

A Review of the Current and Emerging Trends of Higher Education Institutions in Developing Countries

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Abstract

Higher education in developing countries is experiencing and embracing changes due to globalization and market development and advancement. In this regard, a review of existing works related to the current status and emerging trends of higher education institutions is useful to provide insight on the current researches. The paper is divided into several sections of the review. A general understanding of the context of higher education, the impact of globalization and higher education in developing countries are highlighted in this review. The paper provides a discussion, and a review of the challenges higher education institutions face in the Malaysian context as a developing country. Literature on the challenges related to student mobility, the academic profession, and information and communication technologies are presented. The fundamental challenges have made it possible to understand the state of higher education and stimulate further research, growth and development for the nation.

Keywords: emerging trends of higher education, developing countries, higher education in developing countries, globalization, student mobility, the academic profession, information and communication technologies

1. Introduction

Higher education is one of the most critical elements that countries worldwide focus on as a key and primary agenda. Notably, the most considered factor in higher education is quality. Nations have made education, in general, a national and international agenda due to development and advancements in the modern world that entails globalization of economic activities and extension of higher education. Developing countries are on the front line to embrace critical education changes and how their citizens receive quality higher education. Thus, the most valuable measure and strategy that developing countries are currently embracing are ensuring that their state of higher education is comparable nationally, which is the standard of international level.

The key ideas that must be understood when embracing quality in higher education, especially for developing countries, include and are not limited to globalization, information and communication technologies, human capital, and economic development. Human capital, economic development, and globalization have acted as fundamental triggers to the dynamic change in how developing countries perceive higher education (Rena, 2010). Dynamic changes are the vital elements that have called for changes in how nations invest in higher education, with fundamental changes occurring in a national and global context (Rena, 2010). The multiple trends in higher education in developing countries have been triggered by pivotal factors such as globalization, economic development, and human capital, among others, elevating the consideration of its quality.

1.1 Understanding the Context of Higher Education

The initial and pivotal step to coping with quality is understanding the context of higher education. The subtitle addresses the fundamental knowledge in the field, summarizing how the significance of higher education has advanced over the years (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2015). It also discusses the discussion of whether universities grow as the economy grows or gets richer (Rena, 2010). The research argues that there is a debate on how universities significantly boost economic development. However, the research shows that many countries, especially Asia, have considered higher education a critical aspect of their society.

Furthermore, although the research on higher education advocates for no direct correlation between universities and the

economy, especially on the growth of both, multiple nations have opted to consider it essential for future economics plans. One of the critical regions has embraced quality higher education in Asia (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2015). The regions focus on improving, expanding, and further investing in higher education systems, such as universities. Their results have an apparent impact on most of the other developing regions globally (Shahijan et al., 2016). Therefore, in higher education, the crucial area to have considered is its implementation in Asia.

Besides, nations that have considered the relevance of higher education are considering its quality. Quality is the essential agenda that not only developing countries are focusing on. Quality in higher education is being considered in a global context. The globalization of economic activities and the need to expand education are chief contributing factors to considering quality in the field (Rena, 2010). The developing countries are ensuring that higher education is at the international standard. For the developing countries, most of the activities must much the advanced modern world, including and not limited to higher education. When they embrace quality in higher education, it is a guarantee that they will cope with the changing global context (Shahijan et al., 2016). Therefore, quality in higher education has grabbed world attention, with multiple regions implementing it, such as China and India.

2. The Impact of Globalization

The central aspect defining the 21st century is globalization, how life has developed with significant elements such as technology and the economy. Notably, research on the impact of globalization marks it as central to influencing higher education (Rena, 2010). The main aspects of globalization that can be considered central to the development in the field include and are not limited to an integrated world economy and advanced information and communication system. Quality in higher education is key to developing countries, through how English has played a role and the development of international knowledge networks (Shahijan et al., 2016). Therefore, forces beyond the control of academic institutions such as the ones discussed above are fundamental to the growth of higher education on matters regarding quality.

