The Changing Face of Transnational Education in Malaysia:
A Case Study of International Offshore University Programs

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For all the sentient beings who have paved my path with light

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ABSTRACT

In a rapidly globalizing economy, Malaysia has embarked on a new phase of economic development; since the 1997 economic crisis, the Malaysian government has placed more emphasis on developing a sufficiently skilled workforce to compete in the world. High education, especially transnational education programs, plays a crucial role in providing diverse programs that meet the market demand. These transnational programs have been attracting international students with an aim to gain the international currencies. The market of transnational education, however, is getting more competitive than ever despite the governmental efforts.

To identify the current status and challenges of transnational education in Malaysia, semi-structured interviews were conducted in the context of a case study at the Ministry of Higher education of Malaysia, Malaysian Association of Private Universities and Colleges, and two school programs; the relevant documents were also used to address the research questions. The conceptual framework applied to understand the dynamics of complexities of transnational education in Malaysia focuses on the world system theory in higher education.

The researcher found that the current expansion of transnational education is economically driven to gain financial profits in the short span by attracting international students to Malaysia. What emerged as a challenge is that transnational education and competition in the international education market are now forcing Malaysia to develop its own capacities of research and teaching, and branding of their education at the national and institutional level to make the growth of transnational education sustainable in the long run. This incentive in capacity-building will also enable Malaysia to make their local education effective. The researcher also identified some policy changes and capacity-building support that need to be initiated by the Malaysian government. The researcher also identified that increased competition in the field of international higher education has brought about more players and competitors such as local agents and other new countries and institutions that are offering similar transnational programs. Such economic focus on transnational education and new players make the center-periphery dynamics more complex in higher education in a country like Malaysia in transition

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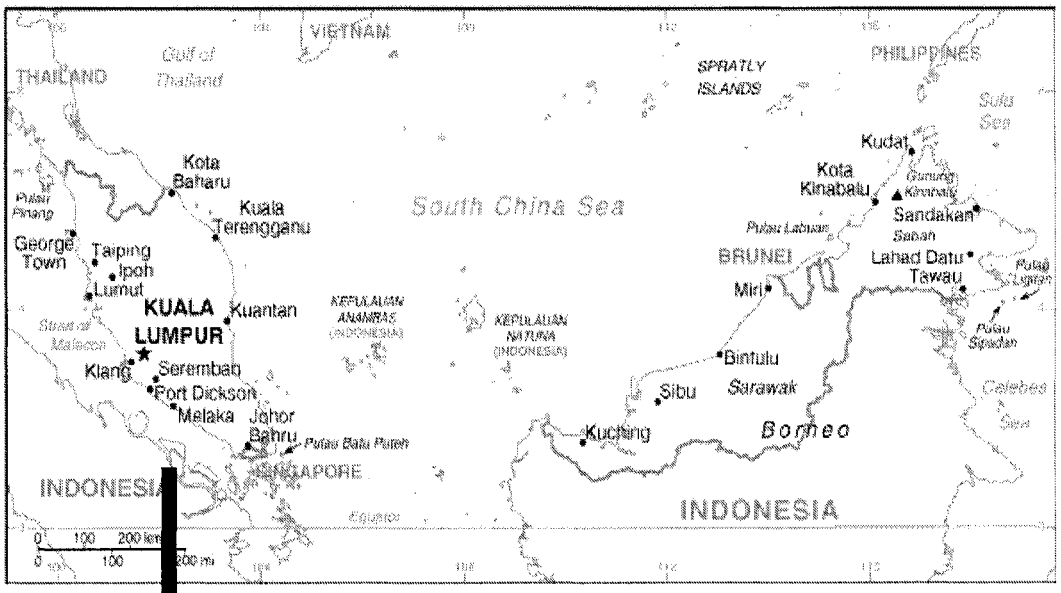

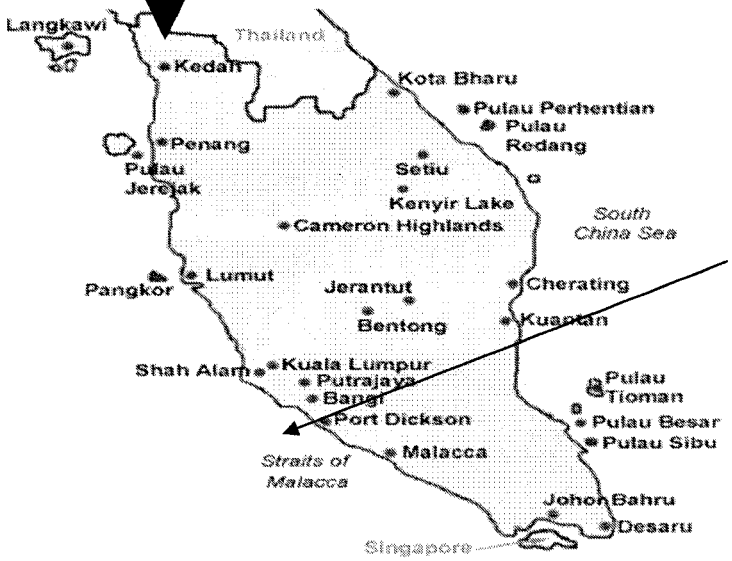

Monash University Malaysia

Taylor's College

Source

Top photo: http://www.earthecho.org/fellowship/in-the-field/

Bottom photo: http://www.holidaycity.com/malaysiahotels/

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Higher education plays an important role in providing adequate human capital for national economic development. In a rapidly globalizing economy, higher education and training are required to meet the demand of creating a highly skilled human workforce necessary to survive in such a global world. Privatization and internationalization of higher education worldwide are examples that show the educational response to such globalizing forces. This is partly due to the limited resources to meet such growing demands for higher education.

As a part of the internationalization of higher education, transnational education has been gaining more attention than ever as a way to deliver educational opportunities across borders (Altbach, 2004a; Knight, 2005). In transnational education, educational institutions and programs from one country operate in another, and programs are jointly offered at local institutions by universities from other countries. Previous research focused on the increased educational access to transnational education in countries where the access to local higher education was quite limited (Lee, 1999a). Some scholars have looked at transnational education as a way for developed countries to increase their revenue. This is especially a hot issue in Australia in which recruiting international students in the Asia-Pacific region is a part of the national strategy to increase revenue (Coleman, 2003). Some other research describes innovative ways of delivering education across borders.

Recently, more attention is being paid to the issue of quality assurance. This is related to the global trend of establishing a quality control organization for transnational education. Current research on transnational education focused on treating education as an export commodity has also brought up accountability concerns in regards to quality (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001; UNESCO, 2001). This issue has been fueled by the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which governs the liberalization of international trade in services and enhances economic development worldwide by members of the World Trade Organization. This agreement also views higher education as a tradable product with an aim towards "increasing liberalizing policies that prevent discrimination between international and domestic suppliers and prohibiting national measures that would limit international access to domestic markets" (King, 2004). Countries that agree upon the GATS are encouraged to make a commitment to further liberalization of trade including education (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001). Lee (2004) argues that such free trade in educational services through international investment would affect the existing educational structure within a nation. On the other hand, Pratt and Poole (1998) state that this free trade across nations will bring competitive advantage, from which institutions with more autonomy and responsibility will benefit the most.

Although numerous studies have been conducted to address the issues and impacts of transnational education, existing analyses still contain significant gaps. First, the current research has focused on economic merit without much consideration of the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of transitional educational programs. For example, Australia regards the internationalization of higher education as one of trade,

with educational services growing to a $4.2 billion (AUD) industry and the nation's largest export earner (Coleman, 2003).

Another gap is a lack of empirical research on the mechanism of offering transnational educational programs. The current research has limited perspectives from the international partner universities which offer programs in other countries. For example, much research has been done in regards to curriculum, student achievement, and evaluation which are examined from the perspectives of international partner universities such as those in Australia. This might be because these programs are offered and monitored primarily by international educational providers from the developed countries (Alderman, 2001). Coleman (2000) also indicates that this limitation of the research in this area is due to the extremely rapid expansion of transnational program provision.

The third gap is that little research has addressed the long-term impact of transnational education on the existing local education dynamics within a nation and/or region. Many researchers have already acknowledged that globalization and information technology are a push factor for the current expansion of transnational education. However, these studies have not provided sufficient explanations for the possible impact that transnational education may have on local contexts.

The impact of transitional education on local education dynamics is further complicated because transnational educational programs are now attracting international students from other neighboring countries. For example, an increasing number of international students in Malaysia attend transnational educational programs to attain international degrees through English-medium programs. It is identified by other

researchers that local students, in this case Malaysian students, experience culture shock or identity crisis by participating locally in transnational education programs (Sugimoto, 2005). Such an unexplored issue related to transnational education may limit a full understanding of the possible impact of transnational education in a bigger picture.

To address such issues, this study uses Malaysia as a case, in which the higher education market has been expanding with a specific focus on economic and human capital development since the 1997 economic crisis. Malaysia has been known as one of the pioneers in the development of transnational educational programs (Webway, 2006). The Malaysian endeavor to become a regional hub of education by the year 2010 is also pushing the Malaysian government to become actively involved with promoting higher education overseas and attracting international students. The further analysis of international higher education in Malaysia is addressed in chapter III.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the dynamics of transnational education in Malaysia by using two schools that offer such programs as cases. This study attempts to reexamine the influence of transnational education and to explore the local educational dynamics associated with transnational education. This study also uses a conceptual framework of the center-periphery model in higher education. The particular interests here are the roles and responsibilities of local institutions that offer transnational programs and that attract international students, and their impacts on the local contexts in Malaysia.

In addressing the purpose of study, this paper proposes the following research

questions:

1. What is the current status of transnational education in Malaysia?
2. Why do international students choose Malaysia as their study destination?
3. How do international-linked programs identify and respond to the needs of international students in Malaysia?
4. What are the major challenges of transnational education in Malaysia that influence its sustainability and effectiveness?
5. What are the theoretical implications?

Significance of the Study

This study is expected to contribute to the current research of transnational education in three ways. The first contribution is that this study adds a new dimension of education dynamics discussed in the field of transnational education. This study will initially apply the center-periphery dynamics in higher education as a conceptual framework. An empirical case study of Malaysian transnational education is conducted to further discuss the impacts of center-periphery dynamics imposed by transnational education.

Second, this study also addresses unexplored concerns of international students attending transnational educational programs. A rationale and possible impacts of attracting international students in transnational education programs in Malaysia are identified.

Third, this study is intended to identify major challenges for recruiting international students to transnational education programs by conducting an empirical

case study of Malaysian transnational education. This study, thus, provides insights on possible dynamics and issues of how transnational education will expand and influence the local contexts.

Davis, Olsen, and Bohm (2000) note that, despite the current expansion of transnational education, little data collection and research has been done, other than on distance education. Likewise, McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) state that no comprehensive central source of data is available in terms of institutional and program mobility. This study is, therefore, expected to add some insights to the current discussion of transnational education.

Comprehensive Definition of Key Terms

This section identifies and provides a comprehensive definition of three key terms that are used throughout this research paper: globalization, internationalization of higher education, and transnational education. The definition of transnational education also includes transnational education in a Malaysian context. This section attempts to briefly describe these three terms to provide the common ground for the discussion of this paper.

Globalization

This study defines globalization as a multidimensional force that may create new opportunities for a society. It has predominantly dealt with the economic aspects of society as described by the International Monetary Fund as, "the increasing integration of economies around the world, particularly through trade and financial flows" (2000, April). Knight (1999a) describes globalization as the "flow of technology, economy,

knowledge, people, ideas... across borders" (p.14). Such flow across borders is now affecting different sectors of the society. For example, Wagner (2004) addresses the impacts of globalization from three dimensions of economic, political, and cultural perspectives.

As often discussed by researchers, electronic technology is a push factor for economic development and competitiveness across borders, resulting in a growing network of economic exchange. It needs to be mentioned, however, that this technological advancement has also created cultural, economic, and political Westernization (de Wit, 2002; Sadlak, 2000). Some researchers have identified that it has also created some new issues of inequalities (Altbach, 2004a). It is interesting to note that such Westernization is now creating more opportunities for non-western, non-white groups or players to collaborate and compete globally (Friedman, 2005).

Globalization is thus not confined to economic development; it has created multi-dimensional impacts across sectors. Friedman (2007) states:

> Globalization is not simply about the spread of capitalism or markets or enhanced trades. It is not an exclusively economic phenomenon and its impact is not exclusively economic. It is a much broader, deeper, and more complex phenomenon, involving new forms of communication and innovation (p.482).

When it comes to education, many researchers have viewed the current internationalization of higher education as a response to globalization (Knight & de Wit, 1995). Slaughter and Leslie (1997) identify that globalization plays a significant role in making higher education more market-oriented, especially the international market to attract international students for financial benefits (p.36).

This study thus defines globalization as a multifaceted force on local societies which may provide opportunities but also threat for the local government and higher educational institutions that have created intensive competitiveness among institutions and nations.

Internationalization of Higher Education

Internationalization of higher education has been defined in many ways and lacks clarity of interpretation. Therefore, many use other relevant terms interchangeably (Arum & Water, 1992; de Wit, 2002; Knight, 1999b; Lee, 1999b; Qiang, 2003). In this regard, Knight (2006) states that there is no universal definition of internationalization. This section briefly reflects some common themes or concepts of internationalization of higher education derived from definitions by several authors and attempts to define the term in an appropriate matter for this study.

Many researchers have identified the internationalization of higher education as the process or response to the impact of globalization by an individual country or educational institution (Altbach, 2004b; Ellingboe, 1996, 1998; Knight, 2001). For example, Knight (1997a) describes the internationalization of higher education as "the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching/training, research, and service functions of a university or college or technical institute" (p.29). As such, Altbach (2004b) defines internationalization as "the voluntary and perhaps creative ways of coping [with globalization]" (p.3). Some researchers define it from economic perspectives. Hefferman and Poole (2004) views it as a business model through which organizations increase the scale of their international engagement as experience is enhanced and competencies are developed.

This study identifies the internationalization of higher education as a tool or process to cope with the external force of globalization, which can turn out to be either a threat or an opportunity for higher educational institutions as well as nation-states. It is thus significant for each institution to develop international dimensions in teaching and research and to contribute to meeting the diverse needs of individuals, communities, country and society across sectors (Knight, 2006). Such an attitude towards globalization can be initiated by a strong leadership and strategic policy planning (Altbach, 2004b; de Wit, 2002; Ellingboe, 1996; Harari, 1992; Knight, 1997b) .

Transnational Education

Transnational education refers to education "in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is located" (UNESCO & Council of Europe, 2000). This study uses transnational education as a part of the internationalization of higher education for its diverse forms of educational provision across borders as addressed by Coleman (2003). Although some scholars use the term multinational education to define educational programs and institutions offered outside their home countries (Altbach, 2004b), this paper uses the term transnational education for consistency. This study also uses the terms international-linked program and transnational education programs interchangeably.

Transnational education can be divided into two categories. According to Daniel (2002), some programs are offered by the use of technologies of distance learning. Other programs are offered in a traditional way in which classes are given either by lectures from international partner university or locally hired lecturers. Since each of these two approaches raise different issues, this study focuses on the second

approach of teaching in the classroom setting.

In this study, universities offering a program overseas, such as those in the United States and Australia, are referred to as international partner universities. The educational institutions where the students are located, in this study private institutions in Malaysia, are referred to as local institutions.

Among the growing market in transnational higher education, Malaysia is now perceived as the largest provider (Altbach, 2004c; Tan, 2002), especially in the emergence of private higher education by international-linked programs. Although little consolidated official data are available in terms of institutional and program mobility, public data by the United Kingdom and Australia, the two biggest transnational education providers, shows that around 300,000 international students participate in their transnational programs. The students are concentrated in Asia, mainly from Singapore, Malaysia, and China, and consist of 54 percent of the total (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007, p.25).

Such international-linked programs are now affecting the Malaysian education market as well as other countries in the Asian region. It is also worth noting that they are delivered as a way to meet the demand for higher education as well as making profits (OECD, 2004b). Studying Malaysia as a case study can make a significant contribution to the field of internationalization of higher education.

Transnational Education in Malaysian Context

In the case of Malaysia, private colleges are not allowed to confer their own degrees despite the current educational reform. Therefore, many private colleges are now offering diversified transnational education programs with their international

partner universities, mainly those in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In this paper, international-linked programs refer to twinning programs, credit-transfer programs, and international university branch campuses.

A twinning arrangement allows a local provider to provide whole or part of an international education program that is licensed by his international partner university. Under this twinning arrangement, students are allowed to spend the first part of the program at a private college in Malaysia and to complete the rest of the program at an international partner university. Due to the flexibility of the program terms and student mobility, they are also called 2+1 or 1+2 twinning programs. Since the 1997 Asian economic crisis, the Malaysian government has approved 3+0 twinning arrangements in which the entire programs are taught in Malaysia. Due to its affordability, twinning programs are becoming popular in Malaysia (Lee, 2003).

Other than twinning arrangements, there are currently four international branch campuses in Malaysia, all of which were established right after the 1997 economic crisis. Credit-transfer agreements have also been common among private institutions in Malaysia.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is comprised of six chapters. Chapter II illustrates the current discussion on globalization and its impacts on higher education, followed by the discussion of world system theory to provide a conceptual basis for understanding and analyzing the case study data in the following chapters.

Chapter III describes the internationalization of higher education in Malaysia

since the 1997 economics crisis. This part of the literature review addresses the rationale and context of transnational education including student mobility and government policy in order to sharpen the understanding and analysis of transnational education in Malaysia.

Chapter IV is devoted to explaining the comprehensive approaches to the research design, data collection and data analysis. This includes the discussion of the use of case studies. Chapter V presents the data findings and analysis of each of the sub cases: Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysian Association for Private Colleges and Universities, and two program cases. Finally, the discussion of the data findings and analysis is addressed to answer the research questions in Chapter VI.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

"Any discussion of globalization cannot avoid the deep inequalities that are part of the world system of higher education. Globalization has added a new dimension to existing disparities in higher education" (Altbach, 2004b, p.6).

This chapter provides a review of the literature that is related to globalization and its impacts on higher education, and recent trends and issues of transnational education. This review of the previous studies attempts to define a missing part of the current discussion on transnational education. The literature review also offers a conceptual framework for this study that addresses the complexities of transnational education by using Malaysia as a case-study. The basic framework for conceptual analysis is based on the center-periphery model in higher education.

Globalization and Its Impacts on Higher Education

From the beginning higher educational institutions have been international in scope, accepting international students and scholars, and thus have responded to national realities and international trends(Altbach, 1998). However, the current internationalization of higher education needs to be redefined in a broader context due to the two major forces of globalization and information technology.

These two forces are intertwined and the main resources for the global economy are significant knowledge and information (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002). They have also led many countries to redefine the social role of higher education to "fight to

find its own place in the global order" (Kwiek, 2001, p.36) since those countries who can adapt to a changing climate will be more likely to succeed (Bloom, 2005). In other words, countries who cannot cope with this increasing pressure will be left behind.

Newson (1998) argues that the higher education system is thus closely linked to national strategies for securing markets. It is especially critical for postindustrial nations because "there is a greater dependence on higher education for training and research and greater development than in industrial societies" (Slaughter, 1998, p.47). Economic globalization and information technology have made the situation more complicated in that globalization has a major impact on "providing a ready supply of skilled labor...as a result of the shifts of economic production to knowledge-intensive products and processes" (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002, p.5).

Internationalization is thus regarded as an integrated part of national higher education policy which is essential to develop and transfer knowledge and skills to produce a high-skilled workforce (de Wit, 2002; Ellingboe, 1998; Enders, 2004; Knight, 1999b; Qiang, 2003). de Wit (2002) also argues the changing nature of internationalization as follows:

> ...the globalization of our societies and markets and its impact on higher education and the new knowledge society based on information technology will change higher education profoundly and will also change the nature of internationalization of higher education ... it would be better to speak of a transition to an integrated internationalization of higher education; that is, a response of higher education to globalization and regionalization (p.17).

Such a response to globalization differs from country to country. Some scholars have indicated concerns over the impacts of globalization on national values in that globalization has a "potential threat to the healthy survival of national identity and

culture" (Knight, 1999b, p.18). For example, Malaysia, aiming to be a developed country by the year 2020, emphasizes the importance of maintaining its national identity and its cultural values as well as training a highly skilled labor force (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001).

What is critical in the current discussion of globalization and its impacts on higher education is the growing importance of economic competitiveness (Harari, 1992; Knight, 1997b). Active recruitment of international students is considered in many countries as a way to increase international reserves (Andressen, 1993; Chandler, 1989; Coleman, 2003; de Wit, 2002; Heffernan & Poole, 2005; Marginson, 2002, 2004, August; Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). International students function economically just like exports. Stimulated by the United Kingdom which has been recently active in recruiting students overseas, other neighboring nations in Europe also follow this trend to fulfill the lack of sufficient financial support from the government. This factor of economic competitiveness in the European nations has also made the major English-speaking countries rethink their leading role in higher education and more actively compete with each other across borders (Alderman, 2001; de Wit, 2002).

However, it is quite recent that higher educational institutions are responsible for analyzing their role in the global environment from economic perspectives and bringing together the different isolated components of international education into an integral strategy for their institutions (Chandler, 1999). During the 1990s, some studies identified that most of the higher educational institutions did not have an international strategy for the whole of the institutions (Holzner & Greenwood, 1995). Some researchers argue that there is a lack of research of the long-term and indirect impacts of

active involvement of institutions with internationalization activities (de Wit, 2002).

This integration of economic competitiveness to the educational policy, however, needs to be set in the context of multiple sectors in the society that are rapidly evolving on a global basis since information technology is changing the nature of learning and teaching. Not only is international competition increasing rapidly, its nature is changing significantly. The global education opportunities available across borders will attract many new players, public and private, international and national, with various partnerships and new approaches to delivery. OECD (2004) also states that this growth of diverse players in education has driven a shift to partnerships including economic motives. If such competition is planned in an appropriate manner, it can create better opportunities for various players in higher education, but it needs to be kept in mind that competition also has the potential to threaten a crucial part of the system (Newman & Couturier, 2002).

Higher educational institutions have thus come to depend on and welcome a strong in-flow of international students thus conducting themselves explicitly as "business enterprises" (Alderman, 2001, p.48). Given the growth of global competition, it is essential that policy makers and institutions need to become better informed on possible patterns of demand analytically, particularly as this will facilitate the formulation of investment decisions and internationalization strategies at all organizational levels which will eventually affect the whole society (Enders, 2004).

However, little empirical research has been done to address the long-term impact of current economic competitiveness among higher educational institutions. This

is especially so for the impacts of international competitiveness on local higher education in developing countries, despite some possible concerns over the negative impacts upon the national education system and the marginalization by the values of the other culture in developing countries (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997).

Such economic competitiveness and the role of international students as a source of income have been further escalated by the recent expansion of transnational education. This has brought about other new issues to be considered.

Current Trends and Issues in Transnational Education

International investment in educational services across borders is a rapidly growing phenomenon in the world, especially in the Asian region (Altbach, 2004c; Tan, 2002). It is estimated that the number of students participating in transnational education will increase drastically; the number of international student mobility would increase from 1.8 million in 2000 to 7.2 million in 2020, with students enrolled in transnational program assuming 44% of the market (Bohm, Davis, Meares, & Pearce, 2002). Higher education is thus treated as a profitable product across borders (de Wit, 2002), and universities from the developed countries, mainly from Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, are exploring business opportunities in the developing countries to generate additional income by attracting fee-paying students.

The growing interests in transnational education have also brought forth the issue of quality assurance (Coleman, 2003; Lee, 2004; Tan, 2002). It is often argued that a certain standard for transnational educational needs to be met (Altbach, 2004b), and

some countries and organizations have moved to regulate the quality of transnational education. It is only since the 1990s that an externally and internally administered quality assurance mechanism has emerged. Countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom have set up a quality assurance board for transnational education to maintain the high reputation of their education overseas. Some researchers (Alderman, 2001; Coleman 2003) argue, however, that the quality and the equivalency of transnational education is not solely assured by such an external quality assurance board, but it should be "in the interest in the countries within which the greatest concentration of external programs operate, typically developing countries, to enact regulations" (Coleman, 2003, p.372). In a similar manner, Vita and Case (2003) also question the feasibility of educational programs across borders and the lack of cultural sensitivity in these programs.

At the global level, this growing concern over the quality of higher education services across borders has also been fueled by the GATS which views higher education as a tradable product. This global framework of commerce and exchange in higher education imposed by GATS would remove "aspects of autonomy from decision making concerning education" (Altbach, 2004b, p.18). It would be especially so for developing countries that would be the main target of the product sellers, those in developed countries.

Other concerns imposed by transnational education are identified by other studies (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001), including damage inflicted upon local education systems by international providers, devaluing the host country's national values and priorities, exploitation of local academics and students by international providers, and

more control over education by international providers (p.88).

