provide high quality of education at lower cost price, offers world-class facilities and services, develop skilful and knowledgeable human talent and increase international research collaboration in higher education (Knight & Morshidi, 2011). Both educity aims at co-locating top international higher education institutions that would produce a skilled workforce with

international-quality education. A skilled workforce will draw foreign investment and support foreign companies in the zone plus it will also foster academic-industry collaboration that will create a multiplier effect on the Malaysian economy (Azman et al., 2014).

Apart from that, in the 2014 OECD report, the overall cost of studying in Malaysia, after considering purchasing power parity, is relatively low as compared to other developed countries (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). Therefore, with an emphasis on creating the image of 'Malaysia: Quality Education at lower cost', Malaysia is aggressively promoting international students, especially from developing countries to study in Malaysia. The government also provides grants and scholarships to qualified international students to attract them coming to Malaysia especially good students from developing countries to help them gain access to the local university and survive during their study life in Malaysia. Scholarships to promising candidates who are believed to be future leaders of a country will benefit Malaysia in future political and business relations.

Hence, although Malaysia had started its higher education journey by imparting knowledge and structures in higher education from well-known higher education providers, however, through strengthening networks and internationalisation of its higher education system, support from private sector and huge investment in higher education allocated each year by the Government, Malaysia is now one of the global players known by its academic and research excellence. All the internationalisation executed thus far has proved a worthy investment where Malaysia was now recognised worldwide and reported to be among the top selections for international students to pursue their higher education.

According to a study by UNESCO in 2014, Malaysia had become the choice for international students because of the rich culture and quality of life, quality of education offered, international recognised programs along with a reasonable education fee and the use of English as a medium of instruction. Other important consideration selection factors includes social/political stability, ease of access to university's services and infrastructure, customer focus, location, qualification of the teaching staff, specialized field and, low fees and cost of living, secure internet access, top-notch staff, Muslim country and availability of financial aids (British Council, 2008; Institut Penyelidikan Pendidikan Tinggi Negara, 2009; Jani, Zubairi, Huam, & Ngah, 2010; Padlee et al., 2010).

As showed in Table 1.2, in the year 2016 to the year 2018, international students from Asian countries dominated total enrolments, followed by students from African countries. Enrolments of international students from Asian countries increased by 1.74% from 97,205 in 2016 to 98,886 in 2018. However, total students' enrolments from African countries fell by 3.94% from 31,058 in 2016 as compared with 29,835 in the year 2018. Therefore, it appears that the higher education internationalisation strategies implemented by the Government have successfully attracted international students (Jani et al., 2010).

Table 1.2: International students' enrolment at local HEIs based on continents as of 31st December 2018

| Region | 2016 | | | 2017 | | | 2018 | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Public HEIs | Private HEIs | Total* | Public HEIs | Private HEIs | Total* | Public HEIs | Private HEIs | Total* |
| Africa | 6,815 | 24,243 | 31,058 | 6,606 | 24,229 | 30,835 | 8,847 | 20,988 | 29,835 |
| Asia | 23,158 | 74,047 | 97,205 | 25,720 | 75,453 | 101,173 | 29,352 | 69,534 | 98,886 |
| Australia | 51 | 272 | 323 | 55 | 227 | 282 | 24 | 253 | 277 |
| Europe | 350 | 822 | 1,172 | 497 | 601 | 1,098 | 199 | 633 | 832 |
| North America | 133 | 239 | 372 | 137 | 229 | 366 | 106 | 274 | 380 |
| South America | 18 | 56 | 74 | 22 | 26 | 48 | 10 | 25 | 35 |
| Others | 73 | 0 | 73 | 58 | 0 | 58 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 30,598 | 99,679 | 130,277 | 33,095 | 100,765 | 133,860 | 38,538 | 91,707 | 130,245 |

Note: *Data does not include international students studying in Sabah & Sarawak
Source: Ministry of Education Malaysia (2018)

1.3.3 Internationalisation Performance

From the internationalisation strategies executed to date, Malaysia had gained ROI as follows:

1.3.3.1 Widening Access to Higher Education for all

In Malaysia, its higher education system is categorised into public and private education institutions whose establishment is aimed at strengthening both human capital development and widens access to education and public equity. Branding universities formed to compete in the ability to build a reputation with a dynamic, competitive, and able to predict the future challenges ready to respond effectively in line with global developments.