The subtitle also focuses on how students have been spread overseas to acquire education, send branch campuses overseas, and other international inter-institution partnerships. Also, global trends have played a fundamental role in challenging universities with multiple degree programs operating within the broader international community (Rena, 2010). Thus, the advancement of living standards and innovation in numerous fields have called for a magnified significance of the global context in education, among other sectors. For instance, the rise and consideration of a standard language such as English in scientific communication, just like Latin, dominated the scientific field in the medieval age in Europe (Abolfazli et al., 2015). Therefore, through agreed means of communication in critical research areas, nations have been able to see the importance of quality in higher education.

Also, the quest for quality in higher education has called for the concentration of databases and publishers. They have acted as critical sources of resources for multinational organizations and other universities. For instance, institutions and programs have developed in multiple nations, such as and not limited to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar (Abolfazli et al., 2015). The countries have promoted policies on foreign universities establishing local campuses. Expanding the universities and learning resources has been a critical element for the local population to access higher learning. Also, large and international universities are seen as centres due to their prowess in research and reputation for excellence (Abolfazli et al., 2015). Therefore, higher education in the modern world has become a priority, with nations focusing on quality.

3. Higher Education in Developing Countries

Developing countries are the core of growth on matters that need a global reference, such as quality in higher education. Educational systems are being boosted by the wealth of nations, a role that plays a significant determination in the centrality and quality of university systems (Rena, 2010). Therefore, countries have demanded investments in their academic plans, supporting expanded enrollment and the vital requirement to develop and grow top-quality educational institutions for research. In the past decade, the group that has enrolled in universities has intensified to 26 per cent. In low-income countries, enrollment in tertiary institutions has also strengthened (Inayatullah & Milojevic, 2016). Therefore, nations have maintained their involvement in supporting higher education.

One of the pivotal solutions to curbing equality in modern society is providing quality education to both genders. Therefore, the provision and acquisition of higher education to the entire population have acted to confront economic structures, culture, and social inequalities. There has also been improvement in the enrollment process to joining institutions of higher learning to improve how populations receive higher education (Inayatullah & Milojevic, 2016). The critical reason why higher education has emerged in the front line to be a fundamental requirement for people to embrace in the modern century is its crucial support for knowledge and international corporation. Therefore, nations such as the Asian region and China have taken higher education to the next level, most notably focusing on quality (Inayatullah & Milojevic, 2016). Great universities have been established and funded as critical publishers and centres

of excellence (Rena, 2010). They have also been considered important centres for research, with many of them, have laboratories of a global standard.

Higher education is a fundamental barrier to many nations, comprising and not limited to Malaysia. Among the developing countries, Malaysia faces vital challenges to its growth, which other developing countries experience intensively. However, the problem of high school education has been the main drawback to the growth of the economy, society, and the overall standards of living in the nation (Adams et al., 2018). The primary reason the nation faces issues on its well-being is based on the role institutions of higher learning like universities and their wealth define the literacy level in the nation (Rena, 2010). Therefore, with more people enjoying continued access to higher education, the nation can enjoy fundamental growth socially, economically, and education-wise.

4. Challenges in Higher Education in Malaysia

4.1 Increasing Student Mobility

Research shows that more than two million students are acquiring education outside their home nations, an aspect which reflects on how education may not be highly developed in those nations. Current statistics show that students studying outside their home countries have overgrown to more than 7 million globally. Therefore, globalization has acted as a fundamental breakthrough that has triggered student mobility (Rena, 2010). Multiple aspects can be understood, indicating that many learners have developed independence. It is also characterized by the development and growth in the global flow of students worldwide (Kemp, 2016). Therefore, with growing nations depending on globalization for improvements, Malaysia is among the nations with experienced mobility of the students.

Two critical global trends define student mobility worldwide and in Malaysia in particular. Students in the nation have entered the major academic systems of the world, showing vital changes in how learners want to acquire higher education. Also, students have travelled to the outside world, from Malaysia and other developing countries, to seek high quality and advanced higher education, an aspect that has attracted the attention of developed countries (Kemp, 2016). For instance, multiple nations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia have revised their immigration and visa requirements, which has attracted international students to the nations (Rena, 2010). Therefore, adjustment of immigration policies by multiple nations and revision of visa requirements has championed student mobility in developing countries, especially Malaysia.