With regard to cultural issues, UNESCO CEPES and Council of Europe (2001) discuss the cultural issues of transnational education as follows: "transnational education arrangements should encourage the awareness and knowledge of the culture and customs of both the awarding institutions and receiving country among the staff and students" (p.9). Other studies also suggest that students who attend transnational education programs without leaving their home country also experience culture-shock (Pyvis & Chapman, 2005).

Some studies have expressed concerns over the sustainability of transnational education partnerships. Altbach and Teichler (2001) identify six emerging issues as follows:

- Lack of concern for equality of opportunity
- Neglect of features of learning that do not produce market result
- Exploitation, either financially or through poor-quality programs, of foreign students
- Overemphasis on easily marketable products
- Selling of knowledge products to foreigners rather than the efforts toward internationalization and comparative understanding
- The growth of for-profit enterprises delivering easily marketable educational programs, sometimes with little regard for standard or quality (p.21).

What is the common stem of these issues is that they are driven by economic rationales.

It is worth noting that these current studies on transnational education do not address issues of international students attending transnational education in another country and their impact on transnational education. In fact, most of the studies on international students have focused on international student mobility and on orientation to such students, but do not necessarily address the international entrepreneurship of

higher education institutions, programs, and players in a particular regional sphere (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). How do local institutions with international-linked programs attract international students? What attracts international students to study in another country through international-linked programs without going directly to the countries which confer degrees? What kind of difficulties do the local nation and educational institutions face to attract these international students through international-linked programs?

To answer these questions, transnational education in Malaysia will be further analyzed in this research as a case study. Malaysia has been traditionally known as a sending country of students overseas due to the limited access to local higher educational institutions. However, the high cost of studying overseas and the 1997 Asian financial crisis have opened up the market for international education providers. Malaysia is now perceived as a growing market in transnational education. In addition, Malaysia has declared itself to become a regional hub of educational excellence by the year 2020 (Malaysia, 1996b). Transnational education programs thus play a crucial role in attracting international students from the neighboring countries and achieving this target as a regional center. Such emergence of international-linked programs in Malaysia as a case study will provide a deeper perspective as to the future of transnational education worldwide and its possible impacts on higher education. To analyze the issues of transnational education in Malaysia, the next section will provide a conceptual framework: the center and periphery model in higher education.

Conceptual Framework

This section looks at the theoretical context with regard to academic interdependence in higher education in developing countries. The historical analysis of higher education shows that much of the higher educational institutions in the non-western countries have a "European university model imposed on them by colonial masters" (Altbach, 2004b, p.2). Some countries have incurred Western impacts on their education from this colonial period; others, such as Japan and Thailand, have blended the Western model with their domestic higher education. Such Western influence on higher education in the world still prevails despite ideology, economic systems, or historical circumstances (Altbach, 1989). Especially, the academic dominance of the West continues to influence higher education significantly in developing counties, resulting in more dependence on the developed countries for its own development (Shannon, 1989). In order to analyze this academic dependence in higher education, the past research on center-periphery model will be further discussed. This discussion also provides a framework to explain the complexities of issues imposed by the current transnational education.

Center and Periphery in Higher Education

Fargerland and Saha (1989) define development with three dimensions: economic, social/cultural, and political. Economic development is the increase in productivity and efficiency of societies. Social/cultural development is defined as the acceptance of "modern" values and behavior, the meeting of basic human needs, and the increase in the quality of life. Political development is the increase in people's participation in the national and regional decision-making processes and political

stability. Although economic development is only a part of the development of societies, it has been considered a very important part. Given the fact that globalization and information technology are big forces, current higher education is now focusing on economic development to produce a highly skilled labor force.

Such economic development in the developing countries is largely influenced by developed countries. Some researchers argue that economic dependency creates educational and cultural dependency, which then creates technological dependency, which in turn promotes economic dependency and keeps the periphery underdeveloped (Altbach, 1998; Galtung, 1971). As such, the peripheral countries maintain the hierarchical relationship and thus dependent linkages to the economy and culture of the developed countries in the center.

World system theorists have analyzed long-term social changes and economic dependency by combining the studies of inter-societal relationships and the economic and political relations within one global system of a social economy. World system theory describes the global structure by dividing it into three components: the core, the periphery, and the semi-periphery. These three components are unequal but dependent on each other in all the sectors: nevertheless, these inequalities will continue to exist, as a result of which the core will be strengthened and the periphery will be weakened (Shannon, 1989; Wallerstein, 1973).

Such dependent linkage between the countries in the center and the periphery significantly affects higher education since higher education plays a crucial role in developing and transferring knowledge. It is worth noting that it is only quite recent that the center-periphery concept has been discussed with a specific focus on education and

national development (Altbach, 1982, 1998).

A question raised here from this discussion is why this hierarchical pattern or inequality still exists between the center and the periphery or is even getting wider. As a way to address the issue, Altbach (1998) provides fives key aspects that accelerate these inequalities in higher education. The first aspect is the historical influence by a Western tradition on higher education in the periphery countries. Although "many African and Asian countries had a highly developed indigenous education system" (p.25), the educational institutions were based on the Western model. Therefore, no matter how the educational institutions try to meet the local demand, the curriculum, the pedagogical techniques, dynamics of teaching and learning are rooted in the Western perspectives in nature. This prevalence of Western culture in higher education in peripheral countries, both visible and invisible, may make it difficult to adjust to the rapid changes by the global economic forces.

The second aspect is that the language used in higher education as a medium of instruction imposed by the colonial authorities (Altbach, 1998, p.25). These languages were mainly English and French. By using the colonial language as a language of instruction at school, those in the periphery were trained to get accustomed to their language and the knowledge conveyed by them. Altbach states that the use of these languages in the periphery countries has been a cultural, political and academic pushing factor for students to seek higher education in the center.

Although some countries have attempted to use their indigenous languages as a medium of instruction in higher education, they are facing difficulties in holding onto their language policy. For example, higher educational institutions in Malaysia have

used Bahasa Melayu, a local language, as a medium of instruction, since the 1980s. It was a part of "restructuring Malaysian society and eliminating the identification of ethnic community with economic functions" (Lee, 1999a). With the growing needs of English, the Malaysian government is facing a twofold dilemma: the need to instruct in Bahasa Melayu as a point of national unity and cultural values alongside the dominance of English as an economic tool.

Such a twofold dilemma to meet local and international needs in education is related to the third aspect, the role of the periphery countries as knowledge consumers (Altbach, 1998). The developed countries in the center have produced most of the world's knowledge, research and technological innovations. They transmit this knowledge through books, journals, and the Internet, most of which are predominantly published in English (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). As such, they export this knowledge to the periphery countries that could eventually change their way of thinking and teaching. This cycle of knowledge distribution has created a framework in which developed countries are intellectual "centers" and the others, in a sense, "peripheral" in this international knowledge system (Altbach, 1982). The increased cost of research has also created more diverse inequalities between knowledge consumers and knowledge producers who benefit from the various resources including funding, library resources, and accessibility to the information by the Internet (Altbach, 2004b). As a result of inequalities between knowledge distributors in the center and knowledge consumers in the periphery, "the poor will, in general, remain poor" (Altbach, 1998, p. 35).

The fourth aspect addresses the means through which knowledge is distributed and controlled by the developed countries in the center (Altbach, 1998). As stated above,

the main journals, research, and e-resources are predominantly from the developed countries in the center where English is widely used. Countries and academic institutions which have a limited access or are unable to pay for access to these academic resources are likely to be left behind from the academic network. Altbach (1998) uses Japan as an example to show the continuing Western academic and scientific impacts on its education in which English is used as a most dominant language for the distribution of scientific knowledge. Asia, including Japan, will thus need to relate to scientific developments in the West and will depend on Western science to provide paradigms and models (Altbach, 1989, 1998). Altbach (1982) also states that the control of communication by the academic dominance in the center is considerable and thus affects the academic dependence by the countries in the periphery. This has been further fueled by the dominance of the English language as a global communication tool and the development of information technology.

The last aspect is the historical trend of international student mobility from the periphery to the center (Altbach, 1998, p.27). This one-way student flow also contributes to branding the education of the center among the countries in the periphery. Students who studied overseas in the Western education system and returned to their home countries with Western pedagogical skills have various impacts on their home educational environment. Even those academics who have migrated keep a close academic tie with academics in their home countries by visiting their home countries for lectures and joint research with their colleagues at home (Altbach, 2004b; Choi, 1995). The use of the Internet has made this close tie easier and useful; this has also made the dependence higher. In other words, those who do not have the Internet will be more

likely to be left out in the periphery, creating more inequalities in the long run.

Again, these are five key factors identified by Altbach (1998) that accelerate inequalities in higher education:1) the historical influence by a Western tradition on higher education in the periphery countries, 2) the language for instruction at higher education level imposed by the colonial authorities, 3) the role of the periphery countries as knowledge consumers, 4) the means through which knowledge is distributed and controlled by the developed countries in the center, and 5) the historical trend of international student mobility from the periphery to the center.

These are helpful to explain the continuing inequalities between the center and the periphery in higher education. As mentioned above, it can be said that globalization and information technology have deepened the inequalities while the center and the periphery are becoming more inter-dependent (Barnett, Jacobson, Choi, & Sun, 1996).

Some researchers hold the view that higher education creates only consumers of Western products and research orientations, not contributors to national development (Frank, 1971; Galtung, 1971). Dependency theories suggest that the cause of underdevelopment is the international linkage between the core and the periphery. The imposed Western system did not have a social reproduction function within the country. Instead it nurtured the colonial elites who could serve the core. For dependency theories, there is no possibility that the elites, who were educated in the history and language of the core, could lead the independent development of the periphery. However, the current development of information technology and globalization is now creating the "new era of knowledge interdependence" (Altbach, 2004b) and is affecting higher education in developing countries in various ways.

Such knowledge dependence is examined in other studies on international student mobility in a context of the global political and economic interactions (Barnett et al., 1996; Barnett & Wu, 1995). Their studies on international student mobility indicate that countries in the core and the periphery tend to remain in the same positions in the world system by sending students from the periphery to the center, and thus widen the gap of wealth and technology. Likewise, Chen and Barnett (2000) apply the world system theory to international student mobility by saying that "countries that hold the resources and knowledge desired by others stay at the center of the world system" (p.437). This statement might be true to some extent, but it seems to lack the complexities of international student mobility, especially those in transnational educational programs. It does not explicitly include student mobility in transnational educational programs and its impacts on the world system. It is thus doubtful whether this would actually measure the knowledge dependence between the center and the periphery.

New Dimensions in the Center-Periphery Dynamics from Transnational Education

The world is becoming steadily more interdependent due to the growing global economy. So are educational institutions. Educational institutions are beginning to realize that international interdependence is a present reality, bringing about diverse responses to the institutions (Altbach, 1998; de Wit, 2002). Recent research by Altbach (2004a) identifies transnational education as a growing response for institutions to cope with such global force, which brings an additional aspect to his analysis on the continuing effect on the center-periphery concept.

Transnational education does not only deal with student mobility, but also with

institutional or program mobility across borders. Some transnational agreements enable students to earn international degrees at local institutions without going to the universities that confer degrees. In the case of Malaysia, by participating in international-linked programs in Malaysia, students from neighboring countries can obtain internationally-recognized degrees at a much lower cost as well as improving their English proficiency.

Such educational convenience across borders brings more concerns in the center-periphery dynamic as Altbach states that the worlds of center and periphery grow even more complex (2004b). Such international-linked programs are dominated by the partner universities or institutions in the developed countries with regards to curriculum and teaching materials, and there is little collaboration in the creation of new curriculum and structures between local institutions and international partner universities (Altbach, 2004b; Lee, 1997).

As such, most of the international-linked programs offered in countries like Malaysia are offered in English, a language of the partner universities in developed countries, in order to attract international students unwilling to learn the local language and to thus enable them to work in an international business sector where English is widely spoken (Altbach, 2004b). Countries or institutions that use English benefit significantly from the widespread use of the language for the academic field (Forest, n.d.; Marginson, 2004, August). Even many countries in the EU are offering English-medium courses to increase student mobility within the region. The current dominant status of English as a universal academic language is thus another factor for the complexity of the center-periphery dynamics. The advancement of information

technology has also made English a dominant language for economic, political, and academic purposes. Altbach (2004b) states that universities from Australia and the United Kingdom are the most active players in transnational education in Southeast Asia.

The expansion of transnational education within a short period of time since the 1990s has created some other issues of low quality, poor supervision, and insufficient communication between the providers and host institutions. Despite these concerns, the universities are seeking educational and economic opportunities in the region for various reasons. One of the reasons is that recruiting local teaching staff is easier in this region where English is widely spoken. Thus they can offer programs at lower cost because they do not have to send their staff to Malaysia (Sugimoto, 2005). This rationale is also supported by Bennell and Pearce's study (1998, September) that international partner universities have selected countries for international-linked programs where English is either the official medium of instruction or widely used at the educational level. Another reason for Malaysia to attractive interests of international universities in transnational education is that Malaysia has sent many students overseas in the past and those returnees educated overseas, mainly in Western developed countries, have an impact on continuing links with international universities and implementing a Western academic orientation (Altbach, 1998).

As can be seen from this trend of active involvement in transnational education programs, a primary goal for international partner universities and local institutions is to make a financial profit (Alderman, 2001; Altbach, 2004b). It is especially so for universities in the developed countries which offer programs across borders. Alderman

(2001) states as follows; "Franchising enables originators of goods and services to permit independent companies to deliver the same goods or services, under the same brand names, in return for a fee, or a share of the profits" (p.48). OECD (2004b) identifies that such commercial arrangements in education are becoming prominent in the Asia-Pacific region (p.12).

However, there is an economic pitfall if the universities or educational institutions have little expertise in leadership and institutional strategies for international-linked arrangements. This may result in creating additional financial deficits. According to Buckell (2002), the South African campus of Monash University, Australia, has accumulated a deficit of $20 million and is striving to recruit more students to repay the deficit by the year 2008. This economic pitfall would be easy for any institution to fall into in the force of globalization.

As a current phenomenon of internationalization of higher education, some countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom are actively involved in opening up branch campuses and, in some cases, arranging educational programs with partner institutions overseas. Altbach (1998) points out that these programs are offered in countries where local demand for higher education is high but the supply does not meet it. It is because "academic degrees from the 'center' are valued at the 'periphery' " (p.xx). Such dilemma has created more unequal environment in the periphery, making the center-periphery dynamics even more complex.

Given the complicated nature of the centers and the peripheries in the international academic world, Altbach (1998) indicates that the center-periphery model reflects the difficulties for developing countries to make the transition from the

periphery to the center in the current world by saying "a seemingly simple goal of removing inequalities as a part of a commitment to a new international order is extraordinary difficult" (p.34).

However, local higher educational institutions may be in the periphery in the international system, but are clearly central in their own society to meet the local needs. By recognizing their local needs from global perspectives, higher educational institutions and educational policy can create larger political, social, and economic impacts on the society in the international context. At the same time, the knowledge-based economy has created pressure for higher educational institutions to educate people for the new economy and to create new knowledge (Alderman, 2001; Altbach, 1998). Transnational education in some Asian countries is thus seen as an effective role for economic development (OECD, 2004b).

Given the economic and educational concerns of creating highly skilled personnel in many countries, the Malaysian government have also realized that increased human capital investment in knowledge creation is required for national competitiveness in the global economy (Bjarnason, 2004). It is especially so in higher education in that knowledge in higher education plays a fundamental role in providing economic growth and wide learning opportunities. King (2004) identifies that the scale of productivity has switched from the tangible factors of production including land, capital, and machinery to individuals for national development. Therefore, national development requires and depends on highly-trained, skilled persons willing to adapt to such change. This statement in economic development is not necessarily restricted to the nation-states, but also to the regions.

The question raised here from this discussion is how the countries and higher educational institutions in the periphery can cope with the force of globalization. One of the most critical issues in changing the dynamics of higher education to deal with such global force is the internationalization of higher education (Knight, 1997b). The central part in the discussion on internationalization is the relationship between the center and the periphery in the global arena. However, the current situation enforced by globalization and information technology has created an opportunity for countries in the periphery to be a center in the periphery. As Forest (n.d.) describes, regional interdependence is taking place in the field of higher education (p.5).

The concept of a regional center has been discussed in other research, also referred to as a "peripheral center" (Altbach, 1998, p.28). Altbach points out that some peripheral universities, such as the University of Nairobi, the University of Cairo, and the University of Delhi, have served national and regional needs and gained more financial attention from international aid donors. By so doing, these universities have achieved an international standard of teaching and research as a peripheral center.

However, the current phenomenon of transnational education gives another dimension to the center-periphery dynamics. As stated above, Malaysia is now perceived as the largest provider among the growing market in transnational education and attracts many educational programs from Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States. Through these partnerships, both Malaysian institutions and international partner universities can make financial profits by recruiting students locally and from the neighboring regions. Such a growth of transnational education in Malaysia can attribute to the common interests that each stakeholder on both sides share; the

recruitment of international students and national economic interests. Qiang (2003) identifies that these two are push factors affecting the current internationalization of higher education. The uses of technologies in the delivery of education and the active involvement of the private sector with higher education in Malaysia make it easier for international educational providers to explore educational opportunities in Malaysia. Such a win-win relationship has a positive impact on the current spread of transnational education (Davis et al., 2000).

This win-win relationship in the discussion of the center-periphery dynamics does not necessarily include international students from the neighboring region. Other researchers have identified academic and financial merit for international students —students are able to attain an internationally-recognized degree at a lower cost in Malaysia. However, little research has been done on the international students taking international-linked programs in Malaysia and its long-term impact of recruiting students from the neighboring region on the current expansion of transnational education.

Likewise, Marginson and Rhoades (2002) identify the limitation of the current framework for conceptualizing transnational activities in higher education and its limited analysis of players involved, claiming that the current framework does not fully address the local and regional dimensions:

> "In all the attention devoted to the general national character of higher education systems and of organizations within them, there is too little exploration of local demands and variations within nations, and of the ways in which local institutions extend their activities beyond national boundaries" (p.285).

Another issue that needs to be considered is how transnational education will define regionalization in the Malaysian context since regionalization can be interpreted in two different ways (Enders, 2004). Regionalization can be described as a process of growing regional co-operation or even integration on equal terms at all levels and sectors, such as institutional partnership across borders. This applies to the current phenomena of student mobility in the European Union. On the other hand, another part of regionalization can be interpreted as "part and parcel of the globalization process, establishing co-operation among neighbors in order to counteract the pressure from other parts of the world" (Enders, 2004). This concept of regionalization in the Malaysian context seems critical in addressing the center-periphery dynamics to understand in depth the Malaysian drive to be a "regional" center of education.

Conclusion

Education plays an important role in distributing all modes of ideas to students (Silva, 1980). Above all, higher education plays a crucial role in producing and disseminating knowledge. With the force of globalization and information technology emerged, higher education is now required more than ever to meet the local and global demand to produce knowledge and supply highly skilled personnel. In order to respond to such external forces, governments as well as educational institutions have identified internationalization of higher education as an important component. What is worth noting is the growing economic competitiveness in higher education. Such economic competitiveness has been further fueled by the current expansion of transnational education.

A review of the literature suggests that the current discussion on transnational education is based on economic merit. This is related to the fact that the internationalization of higher education is stimulated by the economic competitiveness as described above. This review also indicates that the main stakeholders discussed in the internationalization of higher education and transnational educations include two sets of center-periphery dynamics: international partner universities and local educational institutions, and local government and governments in other countries. Such limited units of analysis for international higher education may limit the possible analysis and discussion.

The discussion for the center-periphery model in higher education, a main theoretical framework for this study, explains the inequalities in the higher education in the world and the limited scope of the current center-periphery dynamics. As Altbach (1998) stated, "...the nature of peripherality varies. Those in authority, at both government and in the universities, should also have a consciousness of the nature of the center-periphery relationship" (p.35).

It is thus important to extend the research focus to the activities of transnational education in a regional sphere by local players, such as international students, because these local players shape the current research and take us "beyond nation-states, national markets, and national systems and institutions of higher education to consider organizational agencies and human agency at various levels" (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002).

However, the current discussion of transnational education does not include international students as an important player to affect the sustainability of transnational

education. Given the fact that international-linked programs in Malaysia have been attracting students from the neighboring region due to their affordability and marketability, it is important to consider the possible impacts of international students on the current expansion of transnational education.

In addition, Malaysia is trying to become a regional center of educational excellence by attracting students from the neighboring regions to the international-linked programs rather than locally-owned programs at public higher education institutions which are conducted in Bahasa Melayu. This also creates another dynamic of center-periphery, Malaysia and its neighboring countries, which needs to be considered for further analysis.

CHAPTER III

EXPANSION OF TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA

"Globalization need not mean a borderless world. The borders could still be there and should be respected... The market is not interested in the social consequences of maximizing profits...The regulation of the market must remain the responsibility of governments. Governments, whether democratic or not, must care for the whole nation" (Mahathir, 2002, p.69).

Introduction

Under the strong leadership of Mahathir, a former prime minister of Malaysia, who initiated the vision 2020 and introduced the regional center of educational excellence target, higher education in Malaysia has embarked on a new phase of producing the number and the quality of high-skilled personnel needed for a nation to survive and secure its economic presence in the global market.

This chapter highlights the recent trends of higher education in Malaysia with a specific focus on the internationalization since the 1997 economic crisis. The purpose of this chapter is to examine factors that are affecting the expansion of transnational education and international education recruitment efforts in Malaysia since 1997. This is aimed at providing the background of transnational education in Malaysia for the analysis in the following chapters.

Higher Education Reforms in Malaysia since the 1990s

Malaysia has implemented higher educational reform since the mid-1990s to provide for a highly skilled workforce to meet the demand of the global society and also as a means to become a developed country by 2020 (Malaysia, 1996b). Malaysia has also opened up its market to international education providers in order to achieve its international presence as a regional center of education by 2010.

Prior to that, the reform was focused primarily on poverty reduction and the restructuring of the society under a comprehensive policy framework, the New Economic Policy (de Micheaux, 1997, September). During the period of the New Economic Policy, 1970 to 1990, the access to higher education was a means of "restructuring Malaysian society and eliminating the identification of ethnic community with economic functions" (Lee, 1999a).

The elimination of economic disparity among the ethnic groups has been a main focus in Malaysian education since the racial riots of 1969. Since then, the use of Bahasa Melayu as a main language for instruction and the racial quota system to the admission have been implemented at public higher education institutions.

In 1971, right after the 1969 racial riot, the Constitution Bill required all public universities to convert their medium of instruction from English to Bahasa Melayu by 1983 which aimed at achieving national and ethnic identity and an indigenous knowledge culture (Lee, 2004). English was thus completely phased out as the medium of instruction in favor of Bahasa Melayu in 1983 (Singh, 1996; Tan, 2002).

The quota system for the admission to public higher education institutions base on ethnic composition is aimed at reflecting the ethnic composition of the nation. This

racial quota system has enabled more Bumiputra[1] students to gain access to higher education in the public sector and to better-paid jobs. This system is modeled after the ethnic composition of the Malaysian population. In 1985, the portion of enrollments in the degree programs at public higher education institutions by ethnic group was as follows: Bumiputra (63.0%), Chinese (29.7%), and Tamil (6.5%) while the relevant data before the racial quota system were 35.6%, 52.9%, and 11.5% respectively (Lee, 2004, p.228). Therefore, one of the major roles of Malaysian education has long been to promote national unity and fill in the economic gaps among the different ethnic groups (Lee, 1999c).

Since the 1990s, however, there has been a shift for educational policy towards human resource development, to fulfill Malaysia's goal of becoming a developed country by the year 2020. In order to achieve this benchmark, the New Economic Policy was replaced by the National Development Plan (1990-2110), which is an initial policy framework and is known as Vision 2020. Vision 2020 has identified nine goals to be achieved by 2020:

1. To establish a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny.
2. To create a psychologically liberated, secure, and developed Malaysian society.
3. To foster a democratic society.
4. To establish a full moral and ethical society.
5. To establish a mature, liberal and tolerant society.
6. To establish a scientific and progressive society.
7. To establish a fully caring society and a caring culture.
8. To ensure an economically just society.
9. To establish a prosperous society.

(Mahathir, 1991, pp.2-4 cited from Lee, 1999c)

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[1] Bumiputra means "native of the soil" in Bahasa Melayu.

To achieve these goals, higher education has put more emphasis on developing human resources in addition to promoting ethical and moral unity.

Due to the racial quota system to public higher education institutions, private higher education in Malaysia has long been known for supplementing educational opportunities for those local students who failed their public university entrance examination. Despite the gradual increase of admission to local public institutions, the increased acceptance rate does not meet the growing demand of the increased number of candidates[2]. Another option for those who did not gain admission to public institutions, mainly Chinese and Tamil students, has long been to seek education overseas in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States.