Consequently, universities in Malaysia were categorised into three groups: research universities (RU), focus universities (technical, educational, management and defence courses) and comprehensive universities. Up to now, there is 20 public on which five universities are clustered as RUs, 70 private universities, 91 college communities, 33 polytechnics, 410 private colleges, 34 private university college and 14 higher institutions centres of excellence (HiCoe). Overall, the establishment is with the ultimate goal of widening access to higher education through increasing the number of seats and to produce quality products to match the domestic and international demand ("Malaysia higher education institutions," 2018). Thus, widening access to tertiary education for locals and attract international students that set the pace for Malaysia to become an education hub (Abd Aziz & Abdullah, 2014).

Furthermore, Malaysia has set a target to attract 250,000 international students in higher learning institutions and schools by the year 2025, whereby 80% of the international students will pursue their studies at the higher education level (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). As shown in Table 1.3, Malaysia has achieved the yearly target for international students' enrolment except for the year 2018, which recorded 130,245 enrolments as compared with the targeted number of 144,000. In this regard, Malaysia needs to take steps to accelerate the growth of international students' enrolment to ensure that the target set for the year 2025 is achieved.

Table 1.3: Projection of international students' enrolment at local HEIs as of 31st December 2018

| Year | Projection | | Total | Actual | | Total |
|------|-------------|--------------|---------|-------------|--------------|---------|
| | Public HEIs | Private HEIs | | Public HEIs | Private HEIs | |
| 2014 | 33,600 | 77,000 | 110,600 | 32,842 | 74,996 | 107,838 |
| 2015 | 36,000 | 79,045 | 115,045 | 33,369 | 88,665 | 122,034 |
| 2016 | 38,400 | 91,000 | 129,400 | 30,598 | 99,679 | 130,277 |
| 2017 | 40,800 | 95,200 | 136,000 | 33,095 | 100,765 | 133,860 |
| 2018 | 43,200 | 100,800 | 144,000 | 38,538 | 91,707 | 130,245 |
| 2019 | 45,600 | 106,400 | 152,000 | | | |
| 2020 | 48,000 | 112,000 | 160,000 | | | |
| 2021 | 50,400 | 117,600 | 168,000 | | | |
| 2022 | 52,800 | 123,200 | 176,000 | | | |
| 2023 | 55,200 | 128,800 | 184,000 | | | |
| 2024 | 57,600 | 134,400 | 192,000 | | | |
| 2025 | 60,000 | 140,000 | 200,000 | | | |

Source: Ministry of Education Malaysia (2018)

1.3.3.2 Research Development and Innovation

Between the year 2007 and 2012, the number of publications had increased by more than threefold (Malaysian RU contributed 70% of the total number) and a number of patents filed by local HEIs grew by 11% each year. The number of citations had increased by fourfold from 2005-2012. Malaysian RUs also contributed as solution providers in the market which provide research and consultancy services for industries, agencies and community generating RM1.25billion in revenues within the stipulated years (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

1.3.3.3 Global Reputation

According to the U21 report, in terms of overall ranking out of 50 countries, Malaysia fell to ranked 27th in 2019 from ranking 19th in 2017. Next, comparing the overall performance with neighbouring ASEAN countries, in terms of resource allocation, Malaysia was ranked 8th out of 50 countries in 2019 (initially was 12th in 2014 and 1st in 2017 report) (Williams & Leahy, 2019; Williams, Leahy, & Jensen, 2017), which among the neighbouring Asian countries, Malaysia showed the highest commitment towards higher education. However, when it comes to an output measure, although Malaysia invested a large number of resources as compared to neighbouring Asian countries, Malaysia was ranked at number 41 in the year 2019. It reflects that the investment in resources has not yielded the outcome compared to other Asian countries listed in the top 50 such as Singapore which ranked 32nd in resources but ranked 25th in output as well as Korea which ranked 37th for resources and ranked 27th for output measure in 2019.