Additionally, other reasons have triggered student mobility in Malaysia among other developing nations. Bate policies in the developed countries have motivated international students to seek quality and advanced higher education from other nations. Education offering higher education, such as universities, also has critical measures and plans that they embrace to fit in the modern global environment for both students and non-students (Hazelkorn, 2016). The strategies are meant to pull resources and students from far through offering them quality education. They try to maintain and grow economic competitiveness, focusing on maintaining and exploiting the potential financial gains from the other nations (Rena, 2010). Therefore, student mobility has been propelled by fundamental reasons: internal, in the nations themselves, and international.

Also, more educational systems and universities in non-English speaking nations have devised new measures to propel student mobility. Most institutions have established learning programs that support local and foreign or second languages, such as English. The introduction of such initiatives has called for a massive rate of student mobility from numerous nations globally, with developing countries facing the effect (Hazelkorn, 2016). Multiple nations and educational systems around Malaysia as a developing country have established better programs such as English-based degree programs. These strategies have attracted massive students from the nation to pursue better and quality higher education (Blessinger & Anchan, 2015). Therefore, the development and growth in other nations in offering foreign or second languages have promoted the mobility of students in developing countries, especially Malaysia.

Furthermore, other triggers that have supported student mobility worldwide comprise partnerships between multiple academic systems or institutions. For instance, higher education institutions such as universities have developed and created unions with other academic systems and institutions in many other countries (Garba et al., 2015). The main initiative for such partnerships is to offer or tap the opportunity to provide diverse degrees and other academic programs, collaborate in various ways, and develop and innovate research projects, among other fundamental tasks (Blessinger & Anchan, 2015). Therefore, the unions have acted as bridges for students in Malaysia and other developing nations, which has promoted student mobility in the regions.

The international programs or strategies minimize manifestations for the strategies many nations embrace in off-shoring the academic programs, the franchised arrangements, and the branch campuses. Some critical reasons student mobility is high in Malaysia among other developing countries are the branch campuses established in the other nations, the exchange programs or the franchising arrangements for the academic degrees, and the globalized strategies (Rena,

2010). The most severe challenge that comes with student mobility is exploitation. Global opportunities in higher education are not the same and are not equitable for all. Poverty is among the main reasons many students do not make it to the top of the best by taking advantage of the provided or potential opportunities (Shahijan et al., 2016). Therefore, although there may be international opportunities and programs for all students, not all the students access the opportunities.

Although research on exchange programs and international plans on educational systems shows the multiple ranges of opportunities that researchers and learners can enjoy, the opportunities are limited to vital minorities. Student mobility may be a subject to better opportunities in foreign nations, such as high-quality higher education, political stability, and better careers (Shahijan et al., 2016). The main challenge is that the students who emanate from wealthy families are the only ones who enjoy the opportunities. Also, the other students or learners who enjoy the opportunities are the socially privileged (Aziz et al., 2019). Thus, the contemporary distribution of resources will be further skewed if global trends in higher education continue, affecting talent, growth, and development in developing countries like Malaysia.

4.2 Academic Profession

The academic profession is one of the required fields that define the growth, development, and sustainability of a nation in terms of its society, politics, social institutions, and educational systems. When a nation cannot protect and invest in its educational systems, its growth is under serious threat (Abad-Segura et al., 2020). The academic profession plays a vital role in developing countries. It is a trigger that propels growth and develops the spirit of pulling together to found a nation in its most essential growth (Rena, 2010). Therefore, when the academic profession is under constant threats, then the development progress of the nation becomes severe and may lead to a government shutdown.

The academic profession is among the fundamental and defining factors to the progress of Malaysia in its process of growth as a developing country. In the 21st century, the field is one among the sectors that have never experienced stress before. Massification is the leading factor in the decline in high education quality in numerous nations (Ceulemans et al., 2015). The issue has led and triggered average qualification for academic to lower in many nations. Massification is a fundamental 21st-century challenge that higher education institutions must address sufficiently to curb irrelevance in the sector (Ceulemans et al., 2015). The problem is a root challenge to developing countries seeking high-quality education to boost the economy, social institutions, educational systems, and community in general.