However, the 1997 economic crisis has changed the climate of higher education in which human resource development is crucial for Malaysia to develop and survive economically in the global society. Given the effects of globalization on higher education and the labor market, the Malaysian government has put priority on information technology in education and training to meet the demands for high skilled manpower in new skill areas at the higher level (Malaysia, 1996b, p.315). In order to provide a highly skilled labor force, the Malaysian government has been encouraging more active participation of the private sector in higher education including transnational education since the mid-1990s.

As stated in the Ninth Malaysian Plan (2006-2010), the Malaysian government identifies education as a crucial factor for developing human capital, which is one of the

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[2] The recent data shows that 40,016 of 63,158 qualified candidates were offered places in the public higher educational institutions, the distribution of which by ethnicity was Bumiputra 24,957(62.4%), Chinese 12,616 (31.5%), and Tamil 2,443 (6.11%) (EXPAM, 2006).

key emphases in the plan. The government has estimated in the plan that RM 50 billion would be invested in education infrastructure. In the past few years, the Malaysia government has been emphasizing education by providing higher budgets for education, no less than 23 percent of the country's state budget (*the Jakarta Post*, June 11, 2006).

To train and develop human resources locally, the Malaysian government has deregulated both private and public sectors since the economic crisis in order to increase the access to higher education locally available. Prior to the mid-1990s, any private sector was able to establish an educational institution. However, the Essential (Higher Education Institutions) Regulations of 1969 did not allow these private institutions to confer degrees nor did it allow any foreign universities to establish branch campuses within the nation (Lee, 2001, p.2).

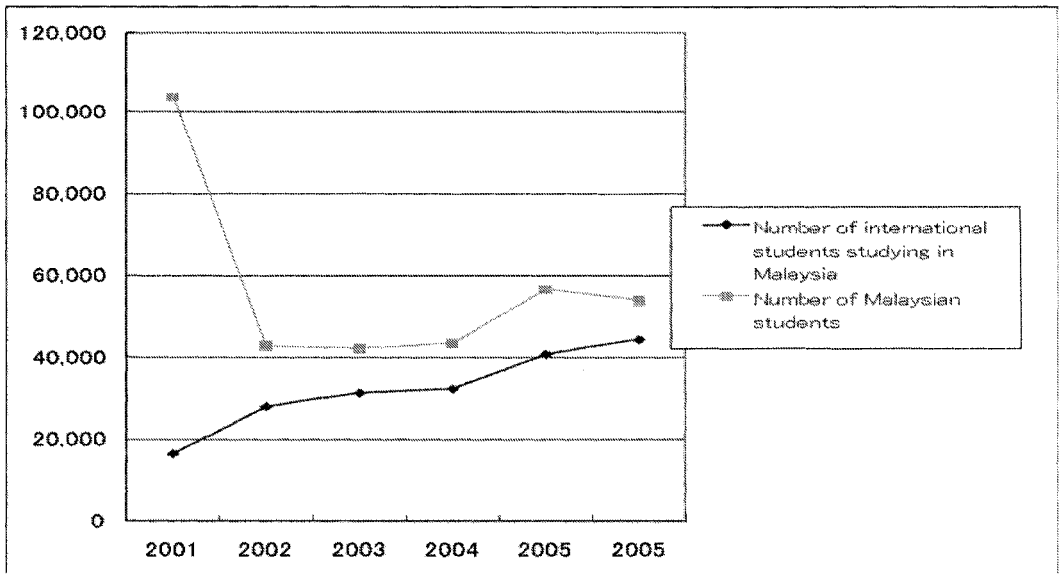
In 1996, the Malaysian government passed three educational laws "towards market-based policies that aim at increasing the range of choices for students and addressing the needs of an increasingly complex social order" (Lee, 2004, p.233): the National Council on Higher Education Act, the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act, and the National Accreditation Board Act. These laws have allowed private educational providers to set up local private universities and to upgrade colleges to a university status as well as opening up the education market.

One of the biggest changes that are relevant to this study is the opening up of the local education market to international education providers that leads to the expansion of transnational education. This change is manifesting a rapid growth in terms of the number of students as well as the number of private higher educational institutions. Between 1986 and 2005, the number of private higher education

institutions rose from 50 to 539, more than a tenfold increase, most of which offer international-linked programs (Arachi, 2005).

It is also worth noting that since the economic crisis the Malaysian government has changed its focus which was sending to now attracting international students to Malaysia. Malaysia has long been known for sending their students overseas. The number of Malaysian students studying overseas reached around 68,000 at the university level in 1985, which was almost equivalent to that of students at local universities (Lee, 1999b). In 1986, Malaysia was ranked as the second highest country in the number of students they sent overseas to study (UNESCO, 1986). However, such high reliance on educational opportunities overseas was greatly affected during the 1997 Asian economic crisis, leading to the devaluation of Malaysian currency and to the expansion of transnational education in Malaysia, in order to prevent the outflow of Malaysian currency. Right after the economic crisis, the number of Malaysian students overseas dropped drastically with a gradual increase of international students as shown in Figure 3-1 .

Figure 3-1 Number of Students Inbound/Outbound



(based on the data from the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia)

For those Malaysian students who returned to Malaysia without completing their studies overseas, the Malaysian government started liberalizing the private higher education and opening up its education market to international education providers for diversified international-linked programs. From this experience, the Malaysian government has learned to develop local education opportunities and to attract local and international students to prevent the outflow of international currencies. Thus, the economic crisis has changed Malaysia's focus on internationalization towards attracting international students in order to gain more international currencies.

In addition, Malaysia has also decided to promote herself as an educational hub, as stated in the Ninth Malaysian Plan (2006), with a target number of 100,000 international students by the year 2010:

> Efforts will be intensified to develop Malaysia into a regional center for educational excellence in education and training through smart

> public-private partnerships. A dedicated agency will be established to promote and export higher education through more strategic marketing and branding of educational products in order to attract a target of 100,000 foreign students at all levels including the school level by 2010. Private education and training providers will be required to enhance their quality as well as specialize and offer more high-end courses with competitive fee structures to attract foreign students (p.258).

Transnational education programs are thus seen by the Malaysian government as a vital role in attracting international students. They are also crucial in preventing the outflow of Malaysian currency by providing local students with more programs leading to international degrees. The question raised here is why transnational education is expanding so rapidly. The next section examines some key factors affecting the current expansion of transnational education in Malaysia.

Key Factors for the Expansion of Transnational Education

The emergence of transnational education programs is related to the growth of private higher education in Malaysia over the last decade as they are offered mainly at private higher educational institutions. There are some key factors that have affected this expansion. First, the access to local public higher education was limited despite the huge intake of secondary education in the 1980s and 1990s (Lee, 2001: Tan, 2002). This is also attributed to the racial quota system of public higher education institutions. It is estimated that about 80 percent of each year's cohort in the 1980s were not able to gain a place in the local universities as stated in the previous sections (Ghani, 1990, p.7).

Second, the relevant literature shows that transnational education in Malaysia is

no exception under the influence of two external forces like any other country: globalization and information technology (Lee, 2004; Tan, 2002). As stated by Carnoy and Rhoten (2002), these two are intertwined and the main resources for the global economy are significant knowledge and information. These penetrating forces have also led Malaysia to redefine the social role of higher education to "fight to find its own place in the global order" (Kwiek, 2001, p.36). Newson (1998) also argues that in the era of globalization, the higher education system is closely linked to national strategies for securing markets. It is especially critical for post-industrial nations like Malaysia because "there is a greater dependence on higher education for training and research and greater development than in industrial societies" (Slaughter, 1998, p.47).

Such external forces have created a growing demand for particular skills such as business and computer skills that graduates with an international degree from a transnational education program may have more advantages over those from the public universities where Bahasa Melayu is used as a main language for instruction (Lee, 1999c, p. 90). In reality, most of the Malaysian graduates from public universities are likely to get employed in the public sector while those from overseas and transnational education programs are employed in the private sector.

In regard to particular skills, the use of English as a medium of instruction at a transnational education program is also a crucial factor for attracting students (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001). Along with the government effort in preserving national identity and values by offering Bahasa Melayu-medium programs at public higher education institutions, there is more emphasis than ever on improving the English proficiency. Like any other country, English is perceived as a critical tool to compete

effectively with other English-speaking countries (OECD, 2004a). With the growing demand of English, the Ninth Economic Plan (2006) explicitly states that the higher education institutions should increase the "proficiency of students in English and enhance their ability to access knowledge and undertake research" (p.257).

Thus it is often said that transnational education programs in the private sector are more sensitive to the market demands compared to public higher education programs. It is also argued that "public universities have been accused of being slow to respond to these [socioeconomic] changes" (Tan, 2002, p.10) and that attracting international students to study in Malaysian higher educational institutions is "seemingly incompatible with the inability of local universities" (Neville, 1998, p.269). Table 3-1 shows that the number of international students at private institutions is almost fivefold that found in public institutions. Since international students at private institutions take international-linked programs, this data shows the importance of transnational education programs in Malaysia for attracting international students.

Table 3-1 Number of International Students at Public and Private Higher Institutions

Year	Enrollment				Total	%
	Public	Increase from the previous year (%)	Private	Increase from the previous year (%)		
2000	3,764	-	15,003	-	18,767	-
2001	3,039	-19.26	13,475	-10.18	16,514	-12.01
2002	5,195	70.94	22,827	69.4	28,022	69.69
2003	6,130	18	25,158	10.21	31,288	11.66
2004	6,315	3.02	25,939	3.1	32,254	3.09
2005	7,656	21.24	33,093	27.58	40,749	26.34

Source: Data Unit, Ministry of Higher Education (based on the number of student passes issued by the Ministry of Immigration)

Malaysian International Students Strategies

To make Malaysia an educational hub in the region, activities to promote Malaysian education overseas have been increasing since 1998 (Kasim, 2001). The Malaysian government established five Malaysian Education Promotion Centers (MEPC) located in Beijing, Jakarta, Ho Chi Minh City, and Dubai (Sugimura, 2006). The MEPC, which is under the Ministry of Higher Education, is aimed at providing a service to prospective international students by giving information on education and culture to promote Malaysia as a study destination. It is also responsible for branding Malaysian education overseas. Other than that, the Malaysian government has been organizing educational promotion fairs overseas since 1998 that include Brunei, Indonesia, Thailand, Pakistan, Vietnam, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, South Africa

and Kenya (Kasim, 2001, p.5).

Furthermore, another governmental agency, the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE), is also responsible for promoting Malaysian education services abroad. MATRADE is operated under the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, the aim of which is to promote Malaysian products overseas. It is interesting to note that this agency is not affiliated with the Ministry of Higher Education, indicating that education services has been treated as a profitable product to benefit to the national interests.

The Ministry of Higher Education has been collaborating with *StudyMalaysia.com* to provide more information on Malaysia as a study destination. *StudyMalaysia.com* was set up by Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities (MAPCU) to promote on-line provision of services on Malaysian educational opportunities.

With this strong initiative by the Malaysian government to be a regional hub of education, the number of international students reached 36,000 in 2002, which means that the number has tripled since 1998 (Sugimura, 2005, May). One of the major attractions for international students to study in Malaysia is the low cost of living and education. Most of these students are enrolled in transnational education courses or at the new private universities through which Western degrees are conferred (Lee, 1999b).

As shown in Table 3-2, the biggest groups of international students in Malaysia are from China and Indonesia. It is largely due to the similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds to Malaysia. It is also interesting to note that seven out of the top ten

countries are Muslim countries.

Table 3-2 Number of International Students by Country in Higher Education Sector

No.	County of Origin	Institutions		Total
		Public	Private	
1	China	223	9,035	9,258
2	Indonesia	1,938	5,362	7,300
3	Bangladish	209	5,525	5,734
4	Pakistan	128	1,819	1,947
5	Yemen	446	1,073	1,519
6	India	164	997	1,161
7	Iran	398	741	1,139
8	Thailand	543	501	1,044
9	Sudan	362	428	790
10	Maldives	119	645	764
	Total	7,655	33,903	41,559

Note: based on the data as of 31 December, 2005
Source: Department of Immigration, Malaysia

Such a focus on international student recruitment by the Malaysian international education policy is relevant to the other countries in which economic competitiveness is a major rationale for internationalization. A comparative study of international students' policy by country indicates that Malaysia's international students' policy is not geared towards mutual understanding, but as a tool to compete economically with other countries in the Asia-Pacific region (Sugimura, 2005, May).

A financial aspect of attracting international students to Malaysia is also clearly stated in the Seventh Malaysian Plan (1996); "the reduced dependence on foreign education and the expected increase in foreign students pursuing degree level courses in the country, will help to reduce the deficit in the balance of payment" (Malaysia, 1996b). Therefore, the current international student policy of Malaysia is similar to that of Australia and the United Kingdom, whose international students' recruitment policies are initiated by the government for economic and financial benefits.

Conclusion

This chapter describes the higher education reform since 1997 as background to understand the expansion of transnational education in the Malaysian context. Before the 1997 economic crisis, there were only a few public universities and no private universities due to regulations of the Malaysian government. However, the economic crisis has challenged the Malaysian government to deregulate the education laws in order to open up its education market to both local and international education providers. What is noticeable after the economic crisis is that the Malaysian government has placed more emphasis on training highly skilled manpower locally in addition to promoting national identity, one of the ultimate goals of Malaysia. Another challenge is Malaysia's vision to become an international hub of education by 2010, despite being known for the large number of Malaysian students that have left to study overseas.

From the brief description of higher education in Malaysia since the 1990s, it is not surprising that Malaysia has been undergoing tremendous changes to meet internal and external needs. As a means to meet such needs, transnational education is crucial for providing educational opportunities for both Malaysian and international students from the region. This discussion also raises some issues whether the rapid expansion of transnational education and the increased number of international students will have any long-term impact on Malaysian education. These issues are further addressed in this research.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter illustrates the methods used to address the research questions on the current transnational education situation in Malaysia. The sources of data for this study include documentary data and interview data from two programs at private higher education institutions in Malaysia and other key stakeholders in transnational education in Malaysia. A brief description of data collection and data analysis is included in this chapter. Some concerns over the use of the qualitative approach are also taken into consideration.

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

The primary approach of this research is the qualitative paradigm using the case study strategy. This approach is useful in that this study attempts to describe the current phenomena of transnational education in Malaysia and to identify the challenge it faces, as described in the previous chapters. Based on the literature review and conceptual framework, I have identified five research questions as follows:

1. What is the current status of transnational education in Malaysia?
2. Why do international students choose Malaysia as their study destination?
3. How do international-linked programs identify and respond to the needs of international students in Malaysia?
4. What are the major challenges of transnational education in Malaysia that influence

its sustainability and effectiveness?

5. What are the theoretical implications?

I have adopted a qualitative research design to guide this study. Qualitative research focuses on experiences and situations to understand their context in depth. Through this, the researchers grasp the process that people use to construct meanings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003). Qualitative research assumes that reality is "multi-layered and complex" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Thus, quantitative researchers focus on inquiries for explanation and control while qualitative researchers focus on inquiries for investigating the complex interrelationships and meanings in contexts (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Stake, 1995).

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define five features as key components of qualitative research (p. 4). The first component is that qualitative research is naturalistic. The qualitative research uses actual setting as the direct field of study to observe in depth what is happening there. Secondly, qualitative research is descriptive in that the data collected takes the rich form of words and pictures that are taken from interview transcripts, personal notes, and other records. Third, qualitative research focuses more on process rather than outcomes. The fourth feature of qualitative research is inductive: the theory is developed based on the data collected. Thus, it does not necessarily require and prove a hypothesis before entering the field under study. Rather this study aims at providing possible emerging themes or perspectives to the current theoretical framework discussed in the previous chapter. Lastly, Bogdan and Biklen state that

meaning is the primary concern to the qualitative approach since the researchers are interested in how different people interpret their reality. These general characteristics of qualitative research have been often discussed by other researchers, as well (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998).

On the other hand, qualitative research is often criticized for its subjectivity since the data analysis is largely affected by the fact that researchers are the key instrument for analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Therefore, all the data are filtered through the researchers' worldviews, values, and perspectives. Such subjectivity is not seen as a disadvantage by qualitative researchers, but as an essential element of understanding the meanings of the study (Stake, 1995). In this regard, many researchers have addressed essential characteristics of qualitative researchers. For example, Merriam (1998) states that sensitivity, tolerance for ambiguity, and communication skills are three main components that qualitative researchers should have (p. 20).

These characteristics of qualitative research are appropriate for addressing my research questions in three ways. First, this study focuses on the current trend of transnational education in Malaysia where complex context needs to be explored. As stated above, qualitative research is suitable for describing the context in depth and understanding the holistic nature of complex situations. Second, the purpose of my research is to understand how transnational education programs available in Malaysia will affect the local education contexts including international student recruitment/services. This is related to Malaysia's challenge to be a regional education hub by the year 2020. Qualitative research is thus appropriate for exploring the

perspectives and experiences of various actors involved in transnational education. Lastly, qualitative research design is suitable for my research to develop a theoretical implication based on data collected in an inductive way.

This study uses a multiple case-study design to address the research questions. The rationale for choosing a case-study design is that the main purpose of this study is to describe in-depth a particular context of transnational education in Malaysia. Stake (1995) defines case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). Therefore, the case study strategy allows researchers to retain the "holistic and meaning characteristic of real-life events" (Yin, 2003, p. 2).

Another rationale for choosing a case study design is that it is also useful in examining contemporary events (Yin, 2003, p. 7). Case-study methods are beneficial for addressing questions about process, how or why something is happening (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Therefore, a rich description of the subject is of much significance, which thus does not require any hypothesis to be deducted from theory to guide the research (Merriam, 1998).

This study used two transnational education programs as a case since the results from multiple cases is considered to be more robust (Yin, 2003). Yin also indicates that the logic underlying the multiple-case studies is replication, not sampling, which needs special attention for its research design. Replication is divided into two types: one is a literal replication by which researchers will predict similar findings and the other is a theoretical replication by which researchers can predict contrasting findings. This study thus attempts to follow a replication while predicting possible

complex situations or modification of research design.

Possible Concerns over the Case Study Methods

What is often discussed in regard to the case study method is the issue of generalizability. External validity is related to the generalizability of the study's findings. Yin (2003) states that case studies rely on analytical generalization, as a result of which the researcher is trying to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory (p. 37). Stake (1995) also argues that a few cases in the study do not necessarily bring forth a new generalization, but add or redefine the understanding
(p. 8). While quantitative research focuses on finding the most general and pervasive explanatory relationships, qualitative research believes that the uniqueness of individual case and contexts are important to understand, which Stake describes as the particularity of the case.

On the other hand, internal validity refers to how research findings can match reality. Reality, or whatever each of us perceives or experiences, is "holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing" (Merriam, 1998, p. 202). Along this line, Stake (1995) also states that what we see in the case will never be the same. Since the researcher is the main instrument of data collection and its interpretations in qualitative research, such interpretation of reality is directly affected by his/her observations and interviews.

As a way to enhance such validity in the qualitative research, some researchers have suggested that triangulation be used as an effective strategy to enhance the validity of generalizations made from the findings (Merriam 1998; Yin, 2003). Triangulation

refers to incorporating diverse sources of evidence into the research, which will enable the researcher to confirm the emerging findings. Yin emphasizes that triangulation is a primary strength of case study data collection through which the researcher can make any finding and conclusion much more convincing and accurate (p. 98). It is also important to keep in mind that the careful selection of triangulation needs to be consistent with addressing research questions since each of the multiple sources of evidence provides a different interpretation of the same phenomenon (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Patton (1987) states four types of triangulation: data, investigator, theory, and methodological triangulation. In this study, data triangulation is used: interviews from diverse stakeholders and documentation.

Selection of the Case

This study employs purposeful sampling of transnational education programs to understand the current phenomena of transnational education in Malaysia. Purposeful sampling is commonly used in qualitative research since a deeper understanding of the cases can be attained to address the central questions of research (Creswell, 1998: Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In doing purposeful sampling, it is critical to select appropriate criteria in choosing the people or programs to be studied.

Merriam (1998) indicates that two levels of sampling are necessary in qualitative case studies. The first level is to select the case or cases to be studied, followed by the selection of the participants, documents, and activities within (p. 65). A careful establishment of criteria is also critical to guide the case selection and

purposeful select ion of study participants and documents to be collected. Such a careful construction of sampling will bring rich information to identify the challenges that transnational education in Malaysia is facing. In order to identify international-linked programs in Malaysia for this research, I contacted two university researchers who are knowledgeable about transnational education. Due to the time-constraint of the on-site data collection in Malaysia, this study concentrates on two programs with supporting interview data from the Ministry of Higher Education and Malaysian Association for Private Colleges and Universities (MAPCU). In gaining access to international programs and interview participants, this study started with identifying and contacting several gatekeepers. A gatekeeper plays an important role in introducing the researcher to other possible research participants within a cultural group (Creswell, 1998). Since I am a stranger doing data collection in the Malaysian educational system, gaining access through several gatekeepers is crucial for data collection. By April 2006, I contacted several gatekeepers for on-site data collection scheduled for July 2006 in Malaysia.

The second stage identified two programs to be studied. The gatekeepers allowed me to contact two programs in Malaysia. The first is the School of Information Technology at Monash University, an international branch campus in Malaysia. The other is the School of Computing at Taylor's College which offers an IT twinning program offered in partnership with Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) of Australia.

The rationale for choosing two programs as cases is based on several themes. First, Australian universities are very active in providing educational services across borders, especially in Southeast Asia. The official websites of each school, Monash

University and RMIT, indicate that they are both active educational providers to international students across borders, and thus they deserve further investigation that addresses the research questions for this study.

Second, Both Monash University Malaysia and Taylor's College are considered pioneers who started seeking international-linked educational opportunities in Malaysia prior to the 1997 economic crisis (Richardson, 1993, February 17). Monash is the first international branch campus in Malaysia. Taylor's College has been known for its diverse international-linked programs since the 1960s when it first started as a pre-university center. They have been providing various international-linked programs in Malaysia and increasing the enrollment of students especially for the last decade.

Among the diverse programs that are offered under international arrangements, this study focuses on undergraduate IT programs since the recent research indicates that IT/computer science programs are the most popular among international-linked programs in Malaysia (Tan, 2002). IT is also considered a key factor by the government to becoming an industrial nation by 2020. Multimedia Super Corridor was launched by the government in 1996 to develop the global information and communication technology hub within the nation (Multimedia Super Corridor, n.d.).

The third stage identified key informants for understanding in-depth the current situation in transnational education in Malaysia. They are:

Two schools: international students, international students' recruiters/advisors, program coordinator;
Ministry of Higher Education: officers from international-related divisions; and
MAPCU: Executive Secretary

School administrators were chosen based on their direct involvement with international student recruitment and advising in each program/school. Officers of the Ministry of Higher Education, a staff of MAPCU were also identified as interview participants after several contacts with the key gatekeepers.

This study includes international students who are enrolled in these transnational education programs in Malaysia. How and why they have chosen to study in Malaysia is a key interview question. The criterion for choosing possible international student participants is based on maximum variation sampling in which a wide range of variation is purposefully selected to bring more dimension and rich description to the research (Merriam, 1998). In this case, the country of origin, gender, and age are possible criteria for maximum variation sampling for international students.

Identifying international students was one of the challenges during my data collection in July in Malaysia. July is normally a school break in Australian academic programs. Since they are both Australian programs, they follow the Australian academic calendar. With some support from the international student advisor and program coordinator of each program, I was able to contact 7 international students; 6 from Monash University Malaysia and 1 from Taylor's College.

Institutional Context

Case 1: School of Information Technology, Monash University, Malaysia

Among four international branch campuses in Malaysia, Monash University Malaysia is the first international branch campus to be founded. It opened in 1998 as a joint venture with the Sunway Group, a prominent business venture group in Malaysia,

which owns the current property on which the Monash campus is located. Sunway is a huge company that owns a hospital, Sunway Pyramid shopping mall, and a theme park. One of their fields is also education. Sunway group also owns Sunway University College, formally known as the Sunway College, which has been upgraded to university status.

In addition to this Malaysia campus, Monash has campuses in Australia and South Africa, as well as centers in Italy and the United Kingdom. Currently, Monash University offers degree programs at five schools in Malaysia: School of Arts and Sciences, School of Business, School of Engineering, School of Information Technology, and School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

The Monash Malaysia campus is a culturally diverse institution accommodating 2,700 students, with international students from 40 different countries making up 25 percent of the student population as of May 2006 (Monash University Malaysia, n.d.).

It accommodates a centralized international student service body, the International Student Affairs Unit (IAU), that handles student pass application processes for international students, and assists them with accommodation, visa related matters, health issues, cultural and educational adjustment, general advice related to student support, and other support programs. One of the staff from the IAU participated in the interview.

Based on the purposeful sampling stated above, this study has chosen the School of Information Technology as a case.