Table 1.4: Asian neighbour's ranking according to the U21 Report

| No | Country | Overall Rank | | Resources | | Environment | | Connectivity | | Output | |
|----|-----------------------|--|------|---|------|---|------|--|------|---|------|
| | | 2017 | 2019 | 2017 | 2019 | 2017 | 2019 | 2017 | 2019 | 2017 | 2019 |
| 1 | Malaysia | 19 | 27 | 1 | 8 | 13 | 9 | 28 | 32 | 25 | 41 |
| 2 | Singapore | 20 | 23 | 33 | 32 | 4 | 6 | 29 | 27 | 18 | 25 |
| 3 | Hong Kong | 26 | 30 | 24 | 34 | 6 | 4 | 21 | 34 | 35 | 32 |
| 4 | Korea | 34 | 36 | 29 | 37 | 42 | 42 | 42 | 44 | 26 | 27 |
| 5 | Thailand | 45 | 45 | 47 | 43 | 26 | 25 | 16 | 23 | 49 | 47 |
| 6 | Indonesia | 50 | 50 | 50 | 49 | 29 | 28 | 31 | 41 | 50 | 50 |
| | Types of Metrics Used | The average score of the four dimensions | | Government expenditure, investments and R&D | | Qualitative assessment of policy and regulatory environment | | Collaboration globally with the industry and international student enrolment | | Research output, institution's ranking, enrolment and employability | |

Source: Williams et al. (2017); Williams and Leahy (2019)

In terms of global ranking, according to Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) world university rankings and QS Asia ranking, the overall ranking of Malaysian top five universities improved each year as shown in Table 1.5 and Table 1.6. In the QS world university ranking 2020, UM was listed at number 70 from number 146 in 2016, followed by UPM at number 159 in 2020 as compared to number 331 in 2016. Whereas for QS Asia university ranking, all five top universities were listed as top 50 rankings for two consecutive years in 2018 and 2019.

Table 1.5: Top five Malaysian universities according to QS World University Ranking

| University / Year | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| UM | 146 | 133 | 114 | 87 | 70 |
| UPM | 331 | 270 | 229 | 202 | 159 |
| UTM | 303 | 288 | 253 | 228 | 217 |
| UKM | 312 | 302 | 230 | 184 | 160 |
| USM | 289 | 330 | 264 | 207 | 165 |

Source: QS world university rankings (2016; 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020)

Table 1.6: Top five Malaysian universities according to QS Asia University Ranking

| University / Year | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2018 | 2019 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| UM | 32 | 29 | 27 | 24 | 19 |
| UPM | 76 | 66 | 49 | 36 | 34 |
| UTM | 66 | 61 | 63 | 49 | 47 |
| UKM | 56 | 56 | 55 | 43 | 41 |
| USM | 57 | 49 | 51 | 46 | 43 |

Source: QS Asia university rankings (2014; 2015; 2016; 2018; 2019)

Based on the performance of current internationalisation strategies, it appears that higher education internationalisation strategies that have been implemented by the Government so far has attracted international students from developing countries, which signals the important role of Malaysia in facilitating the development of future leaders from the countries (Jani et al., 2010). Thus, Malaysia is on the right track to position itself as an international student hub. However, to become the global education hub, Malaysia needs to enhance its strategic higher education internationalisation measures and increase international collaboration apart from recruiting a more international student to benefit the maximum ROI. Budgetary constraints and rising costs of higher education require improvements in productivity and efficiency of the overall higher education system. Hence, the transformation of the internationalisation strategies that are more global and competitive in nature will stimulate the academic development in Malaysia as well as to ensure its investment in higher education generates the desired outcome and to increase public performance and achieve higher standards in the eyes of the world community, hence achieve its target to become the global education hub by year 2025.