Research shows that most of the tutors at the world level have only earned a bachelor's degree. Also, concurring statistics indicate the same challenge in developing countries, whereby most teachers own a bachelor's degree. Most of the nations also have part-time academics, a number that is increasing annually (Ceulemans et al., 2015). Also, critical and excellent institutions of higher learning such as universities employ professors and tutors part-time, which is an emerging trend different from the past when they used to work regularly. Same tutors are professors working part-time and have other appointments in other institutions (Rena, 2010). Therefore, it is a fundamental challenge that developing nations are trying to mitigate by all means necessary, like in the case of Malaysia.

Also, with globalization and many trends going global in the academic sector, more challenges are emerging. For instance, there is a widening gap between the salaries in most countries. Most developing and developed countries challenge other developing nations due to the salary gaps (Ceulemans et al., 2015). The issue of salaries has contributed to brain drain to other countries and, most importantly, developed ones with better salaries. Brain drain is a severe challenge to developing nations since they require an effective and efficient academic system to promote the economy's growth, raise the people's living standards, curb the levels of illiteracy in society, and promote the well-being of social institutions, among other sectors.

As a modern developing nation, Malaysia needs an academic system that is efficient and reliable in promoting and defining growth and development in the critical sectors of the nation. Thus, when faced with brain migration, the issue may bring the academic profession and sector of the nations to its knees. It is one of the most critical contemporary challenges that the nation is fighting daily (Wahid et al., 2018). Brain drain is also a subject to developed countries. The developed countries that offer better payments to tutors and professors are a potential threat to developing nations like Malaysia on the challenge of brain drain. Most of the personnel in the profession would consider working in foreign nations that offer better salaries than their developing nations (Wahid et al., 2018). Therefore, the state of the academic profession in developing nations is declining, with potential threats and challenges rising at an alarming rate.

Additionally, the academic profession at the global level has grown intensively, pushing professionals to seek greener pastures in other academic fields worldwide. The academic profession has intensified, and professions have a chance for consideration and recruitment at all levels in the sector (Idris et al., 2018). Many systems from abroad have been developed and manoeuvred to feature as bates for the academicians and researchers in growing nations (Rena, 2010). Therefore, many developing nations have no other chance than to dance the tune of the developed nations that have devised measures to lure professionals into working from their countries, contrary to supporting growth in their home countries.

4.3 Information and Communication Technologies

Information and communication technology is the backbone element when defining the growth, development, and advancement and, more significantly, the core feature of modern society. Advanced technology with modern inventions and innovations has supported the development and sustainability of appropriate sectors in developing nations, entailing and not limiting higher education (Wu & Zha, 2018). Therefore, when discussing the academic profession and higher education in Malaysia, the researcher cannot forget addressing how the element has supported its growth and the main issues drawing the nation back to its knees.

Research shows that the traditional structure, the most critical institution of higher-level learning, must embrace information technology to support fundamental elements. Some of the critical elements that define it comprise with no limitation to modernism, technology-induced inventions and innovations, and distant learning, among other vital elements (Kumar et al., 2017). Although the current state of technology is a defining factor to the contemporary digitalized world, the structure of the traditional university is and will not be implemented to the modern design overnight. It is a critical problem that must involve effective strategic planning and the process of implementation (Kumar et al., 2017). Therefore, the quality of the services offered will depend on how efficiently the advanced technology will be implemented in the system, considering that some nations are still developing and may not cope with the current requirements for the advanced technology.

One of the critical challenges that developing nations such as Malaysia face amid the implementation of the change as triggered by the current technology is the process of change. For instance, there is a significant disconnect between the developing nations embracing new information and communication technology and leveraging the personnel to portray quality (Rena, 2010). The developing nation has to consider multiple challenges in the implementation process, considering that many people are static to change in the case of embracing new information and communication technology. More challenges affect the growing nations, worsening their situation, making change difficult to employ (Raman & Tan, 2015).

The 21st century is the dawn for embracing and implementing modern and advanced technology for developing and developing nations. Notably, the most critical sector that technological transformation is fundamental is academics (Cheong et al., 2018). With multiple nations, such as Malaysia, not ready for the new technology, the nation has the task of gathering all the requirements for the process (Cheong et al., 2018). Therefore, as a developing nation, top leaders and society in Malaysia have the critical responsibility to positively embrace information and communication technology, solving all the challenges to create a compelling and sustainable transformation from the analogue and outdated season.