Case 2: School of Computing, Taylor's College in partnership with Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, Australia

Founded in 1969, Taylor's College is one of the oldest private colleges in Malaysia and has been well-known for its diverse transnational programs including the one in partnership with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT).

Recent data indicates that the RMIT has been accommodating more than 57,000 students at the RMIT campuses in Melbourne and Vietnam, online, by distance education, and at 100 partner institutions around the world (RMIT University, n.d.). RMIT is declared to be one of the largest providers of transnational education in Australia and a significant provider of education to international students. RMIT has been offering various twinning programs with five local institutions in Malaysia as described in Table 4-1. RMIT has recently set up their international branch campuses in Vietnam, one in Ho Chi Minh City in 2001 and the other in Hanoi in 2004[1]. These two campuses are fully owned by RMIT, without any partnership with local providers, supported by the loans from international organizations, such as the Asia Development Bank and the World Bank. Given that RMIT has international partners only in the Asia region, it can be said that RMIT emphasizes Asia as a most important market.

[1] Although the RMIT set up its branch campus in Penang Island in Malaysia, it was compelled to close at the end of 1999 due to the financial loss of the Malaysian partner's company in the Asian financial crisis McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007, p.41).

Table 4-1. Profile of RMIT's Partner Institutions in Malaysia

Partner institution	Degree conferred
Limkokwing University College of Creative Technology	Advanced Diploma of Multimedia
Malaysian Institute of Management	Bachelor of Business (Management) Master of Business Administration Master of Business Administration (International Management) Master of Finance
Metropolitan College	Bachelor of Business (Accountancy) Bachelor of Business (Economic & Finance)
Taylor's College	Bachelor of Applied Science (Computer Science) Bachelor of Applied Science (Information Technology)

Source: "RMIT offshore programs and partners" by RMIT University (n.d.).

To further examine the current status of transnational education in Malaysia, I conducted additional interviews at Ministry of Higher Education and the Malaysian Association for Private Colleges and Universities.

Ministry of Higher Education

To give priority to higher education, the Ministry of Education was split into two entities in March 2004 - the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. Since then, the Ministry of Higher Education has been in charge of higher education with duties that involve overseeing both the public and private higher educational institutions and other government agencies involved in higher education activities such as the National Accreditation Board (Studymalaysia.com, n.d.). This new ministry, solely engaged in higher education, illustrates how the Malaysian government has put emphasis on higher education and its contribution to economic development. It

is also worth noting that one of the objectives of the Ministry of Higher Education is to promote the internationalization of higher education in Malaysia (Tan, 2006).

For this study, I conducted interviews with two key informants from the Ministry of Higher Education; Dr. Nasser of Marketing and International Education Division and Mr. Abdulah of International Relations Division.

Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities

Established in 1997, the Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities (MAPCU) is a group of private colleges and universities, with memberships limited to major private colleges, international branch campuses and private universities (MAPCU, n.d.). The objective of MAPCU is to promote the growth of the private sector and operating in partnerships with the Malaysian government and its agencies. It is aimed at enhancing the full potential of Malaysia's private higher education industry. MAPCU institutes 45 ordinary members, 14 associate members and 10 branch members of private colleges and universities across the nation (MAPCU, n.d.). MAPCU is not a governmental agency.

MAPCU has been actively involved as a medium between private higher education institutions and the government. For example, international branch campuses and twinning programs including 3+0 programs since the late 90s have been initiated by the MAPCU's commitment to bring "world-class education to Malaysia" while helping the government reduce the outflow of funds for sending students overseas (MAPCU, n.d.). With their expertise in private higher education, MAPCU offers comprehensive study guide books for students with an aim to promote Malaysian private higher education locally and globally. MAPCU also provides on-line study guides at

www.studymalaysia.com. The findings listed in the next chapter are primarily derived from the interview with Mr. Lee, an Executive Secretary of MAPCU and the documents obtained from him. His commitment and devotion as a secretary in promoting private higher education is very insightful and reflective in a way that identifies some challenges that Malaysia is facing.

Data Collection and Analysis

As mentioned earlier, this study uses triangulation by doing interviews and document analysis to describe the current trend of transnational education in Malaysia. This study uses interviews as a primary method for data collection. The methods adopted to answer the research questions are addressed in Table 4-2.

The interview questions are open-ended and semi-structured so that the interviewee can "reconstruct his or her experience within the topic under study" (Seidman, 1991). Other researchers also indicate that the flexible nature of interview allows the participants "to answer from their own frame of reference rather than from one structured by prearranged questions" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 2). This flexible nature of interviews, including the change of interview questions during data collection, is also considered as an advantage of the interview. Rubin and Rubin (2005, p.35) define its flexible interview model as responsive interviewing in which a researcher can get an in-depth understanding of what is being studied. Based on the existing literature on interview method, I made four interview protocols designed as shown in appendix for interview participants.

Table 4-2. Brief Description of Data Collection

Research questions	Information needed	Information sources	Method for data collection
1. What is the current status of transnational education in Malaysia?	1. Purposefully sampled administrators' perception 2. Purposefully sampled students' perceptions 3. Documents related to transnational education in Malaysia	1. Administrators* 2. Students 3. Relevant documents	• Interviews • Document analysis
2. Why do international students choose Malaysia as their study destination?	1. Purposefully sampled administrators' perception 2. Documents related to institutional strategic planning on internationalization	1. Administrators* 2. Students 3. Relevant documents	• Interviews • Document analysis
3. How do international-linked programs identify and respond to the needs of international students in Malaysia?	1. Purposefully sampled administrators' perception 2. Purposefully sampled students' perception 3. Documents related to international students service/recruitment	1. Administrators 2. Students 3. Relevant documents	• Interviews • Document analysis
4. What are the major challenges of transnational education in Malaysia that influence its sustainability and effectiveness?	1. Purposefully sampled administrators' perception 2. Purposefully sampled students' perceptions 3. Documents related to transnational education in Malaysia	1. Administrators 2. Students 3.Relevant documents	• Interviews • Document analysis
5. What are the theoretical implications?	1. Purposefully sampled administrators' perception 2. Purposefully sampled students' perceptions 3. Documents related to transnational education in Malaysia	1. Administrators 2. Students 3.Relevant documents	• Interviews • Document analysis

Note: Administrators include international student recruiters, international student advisors, and program coordinators of each school, officers of the Ministry of Higher Education, and a staff of MAPCU.

I conducted 16 interviews during my visit to Malaysia in the July of 2006. Table 4-3 shows the breakdown of interview participants. Prior to my visit for interviews with administrators, I had sent interview questions and a consent form. Before starting the interview, I explained to all the participants about the use of the tape-recorder and the confidentiality of the data. It is critical to receive permission for recording by explaining the purpose of recording. This allowed trust to be built between the researcher and the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). During the data collection, two of the interview participants showed discomfort in being tape-recorded. In this case, I asked each of them if I could take detailed notes during the interview, and they both agreed upon me doing so.

Table 4-3. Interview Participants

School/organization	Interview sources	#
School of Information Technology, Monash University Malaysia	International student recruiter	1
	International student advisor	1
	Program coordinator (on-site)	1
	International students	5
School of Computing, Taylor's College Twinning program in partnership with Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology,	International student recruiter	2
	International student advisor	1
	Program coordinator (on-site)	1
	International student	1
Ministry of Higher Education	International Relations Division	1
	Marketing and International Education Division	1
MAPCU (Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities)	Executive Secretary	1
Total		16

Document analysis was also used to supplement interview findings. Although the field notes and transcripts from the interviews provide much descriptive data, another form of data is the documents that are categorized as either personal documents, official documents, or popular culture documents (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Among these three, this study uses mainly official documents that are distributed by the chosen programs, the Ministry of Higher Education, and MAPCU. The documents include printed documents as well as electronic resources from their websites. Since the topic of transnational education is comparatively new (Arachi, 2005), newspaper articles, program homepages and printed program brochures were used in addressing research questions. During the data collection, some interview participants were willing to share their professional files of news articles on higher education in Malaysia, which was very useful in updating the data for the research.

The main purpose of collecting official documents is to identify the mission statement and challenge that Malaysian education has been facing by attracting international students. Such documents produced by organizations for public consumption, which are referred to as external communication, are useful in understanding official perspectives on programs, the administrative structure, and other aspects of the organization (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Strategies for Analyzing the Data

According to Stake (1995), qualitative research requires a special emphasis on interpretation. Being in the field for interview and observation enables the researcher to

"record objectively what is happening but simultaneously examines its

meaning and redirects observation to refine or substantiate those meanings" (p. 8). Some researchers might misinterpret data and create different meaning for it. As an effective guideline for the analysis of data, I follow the five primary steps that Stake (1995) indicates as follows:

1. Review raw data under various possible interpretations.
2. Search for patterns of data (whether or not indicated by the issues).
3. Seek linkages between program arrangements, activities, and outcomes.
4. Draw tentative conclusions, organize according to issues, and organize final report.
5. Review data, gather new data, deliberately seek disconfirmation of findings (p.53).

After transcribing all the interview data, I started with a summary of the findings of each sub-case. This summary contains the name of the interview participant (anonymous), the time and location of the interview. Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest that such a summary should include the main points derived from the interview which will be crucial in addressing the research questions and developing new concepts. This summary was the basis for the data findings and analyses in chapter V.

This research follows Stake's comprehensive strategy by coding paragraph by paragraph. Coding categories for data analysis are developed by reading interview transcripts and documents. Reflective notes during and after the interviews are also used since they can be helpful in identifying the possible coding categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). They also suggest "playing with different coding possibilities" (p.183)

before narrowing them down for sub-codes under the major code categories by themes. The interview coding sought to preserve the anonymity of the interview participants, both administrators and student respondents. For the student respondents, information on national origin, age, and gender is provided to illustrate their life experiences in Malaysia.

After understanding and coding individual cases in chapter V, cross-case discussion was conducted to identify key themes to address research questions in the final chapter by using a matrix representing findings from each sub-case. The final chapter thus intends to relate these findings with the previous literature review to extend my ideas and look for the broader themes of what has been learned.

Limitation of the Study

Constraints in terms of time, money, and people might have affected the choice of the data collection instrument and its feasibility (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). In this study, I spent only three weeks in Malaysia; the first week for identifying possible interview participants and contacting them by email and phone, and the rest of the weeks for interviewing and collecting other relevant materials. Although I had key gatekeepers who helped me to refine interview questions and contact possible interview participants, this time constraint might have affected the total number of interviews conducted.

This study also limited the interview participants to those directly related to transnational education. It would have been beneficial to include some participants who

were outside the range of this study. Such inclusion outside the range of the research would prevent researchers from drawing easy and narrow-scoped conclusions from their research (Seidman, 1991). For example, professors at local public universities and local company executives could be identified as possible interviewees in a bigger picture to identify the challenges of transnational education programs in Malaysia.

Conclusion

The research method and techniques outlined in this chapter is critical in developing a qualitative approach for this study by which the data collection and analysis were conducted to answer the research questions. I have argued that the use of qualitative research and the case study method is beneficial to understanding the current trend of transnational education in Malaysia.

I have also briefly outlined data collection and analysis strategies. The data for this study are primarily qualitative: interview data and that from documents. I have triangulated the data from different stakeholders by open-coding, from which certain themes have emerged for further discussion. The following chapter presents the findings and analyses of individual cases.

CHAPTER V

DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter describes the data results and analysis based on interviews and documents collected during and after my visit to Malaysia in July, 2006 and continuing through July, 2007.

The key results for each research question are presented as shown in table 5-1. Sub-case findings and analysis include those of the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities, Monash University and Taylor's College. Since the fifth research question is based on the comprehensive analysis of the other four questions, this chapter does not describe data findings and analysis specific to the fifth research question.

Overall results are addressed in larger themes that demonstrate the findings of the study as summarized in table 5-1. The next chapter focuses on further discussing my research questions:

1. What is the current status of transnational education in Malaysia?
2. Why do international students choose Malaysia as their study destination?
3. How do international-linked programs identify and respond to the needs of international students in Malaysia?
4. What are the major challenges of transnational education in Malaysia that influence its sustainability and effectiveness?
5. What are the theoretical implications?

Table 5-1. Overview of the Data Findings

Research questions	Key data findings related to the questions	Key Information sources
1. What is the current status of transnational education in Malaysia?	• Transnational education as a way to promote Malaysian education overseas. • Increasing competition in the international student recruitment market • Positive image of Malaysia as a developed Muslim country	1. Interviews with the Ministry of Higher Education, MAPCU, and administrators at two school sites 2. Relevant documents
2. Why do international students choose Malaysia as their study destination?	• Low cost • Western degrees • Advice from parents and friends • Pathway for career in other countries	1. Interviews with the Ministry of Higher Education, MAPCU, and administrators and students at two school sites 2. Relevant documents
3. How do international-linked programs identify and respond to the needs of international students in Malaysia?	• Welfare services for international students • Flexibility of the programs	1. Interviews with the Ministry of Higher Education, MAPCU, and administrators at two school sites 2. Relevant documents
4. What are the major challenges of transnational education in Malaysia that influence its sustainability and effectiveness?	• Branding/recognition of Malaysia as a study destination. • Emerging new regions/countries for student recruitment • Enhancing the quality of teaching and research • Initiatives by the government • Different role between the private and public higher education sectors • Deregulating the work permits for international students and scholars • Local agent management • Possible impacts of transnational education on the local contexts	1. Interviews with the Ministry of Higher Education, MAPCU, and administrators and students at two school sites 2. Relevant documents
5. What are the theoretical implications?	• New players in transnational education • Increasing competition for gaining profit	1. Interviews with the Ministry of Higher Education, MAPCU, and administrators and students at two school sites 2. Relevant documents

Data Findings and Analysis

1. What is the current status of transnational education in Malaysia?

Ministry-level: Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia

Transnational Education as a Way to Promote Malaysian Education Overseas.

As stated in the previous chapters and confirmed by the two informants, promotion of Malaysian education to international students is a major mission of the Ministry of Higher Education. It is the Ministry's intention to transform Malaysia into a regional center of education. In addition to Malaysian education offices in five major cities overseas, they are also organizing the Malaysian Education Fairs overseas. Such a promotion strategy varies for specific target regions or countries.

Mr. Abdulah of the International Relations Division commented:

> We are having education fairs [abroad]. We have our own attaché, promotion attaché, in various countries. Every county has its own program or strategy. We are having different kinds of programs to be a global player. We have globalization programs, distance learning, and e-learning across borders.

In so doing, transnational education plays a crucial role in attracting more international students to Malaysia despite the fact that the Malaysia government is now trying to promote both transnational programs and their own local programs overseas.

Emerging New Regions/Countries for Student Recruitment.

The recent data on international students by country of origin in chapter III suggests that Indonesia and China are the two biggest groups of international students studying in Malaysia, and they are still considered as a huge market for recruitment because of their large populations. These two groups make up 40% of the total

international student population.

Given the increased competition in international recruitment, Malaysia's ambition to attract 100,000 international students by 2010 requires a continuous search for new markets for student recruitment. One of the newly emerging markets identified by the Ministry of Higher Education is Africa. The fact that the fifth Malaysia information center is to be set up in Nairobi, Kenya, illustrates the growing interest of African students in transnational education in Malaysia. Dr. Nasser of the Marketing and International Education Division believes that this growing interest from African students in Malaysian education is due to their awareness of education for economic development:

> Africa is also looking at developing and educating their population. I think everybody understands that one of the successful formulas of most [developed] countries is by having education. Malaysia has done that for the last 20 years. Human capital investment is important for the sustainability of economic development. Next month [in August], the Ministry of Higher Education will have the [first] education fair in Africa, but private colleges have already started there to promote their programs and recruit students. Africa is our new destination, and they have been realizing the importance of education for economic development (Dr. Nasser).

Positive Image of Malaysia as a Developed Muslim Country.

The interviews illustrate that religious background also attracts students from the neighboring regions to Malaysia: Middle East and Central Asia. These two regions are also identified by the Ministry of Higher Education as a big market for recruitment. As shown in Chapter III, the top 7 countries of origin among students are Muslim countries: Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Yemen, Iran, Sudan and Maldives. Although there is no Malaysia Information Center in Central Asia, the Ministry has organized

Malaysian education fairs in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, both of which are identified as the most attractive countries in the region.

Mr. Abdulah stated that a positive image of Malaysia among Muslim countries contributes to the steady inflow of students from these regions to Malaysia.

Dr. Nasser also commented:

> They are looking at Malaysia as a model of the developed nation in the Muslim region. We are more well-known as a moderate Muslim nation... Although we are a Muslim nation, we are successful and peaceful. So I believe that Malaysia is a model for most of the Muslim countries. Economically and politically stable.

Likewise, Dr. Nasser stated that Malaysia positions herself as an advantageous country in the Muslim world in terms of student recruitment:

> For Middle East and Central Asia, Malaysia is a better Muslim country. Our stability and our condition. And we have been good partners. Compared to, if you go to the U.K. and the U.S., they have problems of visa. And after the September 11, it is getting strict. It is very frustrating. For Japan it is ok, but for Muslim countries, Muslim students they cannot go. So for them Malaysia is the best destination.

Both interview participants reveal that visa restriction enforced by some countries since September 11 has definitely affected the growing number of students from these Muslim regions to Malaysia for transnational education programs. It is interesting that such positive images of Malaysia among Muslim nations is also affecting the gradual increase of Muslim tourists while the biggest international tourist groups, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, has been decreasing (Table 5-2).

This growing interest in tourism in Malaysia among international tourists has created a new concept, "*edu-tourism*," a combination of education and tourism for international students and their family members.

Table 5-2. Tourist Arrivals in Malaysia from Selected Countries (1999-2002)

Country	1999	2000	2001	2002
Saudi Arabia	11,564	27,808	39,957	45,007
UAE	2,909	2,391	13,762	14,124
Kuwait	N/A	0	7,458	10,470
Lebanon	N/A	0	4,413	5,336
Syria	N/A	0	18,205	21,109
Oman	N/A	0	7,284	8,432
United States	83,260	184,100	145,827	127,920
United Kingdom	136,398	237,757	262,423	239,294
Japan	286,940	455,981	397,639	354,563

Source: Immigration Department of Malaysia. from Md. Khalid (2004. p.7)

Edu-tourism for Attracting International Students and Currencies. Given the growing interest in tourism and education in Malaysia, the Ministry of Higher Education has incorporated education into tourism. Edu-tourism is considered as an important component to attract international students and their family members to Malaysia, not only as a destination to study but also to enjoy the various tourist spots in Malaysia. The Ninth Malaysian Plan identifies the tourism industry as a "key foreign exchange earner" across sectors, including education (Malaysia, 2006, p.193). Since international currency from the education industry has increased from RM220 million (US$ 58 million[1]) in 2000 to RM 450 million (US$ 118 million) in 2005 (Malaysia, 2006, p.198), the Malaysian government has been recognizing the potential of

[1] Exchange rate: US$ 1= RM 3.8

edu-tourism as a new market.

In 2007, the Ministry of Higher Education announced the seven strategies of international marketing of Malaysian higher education; edu-tourism is identified as an important component of the international marketing by the Malaysian government. The seven strategies are as follows:

1. To offer programs that are of quality and at the most affordable cost
2. Integration of all promotional programs, especially to increase "single country" or solo exhibition abroad
3. Simplify entrance process of international students and support services
4. Increase the recognition and collaboration at the international level
5. Enhance synergy between higher education and tourism
6. Monitor and enforce a quality control system, and
7. Increase the capacity of the higher education system

(studymalaysia.com, January 2007).

Increasing Competition in the International Student Recruitment Market.

As stated previously, the Ministry of Higher Education is aware of the changing demand of the market. The interview data reveal that recruitment in China has become competitive since the education market is also opening up to transnational education. Mr. Abdulah stated:

> Countries that are sending students here to Malaysia are also getting smarter. For example, "Rather than sending our students to Malaysia, why do not we invite other countries [or institutions] to set up universities in their countries? And we can send our students there." That is what China is doing right now. So that has been happening now. We are losing our students from China [to come to Malaysia]. They are becoming aware of that by sending their students to other countries; there is a foreign exchange outflow in millions of dollars to Malaysia. So they are trying to find the ways or means to cut students from going overseas.

This situation in China is similar to what happened in Malaysia after the economic crisis; Malaysia has been responding to the changing climate of education since then and increasing the number of international students instead of sending Malaysian students overseas. This is now gradually affecting the number of Chinese students in Malaysia, and pushing Malaysia to search for new markets as described above.

Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities (MAPCU)

The Current Status of Transnational Education

MAPCU identifies transnational education as a principal way to attract international students from other countries despite the fact that more college members in MAPCU are upgraded to a university status to confer their own degrees. Mr. Lee, an Executive Secretary of MAPCU, firmly stated, "They come here for the international branch or other international degree programs … They do not come here to get Malaysian degrees."

According to him, a legislation was passed that these university colleges had to confer their own degrees within the period of five years after being upgraded, during which all the twinning or relevant programs should be diminished and start their own programs. However, this legislation has been reversed by the government to continue their twinning programs for ten years after the upgrading to college university status. The discussion over this length of time for transition between the government and MAPCU is still going on. Mr. Lee commented over the length of this transitional phase regulated by the Malaysian government:

> For how long? We do not know. The period is supposed to be a ten-year period. This is a request and appeal from university colleges. This policy

> however is still not clear. Because we are still discussing. The government might be extending the period. We do not know. Because it will surely affect the intake of foreign students and the government has to look at this area very seriously. If not, how can we achieve 100,000 students by the year 2010? That is our target.

This discussion between the government and the university colleges further illustrates that twinning and other international-degree conferring programs have become a primary tool to attract international students to Malaysia despite the government effort to brand Malaysian degrees overseas. Mr. Lee commented:

> Once they have become a university college, they can offer their own degrees. But foreign students do not come here to get our local degrees. It takes some time to brand our degrees in the international market. Because we are new in this market.

This statement also shows that the growth of transnational education in Malaysia poses dilemma of how they can attract international students to local degrees programs in the long span.

School-level

Case 1: School of Information Technology, Monash University Malaysia

Increasing Competition in the International Student Recruitment Market.

Interviews with staff revealed that there are two kinds of competition for recruitment: local competition and international competition. Local competition is referred to competition with other local private institutions in Malaysia. Despite the international ranking that Monash has achieved, these private institutions are still attractive for students because they offer very competitive tuition fees for international degree programs.

International competition is growing higher and faster than ever due to the liberalization of international education markets. Monash Malaysia has set a few target countries for recruitment: China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Brunei. China has been a big market, and Monash Malaysia has local agents there as well as occasional visits to the target regions. However, the interviews revealed their concerns over the Chinese market and identified it as a challenge:

> China is getting even more competitive. China is now attracting more overseas students to study in China. There are twinning and branch campus to retain local students within China and also to attract overseas students to China. It is getting more difficult on our side (Marketing staff).

> We used to have more students from China. But now China has been taking advantage of attracting foreign branch campuses in China. The number of Chinese students [on our campus] is declining. More universities will be setting up their branch campus in China. More and more Chinese students are going out to study abroad, so why not attracting more foreign branch campuses in China? This will also attract foreign exchange and eventually become an education hub (the IT Dean).

Singapore can be another competitor for similar reasons as China. Singapore is attracting some well-known universities to set up a branch campus such as the University of South Wales, and has a collaborative research center with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The IT Dean commented:

> Our competitor is Singapore. Because of the background where English is widely spoken. For students staying there is quite expensive. Singapore is very much like a city-state. It is more cosmopolitan in terms of race and religion.

Therefore, like any other private institutions, Monash Malaysia also has been seeking other new marketing areas for recruitment

Emerging New Regions/Countries for Student Recruitment.

Monash Malaysia has been targeting the aforementioned five countries for student recruitment whereas the Monash main campus focuses on regional areas. However, the recruitment of local agents, admission requirement, and application procedures are centralized by the Monash main campus and thus, Monash Malaysia follows the same policy as the Monash main campus in Australia. Monash Malaysia also has its own expertise and works with local agents depending on the recruitment needs. If the target countries for Monash Malaysia are the same as Monash Australia such as Indonesia and Singapore, marketing staff from both campuses participate in the education fairs together.

Recently, Monash Malaysia is looking at Vietnam, Thailand, and South African countries as a growing market (Marketing staff). It has started a contract with a local agent in Kenya due to the increasing inquiries from Kenya.

School-level

Case 2: School of Computing, Taylor's College

Emerging New Regions/Countries for Student Recruitment.

As the competition grows, there is always a need for exploring a new recruitment market. Marketing staff identified Africa as a growing market, especially those Muslim countries. This is due to the increasing competition in the Asia region and thirst for a new market:

> African students are more and more coming to Malaysia as an educational destination. We have quite a few numbers of African students. We have students from Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, and South Africa. Actually quite a few. Most of them are Muslim countries. I would think that the majority of

> them really did not know much about Malaysia before coming here. They got to know about Malaysia and our program mostly through the local agents (Marketing staff #1).