1.4 Problem Statement

Malaysia aims to be highly recognised, competitive and able to produce graduates who are not only knowledgeable and resourceful but also marketable (Lee, 2014). Therefore, Malaysia had invested an average of 7.7% of its annual budget on higher education (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). According to the 2017 U21 Report, based on UNESCO's benchmark, Malaysia has the highest resource commitment for education (ranked 1st out of 50 countries). However, Malaysia was ranked 8th in terms of resources commitment (Williams et al., 2017). For the overall performance among Asian countries, in the year 2017, Malaysia was at the first rank, but in 2019, Malaysia was ranked second behind Singapore (Williams & Leahy, 2019).

In terms of quality, despite the increasing rate from 70% to 75% graduate employability rate in Malaysia from year 2006 to 2014, there is also rising concerns from employers regarding the lack of critical thinking, communication skills and English language proficiency of graduates which are essential for them to compete in the global market, reflecting the inadequacy of graduates skills and knowledge as well as a miss-match with what the market needs. Also, the issues of incompatible skills and short of supply of skilled graduates in a crucial segment of the industry are another critical industrial gap that needs to be addressed to ensure that the target to become the education excellence by the year 2025 could be achieved (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

Besides, in the U21 report, the unemployment rate was measured across two groups of people who either have tertiary education or post-secondary non-tertiary education among population group of 25-64 years old to determine the value of tertiary education by the increased likelihood of employability. Hence, in terms of output measure of higher education (which measure international institutional rankings, graduates' employability rates, research output and enrolments), Malaysia was ranked 25th out of 50 countries in the 2017 U21 report. However, in the 2019 U21 report, surprisingly, Malaysia fell to ranked 41th out of 50 countries listed. Hence, Malaysia has to face the challenge of lifting the level of output to match the committed resources and strive to increase its internationalisation performance. Addressing this gap is pertinent to the future growth and development of Malaysia's higher education industry (Williams & Leahy, 2019; Williams et al., 2017).

The globalisation and its discontents, the increasing growth of the global knowledge economy and the advancement in information technology, had a serious impact on global higher education development. Therefore, from the views of academic gaps, because international students' mobility decision influential factors may change over time, varies according to countries' pull factors and students' and student's motivation differs across developed and developing countries (Zheng, 2014), there has been slight agreement on what can be regarded as the best internationalisation strategies for HEIs particularly in attracting international students. There are also very limited studies examining international students' satisfaction, particularly in Malaysia (Hasan & Masri, 2015) that warrants for further investigation.

As Malaysia aims to become the global educational excellence by the year 2025, attracting international students is, therefore, crucial. However, total student enrolments at local HEIs decreased by 2.7% in the year 2018 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2018). Hence, further steps to increase the international students' enrolment at local HEIs need to be taken and implemented to ensure that the target to attract 250,000 international students by the year 2025 will be achieved.

To attract international students, Malaysia and HEIs need to understand the different needs and expectations of international students regarding higher education and consider the push-pull factors that influence international students' mobility decision to Malaysia. However, studies on what is the best marketing strategies to attract international student are very limited (Dahari & Abduh, 2011) and the information on this matter is vague as students' preferences might change over time and across borders. Therefore, there is an urgent need to continuously investigating the issue so that proper and effective marketing strategies to promote the quality of higher education in Malaysia and the products and services offered as well as marketing policies that suits specific needs and preferences of potential international students can be developed and implemented, in order for Malaysia to stay competitive in the global higher education landscape (Baharun, Awang, & Padlee, 2011). For that reason also, satisfying current students perception and satisfaction level is vital because it plays a crucial role in determining a university's success rate and also is an essential tool to enhance the university's perceived service quality (Abdullah, 2006a), as well as potential students, could be easily attracted through positive word of mouth promotion of satisfied students (Ngamkamollert & Ruangkanjanases, 2015).