Changes in how knowledge is communicated, especially in the institutions of higher learning, have been highly revolutionized by the internet. The invention and critical developments of the internet in the current generation have dictated the route most credible sectors will take, with educational systems being affected the most (Ganapathy et al., 2017). The most developed nations in the world are the ones that have felt the first wave and impact of the internet, expanding exponentially, incredibly dimensional on the education enterprise (Phuong et al., 2015). Therefore, it remains a challenge for developing nations to implement modern technology effectively.

Positively, the internet has propelled the growth in joint research and academic collaboration among learning institutions. For instance, the kingpin components that have supported the same include online social networking and electronic mails (E-mails). Besides, electronic journals have also become a comprehensive source of information for scholars and researchers, providing substantive information for case studies and fieldwork (Varghese et al., 2016). Most of the traditional collecting and storing systems mechanisms are increasingly becoming outdated, calling for the implementation of new online measures. The invented measures have enhanced data security, integrity, storage, and easy retrieval using multiple sequences to foster organization (Rena, 2010). Thus, the new internet improvements are advancing the way institutions of higher learning should improve academically.

Multiple more profound implications on the internet emanate from developing nations. The issues are based on the preparedness and response of the nations to the new improvements on the internet. All nations, developing and developed, have taken into action the act to implement the internet in most sectors and, most importantly, educational systems (Varghese et al., 2016). The main challenge for developing nations such as Malaysia is implementing their internet sores division, portraying a divide between the rich and the poor. The rich are the most favoured group to access advanced internet compared to the poor (Varghese et al., 2016). The situation becomes more apparent when the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 as the higher education sectors have to migrate to online class delivery. As a result of inequality in the social-economic status of students, the rate of internet accessibilities declined rapidly. Students with low socio-economic power to afford broadband connection are most vulnerable to encounter challenges to catch up with others in online learning. Therefore, it is one of the most severe challenges that the region faces in effectively

implementing their internet.

Many developing nations consider information technology (IT) a breakthrough to accessing higher education, and Malaysia is no different. Difficulties are the most severe barriers to the developing nations accessing the advanced internet they need (Sumintono, 2017). For instance, Malaysia faces issues such as accessing quality training and continuous upgrades, modern software and hardware, and technical support, among other requirements (Mustapha, 2017). Governments should give households incentives to buy reliable devices to the lower-income groups and families so that their children can study most comfortably. Most developing nations, such as Malaysia, face additional high-speed issues like underserved internet access. Also, the nation faces critical issues in its implementation of fast internet and dissemination of critical information to build its economy (Mustapha, 2017). Therefore, implementing affordable information technology and reliable network infrastructure is a solid issue that the nation needs to address sufficiently.

Therefore, developing nations such as Malaysia should tap the opportunity of the advanced and modern internet to improve its critical sectors and society in general, and most importantly, the education systems. Improving her education system will ensure growth in other sectors that will promote the economy, living standards of the people, boost literacy levels, and improve the community's overall well-being (Rena, 2010). The nation should also check on effective and productive strategies of dealing with issues that involve the challenges to serving the growing population of students and their needs (Rena, 2010). Developing the internet in the nation is a better way of ensuring that the nation has access to better learning environments and supporting critical changes such as the emergence of distance education in the region.

5. Conclusion

Higher education is one of the unique requirements for developing nations in modern society, with advanced information and communication technology acting as a breakthrough in the sector. As discussed, the main elements or key areas that define higher education involve its context, the critical impact of globalization in the sector, and the critical case of higher education in developing countries, such as Malaysia. The fundamental challenges that have made it possible to understand the state of higher education in the nation are the impact of information and communication technology in the region. More challenges which the developing nation can work on to boost its development are the depression on the academic profession and the intensification of student mobility. As a developing country, Malaysia's growth and development in higher education depends on how top leadership and society, in general, will implement critical strategies in investing effectively in the sector, without forgetting the role of current and advanced information and communication technology.

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