> We are right now venturing into Africa. We did not pick them. They picked us. I think that for the past one and a half years, most of the institutions in Malaysia they will tell you the same thing. Strangely and surprisingly, for the past two years, we are flooded with applications from Africa. I do not know why. Africa is the last continent (Marketing staff #2).

However, Africa, like China, is also getting competitive in terms of educational opportunities across borders:

> The problem in marketing in Africa is that they also an African virtual university, RMIT. How do we compete with that? Then, what is the obvious advantage of studying in Malaysia? Is it better studying at home? (Director of the School of Computing)

The Middle East, a new target market by the Malaysian government, is not necessarily considered a new attractive market for various reasons:

> About twelve month ago, our prime minister says that the growing market is the Middle East, but I do think so in terms of the number of students. We have been to the Middle East a few times, but we do see that it is a growing market. The Arabs people, they still prefer to go to the States. Even though they are what we call racially segregated for visa issues and so forth, they still prefer the U.S. for study destination. U.K. and Australia are also their destination (Marketing staff #1).

Another factor for not seeing the Middle East as an attractive market is that marketing staff see that new education hubs are emerging in that region whose strategy is quite similar to Malaysia or Singapore.

Emerging New Education Hubs in Various Regions. International marketing at Taylor's College is very responsive to the market needs and analytical about the condition of the market that they are targeting for recruitment. What emerged in the interview is that two marketing staff members, working in the recruitment field for almost ten years, saw new education hubs emerging in their recruitment regions: Dubai and Cyprus.

Dubai, with a wealth of oil, has been attracting international branch campuses from Britain, Australia, Canada and India since it launched Dubai Knowledge Village (KV) in 2003. The KV Plan aims at developing Dubai into a center for excellence in learning and innovation (Dubai Knowledge Village, n.d.). This interview also reveals how steady and sensitive Taylor's recruiting group can be for collecting market data for international recruitment:

> The Arab's government with the oil money they are also starting up a lot of so-called their own foreign institutions. They are to some extent. I do not want to put them into under the same consideration set, but I will put Dubai on the set. Dubai, as we know, is like another Singapore in the Gulf. It is the most liberal economy anywhere you can find in the Middle East. And it is perceived as a hub, a regional hub for many things from services including education. Do you know that there are several Australian universities in Dubai? They have already set up a branch campus in there. They are some British universities in Dubai. With that, do you think that Arabs will travel far away? Maybe not if they can get the same thing in the gulf region. It is nearer to their countries, and it is a Muslim region. (Marketing staff #2)

He also identified Cyprus and Greece as another emerging education hub for international linked programs as well as a doorway to working in the EU region:

> Some weird weird country to me is Cyprus. Cyprus where on earth is it? Is it in the Mediterranean? They offer local and international programs like Taylor's. But the most attractive thing that I was informed of by my agent who worked

> with them is that students choose to go there because they are part of EU. You can work part-time there during your studies and after working you are free to go anywhere you want to go. Cyprus. And Greece. I have seen Cyprus in the gulf and south Asia for international exhibition (Marketing staff #2).

From his experiences of attending various international education exhibitions worldwide over the past two years, he has also seen other new countries coming into this field: Turkey in the Gulf and South Asia education fairs, India in South Asia education fairs, and China in the Southeast education fairs. As he repeatedly said, international education is obviously becoming a huge business and therefore very competitive.

Malaysia's Presence among the Muslim World. Interviews at Taylor's College also illuminate a positive image of Malaysia among Muslim countries. This reputation enables the marketing people to promote their international linked programs easier than in the non-Muslim countries:

> Malaysia is not definitely ranked #1 for international education. For exceptions, there are a few; most of them are Islamic countries. In Bangladesh, Malaysia is ranked very high. The same thing slowly applies to Pakistan, Islamic countries. Why? Because Malaysia is an Islamic country and it is a modern Islamic country. If I go to those Islam countries, Malaysia is ranked among the top three. My job is much easier in Muslim countries. In all these countries, they have more positive image towards Malaysia in terms of education, political, religious and economic stability. (Marketing staff #2).

He called such a positive image of Malaysia among Muslim countries as "one of the blessings" although admitting that Malaysia is also viewed a very Westernized and advanced Muslim country.

Another factor that has made Malaysia a possible destination for education

among Muslim countries is the September 11th incident and the subsequent visa regulation:

> After September 11, you know, a lot of students from these Muslim countries would have difficulties in getting a student visa to the US or other Western countries. Some of them even do not want to go to the West for that reason. So they look elsewhere. Automatically naturally Islamic countries are those they are looking at, too. More than so called advanced Islamic countries are not so many in the world. Malaysia is fortunately one of them. This factor is a reasoning factor only after September 11. Something new. I do not think that anybody in academia has done something very detail in this, you know, in terms of education and the image of the country (Marketing staff #2).

Given such blessing in Muslim countries, the competition is growing drastically as if "whatever transnational education is offered locally in Malaysia we could do the same" (Marketing staff #2). What are attractions for international students to come over to Malaysia to study at Taylor's College? The next section will describe key attracting factors identified by the interviews and documents.

2. Why do international students choose Malaysia as their study destination?

Ministry-level: Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia

Affordability of Transnational Education Programs

The interviews and the documents obtained from the Ministry of Higher Education reveal that one of the main factors attracting international students is the affordability of the transnational programs in which Western degrees are conferred. For example, the "Study in Malaysia" kit (Ministry of Higher Education, n.d.) for prospective international students includes a brief description of comparative education

costs among possible countries of destination for study as shown in table 5-3. This table shows that the private sector tuition fee in Singapore is $6,082, comparatively close to the private sector tuition fee in Malaysia at $4,000. However, the cost of living in Malaysia is by far the lowest, making a significant difference in terms of the total cost. It is also interesting to note that although this "Study in Malaysia" kit states that Malaysia offers a wide range of programs, it does not include any education costs within the Malaysian public sector. This may imply private institutions are acknowledged as the primary actor for attracting international students to Malaysia, mainly through international-linked programs.

Table 5-3. Cross-country Comparison of Education Costs for a Bachelor's Degree Program in Arts and Sciences (per year)

Country	Tuition fee	Living costs	Total costs
Malaysia (private)	4,000	2,600	6,600
Australia	9,820	7,811	17,631
Canada	6,803	8,707	15,510
France (public)	Minimal	12,906	12,906
New Zealand	7,894	10,765	18,659
Singapore (private)	6,082	7,298	13,380
United Kingdom	15,029	11,350	26,379
USA (public)	13,478	11,321	24,799
USA (private)	23,615	12,154	35,769

Note: in US dollars.

Source: Comparative education cost in *Education in Malaysia* (Ministry of Higher Education, n.d.)

School-level

Case 1: School of Information Technology, Monash University Malaysia

Attracting Factors for International Students to Choose Monash Malaysia.

Although branding and high marketability of graduates are the contributing factors, there are some other areas identified by international students to choose Monash Malaysia. The most influential factor is the low cost. The tuition fee is one third of the same degree program in Australia, and the cost of living is about less than half (The IT Dean).

The second factor is the flexibility of the program. Students at Monash Malaysia can spend up to one year on any Monash campus in Australia and come back to Malaysia to complete their degree programs. The tuition fee is still the same:

> The degree offered is exactly the same as other campuses, and the exams are offered at exactly the same time on all the campuses. Spending one semester in South Africa, and the other semester in Australia is also possible. If students want to study in Australia longer than one year, then students need to transfer their credits to Australia. It is up to students (The IT Dean).

The third factor is that international students want international degrees like the one from Monash main campus that are marketable in their home job market:

> International students want quality education. We are offering top quality education. Global degrees. So we can deliver quality education and internationally recognized degrees…best practice in teaching and research will draw students to Monash (The IT Dean).

School-level

Case 2: School of Computing, Taylor's College

Attracting Factors for International Students to Choose Taylor's College.

As stated previously, Taylor's College has been considered one of the best colleges for its origin with an Australian college and the high academic achievement of their graduates. Some other factors have also been identified as reasons for international students to choose Taylor's College.

Financials as a Main Determinant in Choosing Taylor's College. Although degree programs at Taylor's College are relatively expensive compared with others, it is still cheaper than taking the whole program at RMIT in Australia.

Flexibility of the Programs. Taylor's College promotes their international linked programs overseas for the flexibility of their programs. Students have much choice after they get admitted to Taylor's College:

> Other Malaysian institutions pretty much ask you, do you want 3+0 or 1+2 or 2+1? We Taylor's do not really care. We have 3+0 and if you want 1+2 or 2+1, it is up to you. You do have a choice. You do not have to confirm with me at the time when you submit the application forms. That is, after one year at Taylor's and you want to run off, fine and go. After two years, if you want to go, let us know. And we will arrange everything you go. If not, continue everything here locally. So we give student such flexibility in terms of 3+0, 2+1, or 1+2 or whatever (Marketing staff #2).

Another flexibility of the Taylor's programs is that they do not limit students to choose one institution for the entire program; if they do not fit in the program, they can change to another program out of the other Taylor's partner universities' programs. It is

also possible to transfer their credits to other non-partner universities with which Taylor's College has transfer agreements. They call it double flexibility:

> We are not limiting your choice to one or two institutions alone. Double flexibility. Not all other institutions are like that. These are two key uniqueness we sell overseas by saying, "No need to go to U.K. No need to go to Australia. Come to Taylor's Malaysia to get an UK or Australian degree" (Marketing staff #1).

Strong Preference for Western Degrees. As mentioned above, Taylor's College is now able to confer their own degrees as well as international degrees from linked programs. However, they do not promote themselves as a degree-conferring institution, but as a place where you can get Western degrees at a lower cost. For most of the cases, Malaysia is not ranked no.1 by international students for a study destination. Taylor's College is much aware of the reality that international students "want a white piece of paper, a Western piece of paper, Western qualification at an affordable price. It has to be taught in English. When they go back home or work in the business field, it is still in English" (Marketing staff #1).

Growth of Middle-class Family in Asia Region. In terms of the socio-economic background of students at Taylor's College, one marketing staff mentioned the increasing number of middle-class families in the Asia region for recruitment:

> Even if the GDP is low in a certain country, there is still a small percentage of upper and middle-class family whose kids want to study overseas. Some of them do not want send their kids far away from home, so Malaysia can be their good choice (Marketing staff #2).

Since the marketing team thinks it crucial to brand Taylor's College in target region,

especially among the middle-class families, they have their own strategies for making their name noticed such as setting up a Taylor's advertisement on a golf course, advertising in English-medium local papers, and having an exhibition and seminar at a hotel or at local agent office only for their college promotion.

Recommendations from Graduates of Taylor's College. International graduates who returned home are also crucial for promoting Taylor's programs in other countries. The interview participants at Taylor's College think it very important to treat the currents students like good customers so that they can return home with the good reputation of their Taylor's education. "They tell the differences when they return their home. Education is a kind of good product" (Director of School of Computing). Some of the international graduates who returned home work as the local agents for Taylor's College:

> They [local agents] represent us and a lot of them are actually words of mouth from students who studied here. They go back home and talk about our programs. Actually, many of them are set up by our former students who know extensively about our programs (Marketing staff #1).

International Student Experiences.

This section describes the experiences of six international students; five of them were studying at Monash Malaysia and one at Taylor's College during my visit to Monash Malaysia in July, 2006. Their experiences are illustrated in detail; however, pseudonyms are used to maintain confidentiality. The brief biographical information of international students being interviewed is as follows:

Table 5-4. Biographical Information of the Participating International Students

Name	Country of origin	Sex	Age	Affiliation	Foundation course prior to IT program
John	Indonesia	M	20	Monash	Completed
Eric	Indonesia	M	21	Monash	Completed
Lisa	Indonesia	F	21	Monash	Completed
Cathy	Myanmar	F	22	Monash	Completed
Denise	Palestine	F	22	Monash	Completed
Nate	Vietnam	M	22	Taylor's	Completed

Life experience 1: John (20, Indonesia, Monash University)

John is a twenty-year-old student from Jakarta, Indonesia. He has been studying at Monash Malaysia for one and a half years. It was his final term. He studied English at a local high school followed by an intensive English course for two months at a local language school in Jakarta. He attended Monash College in Jakarta where he received a diploma in IT. He studied IT because he has been interested in computer and has been using it since he was a child. It is also recommended by his parents to get a degree in IT. His parents advised him that it is more marketable in the job market.

When John was finishing Monash College, he was given a choice by the staff to study IT at Monash University in Malaysia or in Australia. Prior to that, he did not know much about educational opportunities available in Malaysia. In Jakarta, as far as he knew, there were more educational expos and information available about the United States and Australia than Malaysia.

John decided to go to Malaysia for mainly two reasons: one is the lower cost

and the other is that it is much nearer to his homeland. His parents agreed with his decision, and supported him financially to study at Monash Malaysia. Before coming to Malaysia, Monash College taught him about how to adjust the culture in Malaysia. Upon arrival, Monash Malaysia also provided some support for him and other new international students. This led him to know about the Indonesian Student Association, a joint organization at Monash Malaysia and Sunway University College, through which he befriended other Indonesian students.

Cultural Issues. John stated that language is a problem. Although Bahasa Melayu is said to be quite similar to Bahasa Indonesia, he mentioned that Malaysians speak much faster than Indonesians, and that he sometimes does not understand them. He explained, "Sometimes I cannot catch up with what they are talking about. Some words have a different meaning … That is why I do not speak Bahasa Indonesia with Malaysian people. I do not want them to misunderstand me." He also shows concerns over the differences between Malaysian English and academic English in IT by saying, "Teachers are using Malaysian English and sometimes I do not understand their culture things. Educational English is not that hard to understand."

John seems to have difficulties in making friends with Malaysian students since, as he said, their communication style is different from Indonesians. His friends in Malaysia are international students, mostly from Indonesia who came from Monash College with him.

Career Plan after Graduation. John is planning to work in Jakarta to help his parents' business for a year with his own business of IT. After that, he is hoping to pursue a Master's degree in IT overseas. He is not sure whether he would be coming

back to Malaysia for his Master's degree due to the small number of transnational Master's programs in IT. He is also looking at Japan, Australia, and Korea for more options.

Study at Monash Malaysia for Prospective Students. After a pause, he commented, "It depends on the person, but I will encourage them to come to Monash Malaysia. Compared with other countries, it is cheaper and closer to study at Monash Malaysia."

Although John expressed a frustration with not being able to get along with Malaysian students for differences in personal communication styles, he seems to be to some extent content with his life at Monash Malaysia.

Life Experience 2: Eric (21, Indonesia, Monash University)

Eric is also a twenty-one-year-old student from Indonesia. As of July 2006, it was his third year at Monash. He had two more semesters left for his degree. Prior to attending the degree program at Monash Malaysia, he took a three-month intensive English course that was offered locally by an Australian institution. After that, he did his diploma in IT and business; first semester at Monash College new in Australia, and two more semesters at Monash College in Jakarta. He did not know anything about Monash Malaysia until he returned home from Australia to complete his diploma. He commented, "Actually when I was at high school, I did not know anything about universities in Malaysia because of the lack of promotion. When I was at Monash College Australia, I did not know about Monash Malaysia. It was when I went back to Monash College Jakarta that I go to know about Monash Malaysia offering a higher

degree."

He first became aware of Monash from an education expo in Indonesia where staff from the Monash recruiting event. After attaining a diploma from Monash College in Jakarta, he came to Malaysia for degree in IT and business, recalling his one semester experience in Australia by saying, "The currency was getting worse and it cost more. So I chose Malaysia." Similarly, many international students majoring in both IT and business, Monash is well known for its business program and its IT is very marketable in the job market.

His parents supported his decision to study in Malaysia since "The currency is so high in Australia but the quality of Monash Malaysia is the same as Australia. They encouraged me to come to Malaysia."

Cultural Issues. Recalling his life in Australia, he seems to enjoy his life in Malaysia. He explained, "Indonesia and Malaysia are almost the same in terms of language and culture. Honestly, before coming here, my pictures of Malaysia are almost like that of Singapore. I think studying here in Malaysia is interesting than Australia. People here are friendly." With regard to language, he thinks that it is a challenge to speak out and discuss in English in tutorial class after lecture.

Career Plan after Graduation. Although Eric knows that there are many companies that match his interest in Malaysia and there is a career fair at Monash once a year, he is hoping to return to Indonesia first to discuss his future plan with his parents. He wants to obtain his Master's degree in business overseas, but he is not sure of the destination.

Study at Monash Malaysia for Prospective Students. Eric said that he would recommend prospective students to come to Monash Malaysia by explaining, "The most important factor is the cost. The cost here is not so expensive compared to Australia. You can get meals at a very low cost. It is the same course that is offered in Australia. The basic quality of Monash Malaysia is the same."

Throughout the interview, Eric looked relaxed and happy. He repeatedly used the word "cost" to emphasize the low cost is the biggest factor. Overall, he seems to be quite satisfied with studying in Monash Malaysia.

Life Experience 3: Lisa (21, Indonesia, Monash University)

Lisa came to Malaysia three years ago. She took one-year foundation course, a Canadian program, at Sunway College that was later upgraded to a university status, Sunway University College. Since her high school diploma from Indonesia did not meet the admission requirements, she had to take a foundation course before proceeding to a degree program. In the foundation class, she studied basic subjects such as English, math, social studies and family studies. As of July 2006, it was her last year.

Lisa became aware of Monash Malaysia from her Indonesian friend who was studying there at that time. Her mother is also a good friend of Lisa's mother, and she told Lisa and her mother, "My daughter studies there. Their IT program is really good." Her first option was to study at International University in Jakarta that offered Australian programs. However, her father asked her to study in Malaysia; her father was politically active in Indonesia, and thought it not safe for her to stay in Jakarta. She was also aware that a certificate or a degree from Australia is more marketable in the job

field than that of Malaysia or Indonesia.

Lisa was hoping to spend one or two semester at Monash campus in Australia, but her father did not let her go. Her father thought that Australia is too far away from Indonesia and he would not be able to see her regularly. She commented, "My parents were afraid that I would not come back from Australia to Asia. Staying in Malaysia for a couple of years after graduation is all right for them. But staying in Australia is another story. It is too far. So I gave up."

Cultural Issues. Though Malaysia was not her first choice, she seems to enjoy her student life at Monash, "Malaysia has so much advantage. It is quite similar to Indonesia in terms of culture and food. It is nearer. My father wants me to study somewhere nearer. And the cost is lower. He comes to visit me twice a year."

During her first year at Monash, Lisa felt a little bit lonely and it was also difficult to communicate with other students. In time, she became better acquainted with different personalities and communication styles of her classmates to get along better. She explained, "It is about the language, but also I think that people here are individualistic. They are friendly. When you see them and get used to them, they become friendly."

In terms of teaching, Lisa thinks that teachers play an important role in students' learning. She also added that learning styles, that is active learning and critical thinking, are crucial for studying at Monash Malaysia. She stated, "I think the lecturer plays a role in enhancing the learning. If you do not understand, you can ask the lecturer and he or she will explain to you. Good communication with the lecturer is a key to succeed. If you keep quiet, you will miss much part of learning."

When Lisa faces some issues, she does not seek help from school; she just talks with her friends. But she appreciates the workshop that Monash Malaysia organized for new international students like herself.

Career Plan after Graduation. Lisa foresees herself working in the field of computer programming or database management. Monash organized a career fair that she attended it last year. Her impression with the local companies after the education fair was "They prefer local people rather than foreigners." If she cannot find any in Malaysia, she will be going to Singapore where the work permit for the international is more open than Malaysia. She has a cousin working in Singapore. He took an American degree program at another private college in Malaysia. He then transferred the credits to an Australian program, through which he spent one and a half years in Australia. Since her cousin also majors in IT, she seems to be more interested in working in Singapore.

Study at Monash Malaysia for Prospective Students. Lisa thinks that the advantage of studying at Monash Malaysia is the "Low cost. It is close to my home. It is safe. English is also important because it is a language for communication. It is also exciting to live in a new place." Every time she returns home for holidays, she tells her friends from her high school to come to Monash Malaysia.

Her advice for studying at Monash Malaysia or any other international programs is not to complete high school; the diploma from Indonesia does not meet the entry requirements, and they will have to spend another year in a foundation course like she did. She explained:

> In Indonesia, we have the secondary school system which takes three years to complete. So I recommend them to take the first two years at the secondary school in Indonesia and come here to Malaysia for one-year

> foundation course. They do not have to waste their time. I finished high school, which was three years, and came here for the one-year foundation course. I feel like I wasted some time. The foundation subjects are like high school subjects that I learned in Indonesia.

She seems to be content with what she has achieved at Monash Malaysia with a specific career goal in mind. On the other hand, she looked a little frustrated at the fact that her high school diploma from Indonesia was not sufficient to meet the admission requirement and thus she had to take a foundation course.

Life Experience 4: Cathy (22, Myanmar, Monash University)

Cathy is a twenty-two-year-old student from Myanmar. She finished her high school at 16 and took a matriculation exam. However, she said, "It [matriculation exam] was low level. I had to take it again offered by another international organization." She then went to an English-medium private school in Myanmar for one and a half years to pass a GCE-O level. She told that many of her friends at this private school went overseas to study since "In Myanmar, we have quite a few universities, but the quality is so bad. All are public universities. They are also far from the cities."

After passing a GCE-O level, Cathy attended a diploma course in IT at a private institution in Singapore for one and a half years. She chose Singapore since her father worked there at that time and he wanted her to come. After she received the diploma, she also applied to the National University of Singapore, but they have a higher requirement that her academic qualification did not meet. Then she decided to go to Monash Malaysia for her degree in IT. She said that she chose IT because she has been interested in IT and also her father wants her to be an expert in IT.

Cathy knew about Monash Malaysia from her cousin who was studying at Curtin University in Sarawak, one of the four branch campuses. Although Curtin University in Sarawak is a quiet place to study, her concern was that there were only a few Myanmar students there. According to her, there are more in Kuala Lumpur. In INTI College and Taylor's College, that she thinks are the most famous colleges in Myanmar, there are 100 Myanmar students in total. Monash Malaysia is not so known in her home; she did not know anything about Monash Malaysia until she came to Singapore.

She has been studying at Monash Malaysia for two and a half years. She wanted to study at Monash Australia for her final year, but she gave it up. Her younger sister also came to Malaysia to study at Sunway University College, and her parents persuaded her to continue her studies in Malaysia and take care of her sister. She has another brother who is 11 years old in Myanmar.

Cultural Issues. Cathy never had difficulties adjusting to life in Malaysia. She explained, "I study in Singapore for one and a half years where the culture is quite similar to Malaysia. So I did not face any challenge here in Malaysia." It appears that she has many friends from Myanmar who are also taking transnational education programs at other institutions. She stated, "There are many Myanmar restaurants in Kuala Lumpur where I often go to with my Myanmar friends." In addition, she goes back to Myanmar every school break. This interview with her was conducted right after she came back from Myanmar during school break.

Career Plan after Graduation. Cathy is planning to find a job in Singapore. She has just applied for EP, Employment Pass in Singapore. She told me about

Singapore, "I just love Singapore. Transportation is much better than Malaysia. I feel safer living in Singapore." She has two career plans to achieve in Singapore: working a couple of years in Singapore and getting a higher degree at the National University of Singapore. A week after this interview, Student Services at Monash Malaysia was planning to have a Singapore job fair in which Singaporean companies would come for job interviews. She intended to attend this job fair. After Singapore, she wants to go back to Myanmar to start her own business in IT. She explained that the IT industry in Myanmar is still slow and there are thus more opportunities in IT to be explored.

Her career plan seems to be very clear and specific in that she wants to start her own business in IT in Myanmar. However, her parents do not want her to return home to Myanmar; instead, they want her to stay somewhere overseas, closer to Myanmar.

Study at Monash Malaysia for Prospective Students. Cathy says that she will definitely recommend them to come to Malaysia for international degrees. She listed three factors for recommending Malaysia as a study destination: cost, location, and safety. As stated above, her younger sister also planned to study in Malaysia. This demonstrates that Cathy is quite content with her student life at Monash Malaysia.

Life Experience 5: Denise (22, Palestine, Monash University)

Denise is a twenty-two-year-old student originally from Palestine, but has spent most of her life outside of Palestine. Her family and she go to Palestine only for holidays to visit their relatives. She finished local high school in the Untied Arab Emirates where the language for instruction is in Arabic. Her family lives in Abu Dhabi where she has spent most of her life. By watching American TV programs and listening

to American music, she naturally learned English which is also widely spoken in Abu Dhabi.

She described her parents as quite liberal by saying, "My parents are working in Abu Dhabi. They are pretty open-minded and I feel thankful for that. Many Arab girls are not ever allowed to leave their countries especially abroad. They can study at local universities as long as they are there."