Also, as countries and HEIs compete fiercely in the global market to attract international students, the debate on the determinants of international student's mobility trend continues, raising the questions concerning the importance of coordination and monitoring of international student's perception and satisfaction. As students' satisfaction is crucial in determining the quality of higher education services and survival of HEIs due to the stiff global competition, understanding the influential factors in international students' mobility decision and satisfaction level would enable HEIs to identify and understand the significant factors of student loyalty behaviour as well as understanding the withdrawal and retention pattern (Katircioglu, Mehtap-Smadi, Kiling, & Ünlücan, 2012). Withdrawals of students and retention rate may incur high institutional and personal costs to the university. Therefore, reducing the retention rates among dissatisfied students is crucial to ensure the university's survival (Baharun et al., 2011). Hence, HEIs need to develop and implement strategic internationalisation measures to increase its internationalisation performance and gain the maximum benefits of internationalisation so that it can help to attract international students to come to Malaysia and help promote Malaysian HEIs to prospective international students.

Noting that there is a very limited number of studies investigating the internationalisation performance of Malaysian HEIs, there is an urgent need to identify the key internationalisation factors that contribute to internationalisation performance among Malaysian HEIs. The mediating role of government policy in the relationship between the factors which have been identified and Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance will also improve understanding of the phenomenon of interest.

1.5 Research Questions

In this study, the following research questions were addressed:

- i. What are the key factors influencing the internationalisation performance of Malaysian HEIs?
- ii. What are the relationships between financial conditions, marketing strategies, HEIs' reputation, HEIs' international students' management with Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance?
- iii. What are the relationships between financial conditions, marketing strategies, HEIs' reputation, HEIs' international student management with government policy?
- iv. What is the relationship between government policy and Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance?
- v. Does government policy mediate the relationships between financial conditions, marketing strategies, HEIs' reputation, HEIs' international students' management and Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance?

1.6 Research Objectives

The general aim of this study is to identify the key internationalisation factors influencing Malaysian HEIs internationalisation performance and to investigate whether government policy mediates the relationships between key internationalisation factors and Malaysian HEIs internationalisation performance. In order to achieve this objective, specifically, the research objectives are:

- i. To determine the key factors influencing the internationalisation performance of Malaysian HEIs.
- ii. To investigate the relationships between financial conditions, marketing strategies, HEIs' reputation and, HEIs' international student management with Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance.
- iii. To investigate the relationships between financial conditions, marketing strategies, HEIs' reputation and, HEIs' international students' management with government policy.
- iv. To investigate the relationship between government policy and Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance.
- v. To investigate whether government policy mediates the relationships between financial conditions, marketing strategies, HEIs' reputation, HEIs' international student management and Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance.

1.7 The Scope of the Study

Malaysia was chosen in this study as it is ranked 12th among the top 20 recruiters of international students globally (Guardian, 2017) and the first ranking among other Asian countries in terms of investment and expenditure in higher education, relative to GDP (Williams et al., 2017).

The sample of the respondent is international students who are currently pursuing their postgraduates' studies at Malaysian five public universities in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The selected HEIs were four research universities (RUs) including Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (KL Campus), and one non-RU which is International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The four RUs were chosen because they were listed among the top five RUs in Malaysia with rankings below 250 based on QS world university rankings in the year 2019 ("QS World university rankings 2019," 2019) and listed among the top 30 according to QS Asia Rankings in the year 2018 ("QS Asia university rankings 2019," 2019). Moreover, the four RUs were also rated as five-star rating according to QS Stars Ratings 2019 ("QS Stars university ratings," 2019).

For IIUM, it was also selected in this study although it was listed at ranking 651-700 according to QS World Rankings 2020 ("QS World university rankings 2020," 2020) and is listed at ranking number 143 in Asia World Ranking 2019 ("QS Asia university rankings 2019," 2019), because it is recognised as an international university. IIUM also has the largest population of international students among public universities in Malaysia ("University highlights 2019," 2019). Furthermore, IIUM is also selected as it is listed as four stars rating according to QS Stars Rating System 2019 ("QS Stars university ratings," 2019).