She became aware of Monash Malaysia from the Internet when she was in high school. With a smile on her face, she recalled on how she discovered Monash Malaysia:

> Well, the whole idea of Malaysia was not in my mind at all until I asked one of my friends, "What are you gonna do after finishing your high school?" And she said, "Well maybe, Malaysia." "Malaysia??" I thought it interesting. What is in Malaysia? I know where it was, but I was just wondering.

She first went to a local agent in Abu Dhabi to get more information about education in Malaysia, but the agent mentioned some universities such as Multimedia University and International Islamic University, but never mentioned Monash. She started searching for some other universities by the Internet, and Monash Malaysia popped up. She described thoughts:

> I thought, "hum…It looks interesting. Let's see what they have." Business and IT caught my eyes. So I talked with my father and he said, "Whatever you want to study I will support you."

After her high school graduation in Abu Dhabi, she came to Malaysia to take a one-year foundation course at Sunway College. It was required by Monash to fulfill the entry requirement.

Denise said that she had thought about going to other countries, but not to the

United State, "a country where everyone wants to go to." Going to Turkey was her another choice because her father studied in Turkey. But when she thought about the quality of education at Turkish universities and the marketability of their degrees, she thought that the standard at Monash Malaysia would be much higher. She also wanted to go to Australia, but the higher cost of living and tuition fees in Australia and the same academic standards between Monash Australia and Malaysia helped her to decide to complete her entire program at Monash Malaysia.

Coming from the Middle East, Denise explained the growing image of Malaysia as destination for holiday and shopping:

> Actually, in the Arabic countries right now the whole images of Malaysia are growing bigger. For example, for those who want to go for holidays, Malaysia is a paradise. And it is true. Shopping paradise, even nature-wise. Beautiful islands everywhere. From my experience, the country I love it. It is really beautiful to come for visit. My sister was here for a month. She loved it. She loved the places, islands. People love Malaysia for its tourist attraction.

She also added another image of Malaysia: a place for international degree programs:

> Education is growing bigger. Because I have noticed that so many people from the Arab countries are coming here. It is not a new thing. It has been around for a few years. They are talking international degree programs. When they want to go back to their home countries, they want to look for jobs. So they have to look for recognized degrees.

Cultural Issues. Coming from a local school in Abu Dhabi where she had friends from various countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan and Jordan, Denise seems to be comfortable hanging out with her friends from other countries at Monash Malaysia. With a sigh, she also told me that she did not quite get along with local

students although she tried hard at the beginning:

> In the classroom, they are fine. Outside of the classroom, no. I think it is our nature and culture. ..We joke around but they do not really understand what we mean. Maybe cultural differences. Some of them are not really open to having international friends. They are stick to local friends. It is sad to see Malaysia stick together within the same ethnic group, Indians together, Malaysians together, and Chinese together. It would be nice if they were more open-minded.

She also pointed out that the learning style of local students is quite different from hers. She gave an example of how local students participated in discussion:

> Malaysian students do not participate in discussion. They just listen. I just speak out and feel so bad about it. In Abu Dhabi, it is more active learning. You have to participate in the class, otherwise then you will get your score deducted. Everyone is fighting for answers. Something that a lecturer was trying to hide from him. Here nobody in my classroom wants to be up. If you do not raise your hand and nobody wants to answer, the lecturer is gonna ask you to stand up and try. Discussion will help us to understand. Just watching the lecture giving us answers is boring. Here everybody sleeps in the classroom. They are not listening to the lecturers, they are not arguing about things, so the class gets boring. Everybody is silent for two hours of class. Nobody asks a question. Everybody looks like everybody understands everything.

Despite such learning style differences, she stated that she felt lucky to have many friends from the beginning of her programs. Her friends in Malaysia also made her decide to complete her studies in Malaysia without spending one or two semesters in Australia.

Career Plan after Graduation. Denise double-majors in IT and business. After graduation, she is hoping to do an internship locally for six months or so to have some

work experiences. After that, she wants to pursue her Master's in IT and business in Australia. She also wants to work in Palestine, but she said that the situation there is not easy to live.

Her parents are very supportive of her decision. She described her father as being open-minded who never forced her and her two sisters to do anything against their will. She also commended, "Marriage is the last thing that my parents mention. They want us to be successful no matter what we are doing." Since she was a child, her parents have taught her the importance for women to have a good education and employment.

Study at Monash Malaysia for Prospective Students. Denise did not give a specific answer to the question whether she would recommend her program to prospective international students. By recognizing the global trend that degrees from English-speaking developed countries were getting more marketable in the world, even in the Arabic countries, she commented:

> It is like with this degree you will find a job, especially in the Arabic countries. It is also cheaper to study here than going to the States. And in the end, you can get the same degree. You can get almost the same type of education [in Malaysia] except for materials and lecturers.

Denise likes the culture of Malaysia in general, and she never regrets coming to Malaysia. However, she also explained that the teaching at Monash was not necessarily what she had expected before coming to Monash Malaysia: more local lecturers than Australian lecturers. She also seemed to be frustrated by the fact that their English and their teaching skills are not sufficient for lecturing:

> Local lecturers would have been working in Australian campuses or something

> so they are fluent in English. I was also expecting like the way they teach is more like giving us examples and experiences, not sticking to the slides or lecture style. This is what falls you asleep.
>
> Sometimes it is kind of annoying because their English is not really good. They might have the knowledge, but it is not enough. We need someone who can give students that knowledge. I do not think they have a proper tool to do that job. Maybe the language. If you are teaching, you need that language, you know. Their language is not good enough. I would say half of them are not good enough. Maybe I was expecting something more. What I was expecting was different from other students.

Denise also identified that for those prospective students who wants to get actively involved with out-of-class activities, Malaysia might not be the best choice. It seems that she was hoping to fully enjoy her campus life both in and out of class activities, but soon realized that student organizations were not well organized as she had expected:

> I would not mind having another opportunity to go somewhere else. I think if you want to have a full experience university life, I do not think Malaysia is good. Maybe my experience is not what I expected to be. Student society or student life is not what I thought it would be. I thought that it would be more active, you know. I thought that student council would be more powerful to have stronger issues to talk about. I think I did not pay much attention to their activities, but I did not find anything really interesting. I do not think they are powerful.

Life Experience 6: Nate (22, Vietnam, Taylor's College)

Nate is a twenty-two-year-old student who is in the second year of the RMIT program. I met him at the porch at his condominium where he was living with his younger brother. He told me that many students from Taylor's College live in his condominium. He just came back from a local restaurant where he worked part-time

during the school break.

Before Nate joined the RMIT program at Taylor's College, he studied banking four years in Australia. He decided to come over to Malaysia because his younger brother got accepted to Taylor's College. It is also due to the financial issues. He said that banking course in Australia taught him not only about banking but also about business negotiation and communication skills while he is studying coding and programming skills of IT in the RMIT program at Taylor's College.

During the interview, Nate compared his experience in Malaysia with that of Australia. He stated that there were not many difficulties in adjusting to Malaysian culture; instead, he had more difficulties in Australia although he did not explicitly explain in detail. He would often return to Vietnam during the school break. This might also help him to feel closer to home rather than living far away in Australia.

With regards to teaching, acknowledging the fact that there are more and more Vietnamese students coming to Malaysia to study, Nate commented with frustration:

> In Malaysia, even though it [the RMIT program] is an Australian program, it is still lecture-centered. In Australia, it is more student-oriented. They have more discussions. Students here are very quiet in the classroom. Also, we use copied textbooks in Malaysia, not originals. They [the original textbooks] are expensive here, I guess.

His comparison between his previous program in Australia and the RMIT program at Taylor's college is worth noting since this illustrates how the teaching can be interpreted by students even if it is still an Australian degree program. He also stated that most of the lecturers he knows are local Malaysians who speak English with some local accents, so called Malaysian English. Having spent some time in Australia previously, he

appeared not to catch any Malaysian accents.

Being asked about his career path, Nate said that he is not sure where to go after graduation. So far, he has three options in mind: one is to take after his father's business in Vietnam, the second is to work in Singapore, and the last is to go back to Australia for an MA.

3. How do international-linked programs identify and respond to the needs of international students in Malaysia?

Ministry-level: Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia

Welfare Services for International Students.

The Ministry of Higher Education is also responsible for looking into the welfare of international students and whether higher educational institutions provide sufficient support to them. When I asked if the welfare includes government scholarships for international students, Dr. Nasser responded as follows:

> No. We want to make sure that their welfare be well taken care of by their universities in Malaysia so that they [international students] do not have any problems. After they have any problem, universities will have problems with recognitions.

This statement suggests that the Ministry is monitoring the general welfare services for international students at the institutional level. With regards to financial support, it appears that each institution is responsible for providing scholarships for international students.

School-level

Case 1: School of Information Technology, Monash University Malaysia

Working with the Main Campus.

As the IT Dean stated, Monash Malaysia is part of one university that is offering global degrees but delivering locally in Malaysia. Monash is highly centralized. The courses have been monitored by the main campus in Australia with teaching materials selected and delivered by the main campus. This quality control is consistent throughout the Monash campuses and thus enables students to spend up to one year at one of the other campuses of Monash University.

Some of the courses, however, need to be localized and customized to meet the local demands of Malaysia. In this case, the IT school at Monash Malaysia offers certain projects that are not included in the original course of Australia:

> We have a big segment of SME, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises. Australia does not. We think that we generate projects based on that, which has no interest in Australia. So some of the classes are customized to meet the local needs, to meet the local relevance. This is flexibility (The IT Dean).

Small and Medium enterprises (SME) are stated as an important segment for the development of the Malaysian economy in the ninth Malaysian plan. In fact, SME is also discussed by Friedman (2007) as a crucial factor for developing the economy by growing and hiring middle-class people;

Regarding recruiting and student services, Monash Malaysia works closely with the main campus by following the same policies and procedures. School visits from Malaysia to Australia or vice versa are organized but not on a regular basis due to the budget constraint. However, the interview data reflect that they do not think it is

necessary to go to Australia because of their frequent communication by email.

Welfare Services for International Students.

Once new international students have arrived on campus, student services staff organize workshops so that they can assimilate into the Malaysian environment. This is followed by a cultural adaptation workshop. The cultural adaptation workshop started by a staff in 2004 after identifying some cultural issues that international students might face in Malaysia. Recently, current international students have been included to assist with the workshop. Student services staff members are gradually pushing these students to organize it based on fun-activities (Student services staff). Topics at the cultural adaptation workshops include safety issues such as how not to be cheated by a taxi driver and how to avoid walking alone at night. Staff members believe that the best thing for new international students is to get connected with senior students from the same country.

Another important reason for having senior students at the workshop is that learning styles and academic expectations at Monash Malaysia can be quite different from what new international students expected from their high school:

> In terms of teaching style, university is quite different. What is expected academically as a student studying here? What would happen if you have cheated? How to study independently. They want to be independent having a critical thinking. We all tell that at the beginning. International students need to maintain a certain standard of academic achievement. Otherwise, study visa will be pulled back (Student service staff).

The interview participants also stated that it is crucial for international students to learn how to respect other religions in the multi-religious Malaysia. Monash Main

campus has realized the effectiveness of the cultural adaptation workshop to emulate it in Australia (Student services staff).

Counseling is another aspect to help international students deal with homesickness. They provide preventive workshops throughout the semester. In addition to one-on-one counseling, they are also running workshops for stress management. They occasionally invite clinical psychologists to come to campus to address issues such as anger management for both students and staff members.

With regard to financial support, international students can apply for any scholarship available to local students. Scholarships are usually offered in the form of tuition waiver (Student service staff).

School-level

Case 2: School of Computing, Taylor's College

Welfare Services for International Students.

Taylor's College facilitates the International Student Office where international students seek academic, financial, and daily advice. Once international students are admitted and attend Taylor's College, the International Student Office will take over the responsibility from the International Marketing Office to assist international students on a daily basis. Staff members from the International Student Office are also responsible for picking up new international students at the airport, which is required by the Malaysian government (International student office staff). This pick-up service is also beneficial for their parents to know that their children have arrived in Malaysia safely and have been treated well. The International Student Office is also checking the class

attendance of international students to prevent them from failing in the program, which takes away their visa status (International student office staff).

Although staff of these two offices work very closely for international students, they are not working under the same section of the campus. Taylor's College has several campuses and international office staffs are allocated on different campuses. International marketing staffs are hoping to move into a new facility where all the schools will be set up and international divisions will be integrated into one so that international students will not get confused. Professional counseling support is also provided at the counseling unit.

Financial support is also provided in the form of tuition waivers. It is a 30% off the tuition fees during the entire duration of the course. This support is offered by Taylor's College for the past two or three years (Marketing staff #1). This is consistent to the strategic plan by Taylor's College to increase the ratio of international students by 2010. Prior to that, Taylor's College never offered financial support to international students (Marketing staff #1). Their international partner universities also offer financial support depending on the academic performance during the first year of the course.

When it comes to academic adjustment, there are some students who cannot follow the program and drop out despite the flexibility of the Taylor's program indicated above. In most of the cases, they will transfer to other Malaysian institutions (Marketing staff #1). If so, Taylor's College will write a release letter for the Malaysian immigration office. Once they have landed in Malaysia, they know that there are a plenty of options. According to the marketing and student service staff members, they seldom drop out and return to their home countries for any reason but financial

problems.

Working with their International Partner Universities.

Meeting the Local Needs. Director of the School of Computing mentioned that RMIT has a reputation that they always have job-ready graduates. Taylor's College is also responsible for letting the Malaysian industry know that they are producing graduates who are ready and highly-skilled to work in the IT industry. In order to meet the local needs, Taylor's College provides industrial training as an elective subject. This training enables students to work in local companies like an internship and get some on-site experiences. This is not available at RMIT in Australia. After negotiating the contract for the curriculum, they got an approval to include this industrial training in the curriculum to meet the local needs. They also provide a workshop for resume writing and interviewing skills so that students are equipped with proper business skills.

The Director also mentioned that program coordinators from RMIT have been to Taylor's College twice a year to discuss the curriculum including the possibilities of additional elective subjects to meet the local needs. After 2007 and onwards, the Director thinks that they would only meet once a year.

It is worth noting that the Director has also informed those from RMIT of the flexibility of their program at Taylor's so that students at RMIT twinning program will have more choice:

> We also want to make sure that if students do not want to stay at RMIT, they can go and transfer to other universities in the world. They have a choice. For example, those who finished the foundation program do not necessarily need go up to RMIT degree program. They can go to the UWE, the University of Western England in Bristol. For bachelor's degree program in IT, we have other credit transfer arrangements with universities in the U.K., and New

Zealand (Director of the School of Computing).

Responsiveness to the Job Market Need. One of the strengths of the IT twinning program with RMIT is the flexibility of the program so that there is no mismatch between the curriculum and the job market. They often talk about elective subjects offered at Taylor's to meet the local needs. The Director commented that the current slow-down in the IT industry is caused because the institutions do not provide sufficient educational programs to meet the market demand:

> It [a lack of jobs in the local IT industry] is especially bad here. Local university graduates are finding very difficult in finding a job. What is the reason? There are a lot of jobs out there. These people do not have the right skills that are needed to get employed in the market. There are some statistics that 75% of public university graduates in IT field are unemployed. They have found that they are teaching them theories. Theories stay the same. But practical skills that are taught at public universities are out-dated. So they are not getting employed (Director of the School of Computing).

The Director added that they are identifying most needed skills in IT and offering some IT-related certificate courses as elective subjects. These are based on ICT skill sets by the Multimedia Development Cooperation of Malaysia. That is how they differentiate from other colleges by producing graduates who are ready for jobs.

Staff Recruitment and Development. International recruitment is strategically organized by Taylor's whereas staff members from RMIT give a regular visit to Malaysia for evaluation and discussion of their programs. During their visit, the international marketing team gets some brief information of the strength of the RMIT programs and its admission requirement. One marketing staff called this meeting a "product-briefing" though which the team will learn how to sell better their product of

education. Taylor's College also sends their staff to their partner universities such as RMIT to know the product they are selling:

> Our principle is that if we are selling Australian program without visiting their campus, we do not know what we are selling. Actually physically go there at least once to see the university and to talk with people there. Then you can sell them better with a better understanding. We always make the best effort in ensuring the quality of the product we are selling (Marketing staff #1).

It is also interesting that the marketing staff take business seminars locally in order to make their marketing efforts more effective:

> I send my team sales seminar presentations, leadership skills, PR skills. Taylor's college offers that money. All are organized locally. This is very professional in terms of presentation skills, and public relations. They are business-oriented. Taylor's is a lot of focusing on staff development. So the workshop, seminars, training are almost on weekly bases for staff to attend (Marketing staff #1).

Since Taylor's College itself has set up a goal to increase the ratio of international students up to 20% by the year 2010, the interview data reveals their recruitment effort and challenges within the limited human and financial resources.

4. What are the major challenges of transnational education in Malaysia that influence its sustainability and effectiveness?

Ministry-level: Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia

Branding/Recognition of Malaysia as a Study Destination.

Branding or reputation of the country is viewed as a crucial factor for the long-term recruitment of international students by the Malaysian government. As stated in Chapter III, the Ninth Malaysian Plan identifies the branding of Malaysian

educational programs as a key factor for attracting 100,000 international students by 2010 (p.258). In this regard, Dr. Nasser stated that branding or recognition of Malaysian education overseas is also an important task at the government-level to make sure that Malaysian degrees and Malaysian education will be recognized by other countries. However, the reality is that "Malaysia is multi-racial, multi-religious, and multi-cultural. We have a good brand of Asian cultures here ... But [international students] do not come here to accept Malaysian degrees" (Dr. Nasser).

Enhancing the Quality of Teaching and Research.

The data identify that another key factor for Malaysia to attract international students is to improve the capacity for research in both public and private higher education sectors. It is also stated in the Ninth Malaysian Plan that enhancing the quality of research will enable institutions to become internationally competitive (Malaysia, 2006, p.257). In this regard, Mr. Abdulah commented:

> We are trying to achieve a new hub of education you know. In order to do so, quality of education, good quality of education is very important. More dialogues among different stakeholders, or collaboration, need to be enhanced to achieve the target.

He also explained that the increase of PhD. holders in both private and public education would contribute to improving the research capacity and eventually attracting international students to Malaysia:

> In our Malaysian Plan, by the year 2015, 40 % of our lecturers will be PhD holders in both public and private institutions. Therefore, we are sending our students and our lecturers outside simultaneously, and also receiving international students. So we have exposure. In this borderless world, we have more exposure to the outer world and we also have to maintain our own policy and curriculum. To produce the highly skilled workforce, we need more

> high-tech programs. Also we need to send more local students to be trained overseas in specific fields such as pharmacy and medical programs (Mr. Abdulah).

What emerged from the interviews is a serious concern over the quality of education. Their slogan for international recruitment is "international standard and high quality education at competitive course fees" (Ministry of Higher Education, n.d.). The Malaysian government appears to be well aware of the fact that if Malaysia cannot improve the quality of education, they will not be able to achieve the target number of international students and survive in the competitive education market.

In this regard, Dr. Nasser expressed:

> If we do not control our quality of education in Malaysia, other countries will be surpassing Malaysia for the quality. So we have to maintain quality and improve quality, update quality and monitor quality. Quality is important. We have to be friendly towards foreign students. We have to know that foreign students will bring foreign exchange. We must be aware of their existence. We must be friendly and respectful to them making sure that they are fine.

At present there is the National Accreditation Board, a quality control body under the Ministry of Higher Education. All the courses offered by the higher education institutions need to be approved by this agency to ensure quality. The Malaysian government appears to be cautious of controlling the quality while opening up the local market to international providers:

> In terms of quality, we need to safe guard our education by control. By providing the best service, quality and accommodations, we treat international students like customers. (Mr. Abdulah).

Cultural Issues

Preserving Asian/Malaysian Values.

Both interview participants identified that one of the factors attracting international students to international-linked programs is the low emotional cost for the cultural diversity of Malaysia:

> We have a good brand of Asian cultures here. So mental cost is lower. Of course, the financial cost is much lower than living in other countries. That is the major thing that we always compare. Unlike going to Australia or America, you are not far away from your family, food and environment. Therefore, you are emotionally secure (Dr. Nasser).

He also talked about the challenge of preserving Asian values while maintaining the international exposure to education in Malaysia:

> We need to protect our Asian values although we are exposed to Western cultures. We have to be pretty conscious about the regression of Asian values. Asian values need to be protected. These values can be reinforced through the education system. The education system is one way of enhancing and preserving our values. Because if you always think about Western values, then you will definitely forget about your own values. When you adopt Western values, they conflict with some of our own Asian values (Dr. Nasser).

Such concerns over the cultural values are also stated in the Ninth Malaysian Plan. As mentioned in Chapter III, the Malaysian government has emphasized enhancing national unity and identity while opening up its education market and training a highly-skilled workforce locally. The Ninth Malaysian Plan refers to its approach as holistic human capital development:

> As the nation progresses to become a developed nation as envisioned in Vision 2020, efforts will be intensified to develop knowledge workers who

> are competitive, flexible, dynamic and performance-oriented ...values of tolerance and moderation as well as a sense of belonging and pride in the nation, which are crucial in a multi-racial country will be given emphasis (Malaysia, 2006, p.259).

Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities (MAPCU)

Different Roles between the Private and Public Higher Education Sectors.

The current expansion of transnational education and the growing demand for higher education have also created some issues between the government and the private sector. As stated in the previous chapter, the public universities have a racial quota system; thus the enrollment of international students is limited at the first degree level and more emphasis is placed upon preserving national identity.

Mr. Lee commented over the limited access for international students to the public sector:

> Public universities are not so open to foreign students but only for postgraduate level. For first degree programs, we do not have enough places to go. Even local students have been rejected. As far as private universities and colleges are concerned, it is not a problem. A lot of spaces. We welcome international students.

This difference between the private and public sector on delivering education is largely affected by government policy. Despite the fact the government encourages public universities to set up a business center for bringing in students for additional revenue, the private sector appears to be quicker at responding to market needs on their own. This creates more frustration among the private sector over the lack of support by the government in terms of cost and human capacity building. Mr. Lee insisted that the government support should be distributed equally to both public and private higher

education sector for the development of higher education:

> Public institutions used to rely too much on government support while private institutions do not get a single cent from the government. It is all private enterprise. The government says, "It is your business venture that you are embarking upon." But what would happen if they do not support us? Definitely the government needs to support private education. For example, academic staff members at public institutions go for Ph.D. courses overseas under the government scholarships. Private institutions send staff overseas for PhD on their own. It costs a lot of money. So we are asking for scholarships from the government.

Possible Barriers for Attracting the 100,000 International Students.

Being asked if the target number of international students would be achieved by 2010, Mr. Lee immediately answered, "How can we achieve this target number? It is not easy." One of the barriers identified by Mr. Lee is immigration issues. The current immigration policy requires international students to follow six steps to study in Malaysia:

1. Students submit all the application forms and relevant documents to the intended educational institution
2. The institution applies for a student pass at the Malaysian Immigration Department.
3. Letter of approval for the student pass will be released by the Malaysian Immigration Department.
4. Before leaving for Malaysia, the student contacts the educational institution in Malaysia about the date of arrival and flight number.
5. The educational institution's representatives will receive the students at the immigration check-point.
6. The educational institution will submit the student's passport to the Immigration Department to affix student pass sticker (Ministry of Higher Education, n.d.).

This procedure shows that international students do not have to contact the Embassy of

Malaysia in their home country; they can just wait for the intended educational institutions to prepare for their student pass. From the viewpoint of educational institutions, this gives them a lot of work from the application period to the arrival period, including the airport pick-up. MAPCU, being a mediator between private higher education institutions and the government, has been trying to make the immigration requirements easier and time-efficient for international students:

> MAPCU are very aware of this issue [of immigration]. We are trying to set up a dialogue meeting with the minister of Foreign Affairs. Colleges are trying to recruit international students, but there is a barrier; immigration policy and the delay of visa. We want to make it a very student-friendly policy (Mr. Lee).

School-level

Case 1: School of Information Technology, Monash University Malaysia

Branding/Reputation of the Institution.

Monash Malaysia is the first branch campus in Malaysia and its reputation for international presence is crucial for maintaining the current increase of students at Monash Malaysia campus. All interviewed staff stated that Monash has been ranked 33rd in international university ranking[2]. Monash was also highest-ranking Australian university in IT in the Times Higher Education Supplement 2004 (New Straits Times, 2006, May 24).

In the past, Monash Malaysia experienced a decreased enrollment at the

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[2] Monash was one of the six Australian universities that were chosen top 100 international universities in 2004 by the Times Higher Education Supplement. Other five universities are Australian National University (16), University of Melbourne (22), University of South Wales (36), University of Sydney (40), and University of Queensland (49) (Rankings of Australian University, n.d.).