1.8 The Significance of the Research

In line with a Shift Number-8 on Global Prominence outlined in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025 and Malaysia's aspiration in producing a winning personality, knowledgeable and virtuous outlined in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan 2016-2020, the result of this study is expected to contribute in theoretical and practical contribution as follows:

1.8.1 Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, the results of this study provide knowledge and information to the Push-Pull Model (McMahon, 1992) about international students' mobility decision key factors that influence their decision to pursue higher education in Malaysia. The results of this study also contribute to increased knowledge and understanding The Course Continuance Behavioural Theory (Bhattacharjee, 2001) concerning the key internationalisation factors that influence international students' satisfaction and loyalty behaviour. Understanding the key internationalisation factors will enable HEIs to increase the quality of products and services offered, thus increasing its internationalisation performance. Hence findings of this study contribute to the proliferation of academic and research at local universities.

Findings also contribute to confirming The Public Policy Theory, where results proved the mediating role of government policy in the relationship between internationalisation key factors and Malaysian HEIs' internationalisation performance (Dil, 1997). Therefore, the findings of this study demonstrated the role of government in aiding HEIs

to build their brand name and reputation and helping them to compete and sustain in the global market.

1.8.2 Practical Significance

Significantly, the results of this study also contribute information to the government and HEIs on a more sustainable and effective internationalisation strategies in order to compete and sustain the global higher education market, to keep pace impact of globalization in higher education market and bring a significant Return on Investment (ROI) to the country in terms of economic growth, political stability, the increasing socio-economic and development of the higher education system. Hence, it contributes to ensuring the target to become the international hub of educational excellence by the year 2025, be achieved.

Results of this study also contribute information to the government in terms of providing knowledge related to research and concrete report with extensive information for national development plans and policies in the internationalisation of higher education context. Also, studies in the field of strategic management and effective delivery of services will offer solutions from the approaches of quantitative methods and measurement that will give an advantage to the government to enhance the formulation and implementation of the most effective higher education internationalisation strategies to compete and sustain in the global market.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

Table 1.7 presents the definitions of key terms in this study.

Table 1.7: Definition of Key Terms

| Key Terms | | Definition |
|-----------|----------------------|--|
| 1 | Globalisation | Globalisation is described as the set of larger socioeconomic forces such as technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas that shape the world across borders (Knight, 2004). |
| 2 | Internationalisation | Internationalisation refers to as the “process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” which includes policies and practices undertaken to match globalisation (Knight, 2004) or in other words, how institutions respond to globalisation is called internationalisation. |
| 3 | Higher education | It is defined as education beyond the secondary level, especially education at the college or university level (www.meriamwebstar.com). |

| Key Terms | | Definition |
|-----------|-----------------------|--|
| 4 | International student | International student refers to those students who chose to pursue pursuing higher education outside his home country either for short or long semesters at all levels of higher education (Abdullah, Abdul Aziz, & Mohd Ibrahim, 2017). |
| 5 | Student mobility | Student mobility is defined as the student who pursued higher education abroad either for short or long semesters at all levels of higher education (Abdullah et al., 2017). |
| 6 | Education hub | Lee (2014) defined education hub as a planned effort of strategic engagement both by locals and internationals in producing new knowledge and innovation initiatives for a competitive economy. |

1.10 The Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter outlines the globalisation of higher education, the aim of Malaysia to become the global education hub and challenges in globalisation that affects higher education. It will also discuss the problem statement, research questions, research objectives, scope of study and significance of the research. The second chapter contains a review of the literature on the theoretical background, student mobility and key internationalisation strategy factors. The third chapter discusses the research methodology used in this study including research design, research method, the location of study, population and sampling, data collection method, instruments used, hypothesis development and data analysis procedures. The fourth chapter outlines the reports and discussion on the quantitative analysis of this survey, and finally, the fifth chapter outlines the conclusion of the study, implication and future recommendations of a similar field of study.

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