Faculty of Medicine program causing its termination (Arachi, 2005). However, with the ongoing demand for medical sciences, Monash Malaysia will set up the School of Medicine and Health Sciences in 2007. This medical school will enable Monash to gain a more prestigious status. The School of Information Technology (SIT) also started the PhD and Master Programs in 2006. The Dean emphasized that the medicine and graduate programs will definitely brand Monash Malaysia as the best school to choose.

Monash Malaysia is also known for both of its international ranking and high employment of graduates. A marketing staff remarked:

> Our graduates are high employed in the market. There is a serious issue of unemployment of graduates in Malaysia, but this does not apply to Monash graduates. They are highly skilled and highly employed.

One of the reasons for the high marketability of the school's graduates is its focus on market-sensitive and customer-oriented to meet students' needs. For example, the IT school offers two degree programs, the Bachelor of Information Technology and the Bachelor of Information Technology and System. In addition to these degree programs, this school offers various IT industry certificate courses that are internationally recognized for students to prepare for the job market before graduation (Monash University Malaysia, n.d.).

More Emphasis on Research Capacity Building.

In addition to the sensitivity of the market needs, the Monash Malaysia identifies research capacity as a crucial factor for enhancing teaching, branding Monash education and recruiting students. Although it is located in Malaysia, Monash Malaysia campus is centralized by the main office for quality assurance. The Monash University

Act regulates to ensure that the academic quality expected of Monash University is met (Monash University Malaysia, n.d.).

Arachi (2005) states more emphasis on locally and internationally recognized and accredited R&D is necessary for the sustainability of their institutional programs in Malaysia. The IT Dean expressed the synergy of research and teaching:

> We can compete with others for our quality as a top university. We are research-active… To be a good teacher, you must be a good researcher. Every staff must be research-active. So we will target the top segment as a research university and then we have started to be research active. Hopefully our research capability will transcend down to the teaching. This is a marketing strategy; we have to be research active. We are a global university, just locating in Malaysia. Best practices in research and teaching will attract students to Monash Malaysia. In that sense, our group is global. We are locally present, delivering centrally monitored quality courses locally.

Another way of branding their name overseas outside of Malaysia, Monash Malaysia is making an occasional public presence as well as regular visits to local high schools in other countries to create a positive image of the school. This is not necessarily organized by every region for recruitment. A marketing staff explained one of the marketing strategies in Indonesia:

> We also have a public lecture in Jakarta for a professor from here to give some talks. Public lectures are formed by our accumulated teams and we select different topics that the possible market is interested in at the hotel. It will attract people to come in and know more about Monash Malaysia. It is a public lecture on general topics. It will attract media and we can get the publicity. That is how we make our brand strong in Indonesia.

Such a public presence will attract more students from other countries because "the name of the university will basically attract international students from other countries

of the world" (Student service staff). This public presence for branding also illustrates the increasing competition in the recruiting market.

Pre-university Courses to Meet the Entry Requirement.

As stated previously, the Middle East has been identified as a target region by the Malaysian government. However, the interview data reveal that Monash Malaysia does not necessarily see the region as an attracting market although inquiries from this region are increasing. Many students from there will have to take pre-university courses to enter a Monash Malaysia undergraduate program. They do not meet the entry requirement by the Monash main campus even when they finished their local high schools:

> Middle Eastern countries for us are more for sponsored students. In many cases, we do not recognize their high school qualifications for the Middle-Eastern students. A lot of them do pre-u program or foundation programs (Marketing staff).

The IT Dean also expressed concerns over the entry requirement of student from the Middle East:

> We have a big group of student from the Middle East. It is starting. Unfortunately, documents are not sufficient to prove that their academic standard is equivalent to our admission requirement. And also we are stuck with the fact that we do not know what is equivalent to our entry requirement.

From students' viewpoint, it is not efficient to spend one or more additional period of time before entering a degree program with additional cost after finishing their local high schools. From Monash Malaysia's side, this pre-university course seems to be another strategy to recruit more prospective students from overseas.

Pre-University Courses as a Strategy for Recruiting International Students.

Pre-university or foundation courses have been common in Malaysia for local students to pursue undergraduate programs overseas. They have been offered at private colleges that have international linked programs. Monash Malaysia also offers foundation courses at Sunday University College, their local partner university college in Malaysia. Like other institutions, these pre-university courses seem to enable Monash Malaysia to attract international applicants whose high school diplomas do not meet the entry requirement to degree programs.

In addition, Monash International sets up Monash Colleges throughout the world. Monash College is an entry pathway for undergraduate diploma to Monash University that can be found in some campuses in Australia, but also in four countries: Singapore; Guangzhou, China; Jakarta, Indonesia and Colombo, Sri Lanka. Each Monash College campus assures the same approach to teaching and curriculum for higher education of undergraduate diplomas that they offer. Monash College's specialized undergraduate diplomas provide an alternative entry point into more than 50 Monash University undergraduate degree programs (Monash University, n.d.).

Having their own pre-university courses worldwide seems to be efficient to brand their education and attract more students in those regions.

Collaboration and Challenges with the Government.

The interview data with staff illustrate some issues and challenges that need to be resolved with the government. Regarding international students recruitment, Monash Malaysia has been organizing their own education seminars and recruitment fairs overseas, but it also participates in education fairs organized by the Ministry of Higher

Education and MATRADE. MATRADE will lead to explore it by hosting education fairs for the first few years, but after that "you are on your own" (Marketing staff). Therefore, it is very crucial for a private institution like Monash Malaysia to set up its own marketing strategy and improve its own expertise for recruitment.

Staff Recruitment Policy and High Ratio for Local Staff. One of the challenges that have been identified in the interviews is the staff recruitment policy controlled by the Malaysian government. There are specific requirement for institutions like Monash to hire teaching staff. The criteria, identified by the Dean of the School of IT during the interview, include over the age of 30, prior teaching experience, and PhD qualification. There are also certain procedures that they have to follow for recruiting teaching staff:

1. submit job-opening related documents to the Ministry of Higher Education for approval
2. advertise it locally in Malaysia
3. advertise it overseas if institution cannot find a possible local candidate in Malaysia
4. select the final candidate
5. submit the documents of the final candidate to the Ministry of Higher Education
6. once it gets approved, contact the Ministry of immigration for work permit including the criminal records

(based on the interview with the IT Dean).

This illustrates the government's intension to sustain the quality of education, but also to preserve a job market for local graduates. However, this tight control will affect Monash Malaysia or any other institutions to recruit potential foreign-born teaching candidates. Moreover, the worst scenario is that Monash Malaysia will lose out on an international candidate due to a six-month waiting period for a work permit.

Due to this immigration restriction and the availability of local staff being fluent in English, University Monash Malaysia tends to hire local staff. The recent data (Monash University, n.d.) indicates that Monash Malaysia has instituted 289 staff in total; 142 academic staff and 148 general staff, out of which, 285 are locally employed.

Work Permit Regulation for International Student. Another challenge with the government that has been mentioned by the interview participants is the limited job opportunities for international student: part time job during their studies and work permit after graduation. Part-time job for international students is strictly regulated and the procedures include paperwork and interview at the Ministry of Immigration, that results that "most of the international students are more likely not to work during their studies" (Student service staff).

Work permit after graduation is also another challenge for international students to face in Malaysia. Due to the regulation for work permits to international students and the high unemployment rate of local graduates, "Malaysian employers tend to hire local graduates" (Student service staff). Most of international students have to leave Malaysia unless they can show an employer that "they have particular skills that cannot be found in Malaysia" (Student service staff). Interview participants concerned that this limited job opportunities for current international graduates will result in losing their prospective international students who think study abroad as a way to work overseas. They would rather choose other countries like Singapore which is more open to hiring international graduates:

> So we are not as open as Singapore. Singapore is very open to taking in international graduates. The Malaysian government is not still open to hiring actively international students. In Singapore if you have finished your degree

> there, you can actually find a job there and stay on. We are hoping that the government would open that possibility, but at the same time if you read the news, we have a growing unemployment rate within local graduates. So they are still careful of that. At this stage, private institutions are not pushing the government to open up the job market to international graduates (Student service staff).

Research Incentives by the Government. Another consideration identified in the interviews is the need of governmental financial support to the private higher education sector. Since Monash Malaysia like other private institutions is not subsidized by the Malaysian government, their revenue totally relies on students' tuition fees. This has been limiting private institutions to develop its research capacity. However, the Malaysian government has recently started the research grant for both private and public sector to apply. The only requirement is whether the institute has a graduate program. Since Monash Malaysia has graduate programs at the School of IT, they are also eligible for this application. This grant is intended to develop a research capacity in the entire higher education in Malaysia. This grant is called Intensified Research in Prioritized Area (IRPA), which has been set up under the Ninth Malaysian Plan. With the growing needs of research capacity building and branding of Malaysian education, this grant is recognized as a positive change in the government support for research:

> There is a huge demand for research capacity. To be competitive, we have to check out our research capability and as result we must encourage more people to be active in doing research. This is a big movement in Malaysia to encourage good researchers (The IT Dean).

He also expressed that this incentive by the government for research will eventually push Monash Malaysia to hire staff with PhDs so that their achievement in research will

establish the reputation of Monash Malaysia internationally. The research publication will be also reflected in their bonus system.

Recognition of Branch Campus Status Being Separated from the Other Private Institutions. The committees of four international branch campuses in Malaysia have been appealing to the Ministry of Higher Education to separate them from other private institutions by making a different category of branch campus in Malaysian higher education (The IT Dean). First of all, unlike other international programs such as twinning, degree programs at these branch campuses have been accredited by a country where the main campus is located:

> We are already allowed to confer degrees back in Australia. What is accreditation in local context? We are already ranked 33 in the world university rankings. So they have to treat us [international branch campuses] differently. Twinning ones need to be accredited, but we have been accredited, not different from the main campus (The IT Dean).

He added that sooner or later the Ministry would eventually separate a category of branch campus from the other private institutions.

Different Role between the Private and Public Higher Education Sectors.

Interview participants clearly stated the role of private higher education sector like Monash Malaysia is totally different from that of public sector. Private higher education offers more varieties of programs that are market-sensitive and flexible to students needs:

> We offshore programs can give more option to locals. We used to have two options, public local institutions or overseas. We cannot get into public local institutions because it was very competitive. Nowadays, more and more people can afford those offshore programs. For those who cannot afford, they can finish the programs in Malaysia locally. Public institutions cannot accept all the possible local students. They are still rejecting local students. They can not

> meet their needs. Public institutions are more tailored for Malays. and for Chinese and other non-Malay would choose to go to private institutions if they can afford (Marketing staff).

This market-sensitivity of Monash Malaysia is also reflected in their vision to increase the ratio of international students whereas undergraduate programs at public universities limits the number of international students due to the racial quota system:

> We want to make our campus multinational. We do not want to have Malaysian students only. At the moment, 25% of our student population is from other countries from 40 different countries. Student experiences needs to be well-blended to our teaching. Because we have a limited budget, we try to look closely at each of the target market that we can go to for promotion (Marketing staff).

Possible Impacts of Transnational Education on the Local Contexts.

Quality Improvement. One of the issues raised is that having a world-class university like Monash within their local system will make other local universities more conscious of quality. Quality is monitored by the Malaysian Quality Framework (MQF) division of the Ministry of Higher Education. The MQF also ranks universities including branch campuses. However, public universities have been heavily subsidized and to some extent protected by the government. Monash Malaysia is also more conscious of quality internally and externally:

> We have to be more quality conscious otherwise we will be left behind. World Class University is presence here. They [local universities] would have to be more conscious of quality. We compare and contrast with other local universities including all these international presence. So we have to compare internally and also externally. We have to elevate the status in terms of teaching and research (The IT Dean).

More Focus on Research. Since Monash Malaysia is a research-oriented university, it is expected to have more collaborative research with local universities. Such collaborative research will eventually raise the rank of both Monash and local universities in international rankings as it stated below:

> The whole world is also looking at transparency and also ranking. We have indirectly brought competition into local education market. People are more conscious of international ranking. Ranking depends on agencies. U.K. or U.S.. The only way to contribute to this kind of ranking is the capability of teaching and research (The IT Dean).

However, the current situation is that local universities, even "the top universities in Malaysia are ranked around 100 in university ranking while our university is #33 in the world" (Marketing staff). In regards to teaching and research, Monash Malaysia is now competing in a different field from other local universities, and does not perceive that "local players are not our competitors" (Marketing staff).

Case 2: School of Computing, Taylor's College

Branding/Reputation of the Institution.

Taylor's College, which has been recently updated to a university status, is one of the pioneer colleges that started twinning programs in the 1980s. Since being established in 1969 as a branch of Taylor's College Australia, it has also been known for its quality education and, for that reason, as one of the most popular colleges for application in Malaysia. Even now, the image of Taylor's is "Do you want Australian education? Taylor's is the place to go to" (Marketing staff #2).

Since there are as many as 600 private institutions nationwide, branding of the

institution itself or having a partner university with an international reputation is a crucial factor for attracting students:

> It [branding] is very important. Because so many IT schools in Malaysia. After a while, there are the same. So we try to differentiate ourselves from others. Another thing to remember is that Taylor's college brand is the most popular and the most famous and most expensive private college of all the private colleges. We have that quality (Director of the School of Computing).

As shown in the Table 5-5, Taylor's IT program is relatively expensive compared with the average. This implies that parents send their children expecting a quality education at Taylor's College. Therefore, Taylor's has to make sure that they can provide quality that is worthy of higher tuition.

Table 5-5. Comparison between Taylor's IT Program and Other IT programs

IT Programs for comparison	Tuition fees	
3+0 RMIT Bachelor of Applied Sciences (Computer Sciences)*	US$15,031	(RM 57,120)
Private colleges' 3+0 international degree program (3 years in Malaysia)**	US$ 8,684-13,158	
Private colleges' twinning degree program (2 years in Malaysia + 1 year in Australia)**	US$ 23,053	
Foreign university branch campus degree program (3 years)**	US$13,421-21,579	

Note: exchange rate: US$1=RM3.80

Source: * academic terms and fee schedule for year 2006 (Taylor's College, 2006)

**study opportunities in Malaysia (Webway, 2006)

International marketing staff also stated that raising the awareness of Taylor's College in other countries is crucial before starting international recruitment so that students would be able to go to local agents for further inquiries:

> Our objective is that we ensure every country we go to people know about Taylor's college. We try to increase the awareness. Because if we go there

> for exhibition or seminar whether it is organized by our own or not, we can get inquiries from students who know about Taylor's and they go to local agents. So the main thing is to create the awareness. And we also create not only the awareness of the Taylor's College but also the awareness of local agents that Taylor's College is represented in your country by so and so agents. So if you have any concerns or issues, you can always direct your questions to the agents which represent us (Marketing staff #1).

As for RMIT, it has been ranked positively in terms of job prospects in the world university ranking (Director of the School of Computing). RMIT released a strategic paper in 2005 to become one of the top Australian universities by 2010. It is also clearly stated in the paper that they aim to be highly ranked in the top 100 universities by the UK Times Higher Education University Ranking (RMIT University, 2005, p.13).

Another factor that makes Taylor's College different from other Malaysian institutions is the high academic performance of their graduates:

> Every year over the past thirty years our students have performed superbly. If you think of the statistics for the past thirty years from this country, which institution which school has produced the most students who got admitted into Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford, you know, MIT? They are from Taylor's College. It has appeared in the press. We students every year for the past five to six years, I do not remember, but less then 10 students who got admitted to Princeton, Harvard, Cornell, Oxford, Cambridge from the entire Malaysia. Most of them are from Taylor's. So that is the reputation that we have gained over the years. This is the uniqueness, I would say, between Taylor's and other local institutions (Marketing staff #2).

Such reputation of graduates for their education or career would definitely affect the local and international recruitment.

More Emphasis on Research Capacity Building.

As stated above, Taylor's College has been conferred a university status, meaning that they can offer their own degrees. As a part of branding itself as a university, Taylor's College is now focusing on research to enhance both teaching and research:

> Both public and private sectors are teaching-based. However, we need to be more focused on research to compete with others. That is what Taylor's is going, researched-based university college, you know (Marketing staff #1).

According to the Director of the School of Computing, RMIT does not impose any teaching requirements for hiring teaching staff in their twinning programs. The requirements depend on Taylor's side. The Director has thus set a guideline to hire teaching staff with better qualification above Master's degree and research skills. The higher the degree, the better he will get paid based on Taylor's merit-based system:

> The college is going through a strong research motivation, so we also try to encourage our lecturers, master's degree holders to go beyond the master's and teaching and to do research leading up to PhD. They have 40 days for annual leaves every year. They must take annual leaves. So they are free to negotiate their own leaves outside their semester break. Maximum numbers of hours of teaching is 18 hours. This is very good. I am also responsible for hiring and evaluating teaching performance. The minimum requirement for teaching is Master's degree and three years of teaching, especially for RMIT (Director of the School of Computing).

Branding/Reputation of Malaysia as an Education Hub.

Unlike Monash Malaysia with its higher educational reputation overseas, Taylor's College, like other local private colleges, seems to have more challenges in recruiting international students. One of the challenges is that Malaysia is not yet

well-recognized as an education hub in other countries, especially non-Muslim countries. Although Taylor's College recruits international students extensively in the Asian region, they have to start by answering the specific question, "Why Malaysia?"

This discussion of branding Malaysia as an education hub relates to international marketing efforts of Taylor's College at an institutional level.

Increasing Competition in the International Student Recruitment.

Like the Monash Malaysia case, interviews with staff identify that there are two types of competition: inter-Malaysian and inter-country competition. As stated above, other local private colleges offer international linked programs at lower cost whereas Taylor's College is well known for high tuition fees and good quality. In terms of branch campuses in Malaysia, the Director of the School of Computing put them in a "totally different market" due to the high tuition fees shown in Table 5-5.

As for international competition, all the interviewed staff mentioned that Singapore and China are their biggest competitors in the region by setting up international branch campuses and providing twinning programs locally. Marketing staff commented with frustration how the international student recruitment has become competitive for the last decade:

> If you look at ten years ago, Malaysia was the first country, one of the first countries that introduced twinning programs. Today, we are still talking about twinning programs. Singapore, and China also joined this market, and they are talking about branch campuses (Marketing staff #1).

Another marketing staff stated that international linked programs like twinning programs are very market-sensitive, but the market demand is changing drastically in many markets where they go to for recruitment. He described the changing climate of

the education market in China and the difficulties in recruiting Chinese students to Taylor's programs in Malaysia:

> China, oh my god, the market is changing so fast. The overall number of Chinese students is dropping because of the internal competition and all other countries' competition. One of my major agents from China even Japanese institutions right now is promoting to recruit Chinese students. Not because of their education programs, but because of the flexibility of getting a job in Japan. I mean, in respect of all the Chinese nationals, after studying in Japan (Marketing staff #2).

He also mentioned that Taylor's international partner universities in Australia are now offering programs in China with local colleges. In other words, Chinese students can take Australian degree programs without coming over to Malaysia. This growth of transnational education in China has created more competition for Taylor's and other Malaysian institutions in the recruitment market.

Another marketing staff also revealed a similar concern over China in which the number of Chinese students studying in Malaysia as a whole is not increasing. According to the interviews, there was a 20 % drop in Chinese students between 2005 and 2006. One of the biggest reasons is because China is now offering similar programs locally.

With regard to target countries and regions, Taylor's marketing team has their own target markets. As of June 2006, they had students from more than 40 countries. Out of these 40 countries, their focuses are on 20 countries including Indonesia, Bangladesh, China, and other neighboring countries, mainly South Asia and South East Asia. These 20 target countries are those that they physically go to for recruitment: they market there, they advertise there, and they have local agents with whom they work

closely.

In the other 20 countries, marketing staff at Taylor's College do not physically go there. The local agents represent them and they look through their profile to see if the agents are reliable. Whether the area is a target or not, it appears that local agents take a key role in providing adequate information and recruiting students in the region. Some issues related to local agents will be discussed later in this section.

Another challenge for recruitment is that other institutions in target regions are also offering the same programs that are conducted at Taylor's College. For example, RMIT has recently set up a branch campus in Vietnam[3]. They also have twinning arrangements with institutions in China. As such, international partner universities, even if they have a certain educational agreement such as twinning, seem to be getting more competitive to gain more profit.

Emerging Key Factors for Effective International Recruitment.

Taylor's College puts emphasis on staff development for international recruitment because they have acknowledged the fact from their recruitment experiences that the international education market is getting more competitive than ever. Branding, focus on research and teaching, high academic performances of their students, and high marketability of their students, are also important factors for recruiting students overseas as illustrated above. This section will describe some other key challenges of international marketing that have emerged from the interview data.

Local Agent Management. One marketing staff remarked that everything they

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[3] Despite the increasing educational opportunities available in Vietnam, Vietnamese students are still coming over to Malaysia for international degrees. It is due to the two to three-year compulsory military training. If they complete their studies in Malaysia, it is more likely that they stay overseas to work (Director of the School of Computing).

are doing is a challenge. Above all, local agent management is, in his words, a "headache," the biggest challenge in their recruitment. Currently, about 60% of international students at Taylor's College are brought in by local agents and another 40% send their applications directly to Taylor's College. They have had a 10 to 15% increase of international students every year for the past four years. Therefore, a good network of local agents plays a crucial role in successful international recruitment.

Like other private institutions in Malaysia, Taylor's marketing team has their own way of selecting and managing the local agents. They find potential local agents by using various networks they have: students and their parents, marketing staff from other Malaysian colleges, and MATRADE. After selecting local agents, they give a trial period, normally about six months to one year, during which they are assessed on their ability to send quality students to Taylor's College. Upon satisfactory results, the agent will be appointed as an official local agent by Taylor's College (Marketing staff #1).

What emerged from the interview data is that the marketing team is very cautious of selecting local agents. Both marketing staffs mentioned that it is hard to find a very good agent for various reasons. These local agents are more business-oriented. If another college from Malaysia or a different country offers a higher commission fee to the agent, they will easily switch from Taylor's College to the other one or put forth a greater effort for the other institution to recruit more students for higher commission fees. Like Taylor's College, local agents are also market-sensitive to meet the demand and supply in the recruitment market:

> They [local agents] survive on the commission and service charge on students, you know … One of our major agents from China is working with even Japanese institutions to recruit Chinese students. The commission

> that the agents get from Japanese universities is higher. Because they are all private institutions, the commission should be higher. Local agent management is so complicated, not only culturally but in every aspect (Marketing staff #2).

Another issue that they are facing in terms of local agent management is the trust issue. As stated above, local agents are more geared toward business by collecting commission and service fees. The marketing team at Taylor's College has learned from their own experiences that they have to be very careful with some agents' motives of recruitment.

> To my disappointment, my ten year experience in this job tells me that in certain parts of the world you really cannot trust anybody. I hate to say that. Apparently, in the beginning of this, we were not aware of this. We simply issued or appointed local people as our agents and allowed them to promote and then complaints came from students and their parents. Some informed us that they were cheated and they were charged a huge sum of service fees without being aware of it. Incorrect information about admission requirement, about our programs, about the expenses in Malaysia, all these things they were cheating. And the worst thing is that some agents ran away with students' money. If you talk with any international people in this industry in Malaysia, that is our biggest concern, especially from certain countries (Marketing staff #2).

Timing for Recruitment in Other Countries. Different country has a different education system and a different examination system for the admission to local higher educational institutions. For effective on-site recruitment overseas within a limited period of time and budget, timing is also identified as an influential factor:

> Let's say, when are they going for the national exam? When are the results coming out? You know, simply going to place before the results are coming out, what is the point? (Marketing staff #1).

It is also possible that the best time to visit one country for recruitment would conflict with those in other countries. They would have to figure out the country in which they will have an effective recruitment:

> Timing is one of the horrible things that we as international recruiters face. Too many countries and all different timings. How can we schedule our flight? This is also important. They clash. Which country should I choose to visit and how? This is another challenge. They are equally important and are happening at the same time (Marketing staff #2).

Education system also includes admission requirement. The more applications they get from various countries, the more expertise in each education system is required to find out whether their education would meet the admission requirement to the international-linked program. If their education is not considered equivalent, students would have to take a foundation course to meet the requirement:

> Although education in years it is equivalent to the British O level in terms of the years of school, but we do not think that the quality of your education is not on top of that. So we will have to force you to spend extra year for pre-University or foundation program (Marketing staff #2).

There are some more factors in the success of international recruitment. However, what is identified in the interviews as emerging success factors are market research skills of education system and timing, and good communication skills with different stakeholders such as local agents and parents.

Collaboration and Challenges with the Government.

Overall, the interview participants appeared to appreciate the current governmental effort in the liberalization of private higher education sector and international recruitment to achieve the target number of 100,000 international students

by 2010. However, as repeatedly mentioned, the market needs in education are changing so rapidly that some concerns over the Malaysian government surfaced in the data.

The Role of Malaysian Education Centers Overseas. Although the Malaysian government has set up five Malaysian education centers in the target countries, the role of the centers is not viewed sufficient to meet one of the two goals stated in Chapter III; they need to make more effort in getting Malaysian local degrees recognized overseas:

> The government has established branch offices overseas. What happens here is that I have been working closely with the education promotion office overseas. I know them very well. Their main responsibilities right now is to bring in foreign students to study in Malaysia. Their responsibility is not to go out there to get Malaysian degrees recognized. Because the government has a target that by the year 2010 they want to have 100,000 international students in Malaysia. Their main responsibility is to bring in the student number, nothing else. So I should say quantity is more than quality. They do not focus on getting the local degrees recognized overseas
> (Marketing staff #1).

International Recognition of Malaysian Degrees at Government Level. More and more private colleges have been upgraded to university status, and Taylor's College is one of those. As MAPCU stated in the previous section, the Malaysian government's first attempt was that these upgraded university colleges should gradually stop offering international linked programs to offer their own degree programs only. However, this attempt was in vain because it appears so unrealistic from the private sector's side. Above all, what is critical for these upgraded private college universities is that the Malaysian government needs to talk with other governments to get Malaysian degrees recognized overseas:

> Whenever we have a forum with the ministry or administration, we are all telling them to take the lead. If the government would say tomorrow that all the private institutions are not allowed to conduct foreign degree programs any more, we will lose international students. Because local degrees are not recognized. That is why we are urging the government, at least from the private sector, to say "You should take the lead. We are getting all these degrees recognized because it will become G-G issues. It is not a college-government issue" (Marketing staff #2).

International Education Fairs by the Malaysian Government. There are two types of education exhibitions: one is organized by the Ministry of Higher Education and the other one is by MATRADE. Ministry of Higher Education itself is quite new and it appears that Taylor's marketing team appreciates more the expertise of MATRADE that have explored the potential markets and host educational exhibitions subsidized by the government. There are also pros and cons in terms of the types of educational fairs by MATRADE:

> MATRADE organizes two types of exhibitions. They have Malaysian only types of education when only Malaysian colleges are involved. So they go there for Malaysian college exhibition. They also organize international exhibition where education from all over the world is participating in the exhibition. We are not interested in that type of international fair. Because when we join that kind of fair, you see some other countries, like America, U.K., and even Japan. So students are not much interested in Malaysia (Marketing staff #1).

Realizing that the international fair is not so effective with so many competitors around the globe, MATRADE focuses more on organizing Malaysian education exhibitions overseas. However, MATRADE is a governmental department under the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, where education is not a big piece of their promotion.

Therefore, they cannot solely commit to promoting education:

> They [MATRADE] are getting involved with too many different industries. They have all their business to do. So education is just a small part [for MATRADE] compared with other electronic or manufacturing industry. MATRADE does not have a specialized department in education. Hopefully later as this industry grows bigger, they might have a special department in education (Marketing staff #2).

Control by the Government for International Branch Campuses. Given the increasing competition in the education industry, the interview participating show some frustration with the governmental restriction over the set-up of international branch campuses in Malaysia:

> We have only four [branch campuses]. They were all set up after the economic crisis and after that no more. There is a restriction by the government. I do not understand why. They should encourage more if they want to be an education hub. That is what Singapore is doing. Singapore has got the University of New South Wales, #1 Australia university branch campus there. If we do not wake up at that direction, we are gonna lose a lot of international students to Singapore (Marketing staff #1).

> They [Singapore and other countries] are talking about branch campuses. We are still talking about twinning programs. It is so difficult to set up branch campuses here because setting up branch campuses is everywhere now. We are frustrated. We may be still pioneers in setting up twinning or all these franchised programs, but people have caught up and surpass us (Marketing staff #2).

Limited Opportunities and Regulation of Part-Time Job and Work Permit for International Student. International applicants often ask the question of if they can work part-time in Malaysia. They are allowed to work part-time, but the requirement imposed on international students is not easy to meet. One of the toughest requirements is that

international students can work only during their school holiday period, which should be longer than two weeks (Marketing staff #2). In addition, not all the jobs are applicable to international students, "Like being a waiter, washing dishes. Very limited job. Basically any job that deals with handling money is not allowed" (Marketing staff #1).

Another requirement is that international students who want to apply for a part-time work permit need to go for an interview at the Malaysian immigration office, but due to the complexity of the procedure, not many students are willing to apply for this permit. A staff revealed, "Unfortunately I do not think many students got approval. I do not think anybody can get it. I do not think this new policy would help" (Marketing staff #2). Whenever being asked a question about part-time work permit, he responds to international applicants, "Yes and no. You can legally work but no there are many restrictions. So it is up to you" (Marketing staff #1).

This regulation on part-time permits also relates to work permits after their graduation. As stated above, other countries such as Japan and Cyprus are attracting more international students than Malaysia in the same market because they provide more flexibility for international students to work after graduation.

Different Roles between the Private and Public Higher Education Sector.

It seems very clear among the interview participants that private higher education in Malaysia plays a different role from public higher education for various reasons such as the language policy and the racial quota system to admission. With regards to international recruitment, the public sector is "not desperate at attracting international students" (International student office staff).

> There are not sufficient places even for local students [at public institutions]. They will be definitely opening up some for international students. But we cannot open too many. Because if we open up too many, we will create big frustration among locals, who cannot even get in. Unlike universities in Australia and the U.S., we do not have sufficient places for local students. It is ok to encourage international students, but right now among Malaysia universities public universities cannot support local numbers (Marketing staff #1).

The language for instruction, Bahasa Melayu in the public sector and English in the private sector, seems to create a huge gab between the roles of these two sectors:

> The public universities are trying to have dual programs, one in Malay, and the other one in English. Postgraduate programs at public institutions are offered in English whereas undergraduate programs are in Malay. Therefore, the public institutions do not attract international students because all are conducted in Bahasa Melayu. They attract international students for postgraduate programs. That is why they are replying on the private education providers for undergraduate program to accept international students (Marketing staff #2).

Although the public higher education used to be fully subsidized by the government, it is getting less funded and thus, they are now working harder to find their financial resources including their research fund. By saying that there is no competition between the private and public higher education sectors at present, he commented:

> They [public higher educational institutions] also have to look outside. They are also trying to change. They need to be market sensitive. For example, the language for instruction is mostly Bahasa Melayu. They need to treat students better like their good customers (Director of the School of Computing).

Possible Impacts of Transnational Education on the Local Contexts.

There are various factors affecting local education contexts in different dimensions. The findings have previously stated factors such as branding, competition, research incentives and government initiatives. One of the interview participants states that international exposures for Malaysian students to learning and teaching at international-linked programs will bring different outcomes in terms of their way of thinking. Another staff commented:

> If more and more Malaysian students will graduate from 3+0, they have no international exposure or experience. But it is a foreign program. So they are in between. In a certain way, they are doing in a Malaysian way. In another way, they are western ways. If you compare 3+0 with 1+2 and 2+1 students who have studied abroad, they are not so white because they have not been abroad to study. Those students in the public institutions have a totally different mindset (Marketing staff #1).

Another concern also emerged through the interviews over the impacts on cultural values of Malaysians imposed by the rapid expansion of transnational education. Another staff refers to the current Malaysia as being at a crossroad:

> They [the Malaysian government] seek economic benefits by opening the market. Such rapid change will change the way of life in the family, family value. For example, think rationally, respect the elder. We need more involvement of family and community to preserve such values. How can we protect our national profits by adapting to global forces? That is a challenge, indeed. Such external change will change the social contexts in Malaysia. We need to be more selective (Marketing staff #2).

Summary

Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to relate the findings of the interview data by using quotations and documentation on each sub-case. Contrasting each case at the ministry-level, MAPCU, and school-level, several important themes identified by different stakeholders have emerged. These descriptive findings will lead to the discussion in the next chapter. The data findings suggest that the economic dimension of transnational education programs in Malaysia has been so prominent. Malaysia has put emphasis on gaining more international currencies by attracting international students and their family members. International students also come to Malaysia for international degrees at lower cost, not for Malaysian degrees. So to say the demand and the supply are being met between the Malaysian education sector and international students who want Western degrees. What is interesting about international recruitment by marketing staff at two Malaysian institutions is that Malaysia, being seen as a developed country among Muslim countries, holds special "blessings" for branding the positive image as a nation and recruiting international students in those regions.

However, this economic dimension is evolving into different dimensions with new competitors coming into the same field of education. China is now opening up its education market like Malaysia, and it has been affecting the decrease of Chinese students coming to study in Malaysia. Dubai and Singapore are also actively promoting their education as regional centers.

This increasing competition is now creating more awareness on research capacity building and on Malaysian education and its degrees being recognized overseas. This awareness can be found at the ministry level and also in the private sector, which

puts forth a strong need from the private sector that the Malaysian government should initiate the recognition of Malaysian degrees overseas with other governments. At the same time, there is a concern over the preservation of Malaysian or Asian values while developing highly skilled manpower by exposing local and international students to the Western-style of learning and curriculum.

Given this competitive situation, how can Malaysia become a center with a specific goal to be a developed country by 2020? The data identify that Malaysia will not open its labor market to international students and scholars to protect the local human resources. In addition, the private higher education sector is concerned over the inadequate funding by the government to build its research capacity. Such restrictions might also affect the goal of Malaysia to be a regional center of education in the long run. The next chapter is devoted to a discussion of these findings to address research questions and future research.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter discusses the data results and analyses presented in Chapter V. The discussion addresses the research questions, followed by implications and directions for future research and, lastly, final remarks.

Research Questions Revisited

1. What is the current status of transnational education in Malaysia?

Transnational Education as a Way to Increase International Reserves

The data findings and analyses support an argument that transnational education plays a vital role for Malaysia in attracting international students and gaining international currencies. All the administrator respondents hold the same view of this role of transnational education.

The economic aspect of attracting international students is clearly stated in the Seventh Malaysian Plan (1996); "the reduced dependence on foreign education and the expected increase in foreign students pursuing degree level courses in the country, will help to reduce the deficit in the balance of payment" (Malaysia, 1996b). It is more explicitly stated in the current Malaysian Plan regarding the role of the private sector in increasing international currencies, "Private education and training providers will be required to enhance their quality as well as specialize and offer more high-end courses with competitive fee structures to attract foreign students (Malaysia, 2006, p.258)."

To boost the in-flow of international currencies, the Malaysian government has recently launched *edu-tourism*. This concept aims to invite international students and their family members to spend more time in Malaysia and spend international currencies. Edu-tourism is identified by the Ministry of Higher Education as one of the seven strategies of the international marketing of Malaysian higher education. Since edu-tourism was just launched in 2007, no relevant figures are available to show the impact of edu-tourism on increased international reserves. However, it is worth noting that education and tourism are being recognized as growing industries in Malaysia (Malaysia, 2006).

Transnational Education as a Way to Achieve the Target Number by 2010

Given the situation that public higher education is more geared to preserving national identity by offering courses in Bahasa Melayu, the data confirms that transnational education programs through which Western degrees are conferred are the sole way for attracting international students and achieving the target of 100,000 international students by 2010. This perception appears to be more prevalent in the private sector. The administrator respondent from MAPCU explained, "They [international students] come here for the international branch or other international degree programs [...] They do not come here to get Malaysian degrees." Interviews with international students also support the fact that they come to Malaysia for a Western degree at a lower cost since Western degrees are more marketable in the job market.

As one administrator respondent revealed, the government was attempting to push private college universities to offer only their own local degree programs within the period of five years after being upgraded, during which all the twinning or relevant

degree programs should be eliminated. The private sector rejected this saying that it would directly decrease the number of international students. This incident seems to prove the current situation that transnational education programs at private institutions have become the primary tool to achieve the target number by 2010. This requirement by the government that private university colleges should cease to offer international-linked degree programs after a transitional period of several years is the "greatest threat to transnational education" (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007, p.102) in Malaysia.

This role of transnational education to attract international students is also due to the limited access that international students are allowed to the public sector and to the racial quota system in public higher education. One administrator respondent stated, "There are not sufficient places even for local students [at public institutions]... It is ok to encourage international students, but right now among Malaysia universities, public universities cannot support local numbers."

This discussion shows that transnational education in the private sector is becoming a predominant role for providing educational opportunities for both local and international students. This seems to contradict the argument by McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) that the role of transnational education is supplementary for providing educational opportunities. They also anticipate the future of transnational education as follows:

> [Transnational education is] unlikely to become established as a long-term solution to shortages of higher education in any one country. Mass provision of offshore education, mostly through partnerships with local private colleges, has been a response to supply shortages that have arisen due to the local system's inability to grow as fast as the demand has grown (p.155).

Given the cultural and academic rationale in Malaysia for the wide recognition of Western degrees and the historical out-flow of Malaysian students studying overseas, this argument does not necessarily explain Malaysian transnational education. Whether transnational education is a short-term solution to meet the lack of access to local higher education should be further explored in future studies.

Positive Image of Malaysia among the Muslim World

In terms of the promotion of transnational education overseas, data indicate that Malaysia has the advantage in the Muslim countries due to the image of Malaysia as a developed Muslim nation. Khalid (2004) also states the dominant status of Malaysia in the Muslim society leads to the positive image of Malaysia as an economically dynamic country;

> [Malaysia] promoted the image of Malaysia as an economically vibrant and progressive Islamic society to be emulated by other Muslim countries. This positive image paved the way for closer economic collaboration between Malaysia and the Islamic countries in the period since "September 11" (p.2).

Likewise, the data suggest that this positive image in the Muslim regions makes it easier for international recruiters from Malaysia to have an advantage without explaining "why transnational education in Malaysia?" This positive image is referred to as "one of the blessings" by one administrator respondent. A student from the Middle East also referred to the growing image of Malaysia as a study destination for international-linked programs.

This branding of Malaysian education in the Muslim region has definitely contributed to a significant increase in international students from this region. The most

visible increase can be seen in the numbers coming from Bangladesh (from 353 in 2001 to 5,525 in 2005), Indonesia (5,336 in 2001 to 5,362 in 2005), Maldives (295 in 2001 to 645 in 2005), Pakistan (501 in 2001 to 1,819 in 2005), Yemen (121 in 2001 to 1,073 in 2005), and Sudan (237 in 2001 to 428 in 2005)[1].

Despite this branding of transnational education in Malaysia among the Muslim countries, the interviews reflect serious concerns over the increasing competition in the education market worldwide.

Increasing Competition

Malaysia is considered a pioneer in transnational programs. Twinning programs have been diversified into 3+0 programs since the economic crisis so that students can obtain international degrees without leaving Malaysia. International branch campuses that were set up right after the economic crisis are also attracting international students due to their affordable degree programs.

However, the data identify different multiple layers of competition. First there is competition among local institutions in Malaysia that are offering transnational education programs. They attract students by offering very competitive tuition fees for international degree programs. Monash Malaysia, being known for its high international ranking, is also concerned over the competition of student recruitment with other private institutions that have lower tuition fees.

The second competition is between Malaysian institutions and institutions in other non-Western countries that have started transnational education programs. China is now opening up its education market to international education providers. Although it

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[1] The data of 2001 are from Khalid (2004) and the data of 2005 are from the Department of Immigration, Malaysia (2006).

still remains the biggest group of international students in Malaysia, the number of Chinese students taking transnational programs in Malaysia has been decreasing. Likewise, Singapore and Dubai are attracting international education providers in the same way as Malaysia in order to become regional education centers.

Among neighboring countries, Thailand has also started offering transnational programs to be a hub of education. However, the interviews reveal that Malaysia is right now completing fiercely with Singapore in the region, not with Thailand since "Thailand is new in this market" (One administrator respondent). Given the increasing number of the English-medium degree programs available locally, Thailand should be considered a serious competitor although Malaysia has the advantage of being perceived as an English speaking country.

Third, the interview data show emerging competition between Malaysian private institutions and their international partner universities that have started transnational education programs in other countries. RMIT, one of the partner universities of Taylor's College, set up branch campuses in Vietnam as well as offering transnational education programs with institutions in China. Students in China and Vietnam who want to pursue a degree at RMIT do not have to leave their home for Malaysia; the RMIT degree programs are locally available.

These different layers of competition in the field of international higher education are growing so fast that they are posing new challenges to Malaysia.

2. Why do international students choose Malaysia as their study destination?

Various factors affect the decision of international students to choose Malaysia. Interviews with international students imply that they did not necessarily get sufficient information on educational opportunities in Malaysia; they obtained the relevant information within a short period of time when they were finishing high school or taking a pre-university course. A study by Arachi (2005) may support this argument in which international students have chosen transnational education programs in Malaysia due to the "mere ability of a handful of foreign satellite campuses in Malaysia or limited choice rather than specifically targeting the trademarked university during the application process (p.18)." If their decision-making period is short, what are the factors affecting their decisions to study in Malaysia? Following are some key factors that have been identified in the interviews and the relevant documents.

Low Cost for a Western Degree

As noted in the findings, the low cost is the most attractive factor for international students in choosing Malaysia for transnational education programs. This factor is most obvious in the governmental documents and pamphlets for promoting Malaysian education. This low cost has to be accompanied with a Western degree. "A Western piece of paper at affordable cost in Malaysia" is also a commonly-used phrase among international recruiters.

Interestingly, international student respondents were looking at their career paths in a larger perspective in terms of obtaining a Western degree. Since Western degrees are seen as a "gateway to economic prosperity and social security" (Damme, 2002, p.23), these degrees do not limit their job opportunities or higher degrees within

Malaysia and their home countries after graduation. This is also related to the discussion by Marginson and McBurnie (2004) that English-medium education is regarded as providing social advantage for career prospects and educational quality.

Malaysia as an Educational Pathway to Another Country for Career

As stated in the findings, the current immigration policy makes it hard for international graduates to work full-time in the Malaysian job market. This is also due to the governmental affirmative action policy to protect the local job market for Malaysian graduates. Therefore, these international students who finished transnational education programs in Malaysia tend to consider Malaysia as an educational pathway to get a Western degree at low cost and then leave for some other countries, such as Singapore, that are more open to issuing work permits to people from outside. This trend of international graduate mobility from Malaysia is identified as a concern by Marginson and McBurnie (2004) since some international students are using study in Malaysia as a bridge to the English-speaking countries.

Advice from Parents and Friend rather than the Branding of Malaysia as a Study Destination

The data suggest that parents and friends have strong influence over the student's decision to study in Malaysia. For example, one student from Indonesia responded that she decided to study in Malaysia since her family friend told her about the transnational education programs there. Such family influence over the choice of study destination is shared by Pimpa's research (2003) in which the decisions among Thai students to study in Australia were often strongly influenced by family members (cited in Marginson & McBurnie, 2004, p.173).

Since Malaysia is "new in this market" (One administrator respondent) without any specific image of education like the United State, advice from parents and friends is exceedingly crucial to create a positive image of Malaysian education overseas. In order to create such a positive image, current international students need to be treated well, like customers, since "they tell the differences when they return their home. Education is a kind of good product" (One administrator respondent).

3. How do international-linked programs identify and respond to the needs of international students in Malaysia?

Flexibility of the Program

This factor is not specific to international students, but the interviews show that transnational education programs are flexible to meet the students' needs. It is partly due to the market-sensitivity of the private sector in producing the high-skilled graduates. Although core subjects have to be the same as the main campus or international partner universities, the findings of IT programs at Monash Malaysia and Taylor's College indicate that some subjects are localized based on the demand of the local employment market.

Such flexibility is not limited to the subjects. As stated in the findings, Monash Malaysia offers students an opportunity to spend up to one year at one of the other campuses of Monash University. Taylor's Colleges offer "double-flexibility" as explained in the previous chapter; if students do not fit in the program, they can change to another program at one of the other Taylor's partner universities' programs. It is also possible to transfer their credits to other non-partner universities with which Taylor's

College has transfer agreements. This flexibility does not necessarily apply to all the private institutions offering transnational education programs, but these two cases may reflect the responsiveness to meet the student's needs.

Financial Support to International Students

The data suggest that it is institutions, not the Malaysian governments, that are responsible for the financial support to international students. The Ministry of Higher Education monitors the overall welfare service that each institution provides to international students. Two institutional cases indicate that financial support is provided in the form of tuition waivers. While the scholarships for international students from the Malaysian government are relatively new and limited, the data reveal that some private institutions with transnational education programs have started a certain form of financial support to attract more international students.

International Students Counseling and Advising

Both Monash Malaysia and Taylor's College offer orientations for new international students to help them more easily adapt to the new environment at school in Malaysia. In the case of Monash Malaysia, as stated in the findings, they are including more senior international students in the orientation so that they will be able to initiate such orientation in the future. This involvement of senior students in the orientation is also beneficial for new students to get to know other students from the same country and to get used to student life in Malaysia.

Each of the two institutions facilitates an international student service unit where international students seek support on a daily basis. In addition to that, a counseling unit is available where any student and staff can go for professional mental

support. Both cases recognize academic and mental support to international students as necessary to serve their needs.

4. *What are the major challenges of transnational education in Malaysia that influence its sustainability and effectiveness?*

Research Capacity Building

With the increasing competition in transnational education, there is a perceived need for increasing research incentives and research capacity to make their programs sustainable. It is also stated in the Ninth Malaysian Plan that enhancing the quality of research will enable institutions to become internationally competitive (Malaysia, 2006, p.257). Research capacity building is recognized to eventually reach down to teaching and student recruitment.

Both Monash and Taylor's College are selective in recruiting their teaching staff to enhance their research capacity. They also encourage existing staff to do research by giving them merit-based salaries since research achievement will brand the reputation of the institution. However, the data suggest that the amount of research funding applicable to private institutions is quite limited, and many of them have to generate their own research funding, and not rely on the government. Although the government set up a new research funding called IRPA, Intensified Research in Prioritized Area, only a small number of institutions that facilitate graduate schools in the private and public sectors are eligible. Therefore, it is most unlikely for most of the private sector to get research funding from the government. Generally speaking, the research funding by the government is not geared toward the private sector, but toward

the public sector.

Improvement of Quality Education

Another challenge is a perceived need to improve the quality of education and sustain the current expansion of higher education, especially transnational education. Current transnational education programs and their recruitment are in large part dependent on the prestige of the international partner university issuing the degree (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007).

The Malaysian government has thus set up a quality control body to monitor and improve higher education programs in both public and private sectors. Transnational programs are also monitored by their international partner universities or main campus overseas. In so doing, they have to always "make the best effort in ensuring the quality of the [educational] product that they are selling" (One administrator respondent).

However, some students express concerns over the quality of education; they think that some local teachers are not fully trained to teach subjects in English. Some issues raised in the interviews are 1) their English is not sufficient to lecture at college level, and 2) their teaching style focuses heavily on lectures and theories rather than facilitating discussion. In this regard, the Ministry of Education (2003) identifies the need of teaching staff development in the private higher education institutions by stating:

> A large number of the private higher education institutions also face the problem of providing staff development programs due to the high costs incurred...the MOE [Ministry of Education] could assist the private higher education institutions in staff development assistant (p. 4-15).

None of the administrator respondents in the private sector mentioned such staff development support by the government; currently this appears to be facilitated by individual institutions for improving their own education programs.

Branding

International reputation or branding is seen as a challenge by all the administrator participants. The data identify two kinds of branding as an emerging challenge that face transnational education in Malaysia: one is the branding at the institutional level for their programs and the other is the branding of Malaysian education overseas. As Slaughter and Leslie (1997) point out, universities aim to maximize prestige as well as revenues. Such prestige may also include international ranking made by international magazines. McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) anticipate that international ranking publications will eventually publish a consumer guide on transnational education (p.159). Given the Malaysian case, such an international presence with a positive image of the institution worldwide would result in increasing revenue by attracting students, thus achieving the target number.

Another branding issue is the branding of Malaysia as an education hub in other countries. Data suggest that Malaysia as a destination for transnational education is not well recognized in many countries, especially non-Muslim countries.
Since Malaysia is still new in this field, the branding of Malaysian education is still fluid, affecting the recruitment of new students. For example, the recent incidents that happened between some Malaysian private institutions and Chinese students in providing false claims of their programs and facilities have resulted in a 10 % decrease of students from China (Tan, 2006). The data also illuminate that this branding of

Malaysia as a study destination needs to be initiated by the Malaysian government for promoting the positive image of Malaysian education overseas.

Recognition of Malaysian Degrees in Other Countries

The interviews at the Ministry of Higher Education reveal that recognition of Malaysian education overseas is a crucial task at the government level to make sure that Malaysian degrees and Malaysian education will be recognized by other countries. At present, transnational education programs in the private sector are a principal way for attracting international students to Malaysia. The ultimate goal of higher education by the Malaysian government is to provide more educational choices to local and international students by offering both transnational education programs and local degree programs.

However, the interview data suggest that recognition of Malaysian degrees in other countries has not been initiated by the government although the Ninth Malaysian Plan stated the importance of branding Malaysian education overseas to make Malaysia a regional education center. The government and the five Malaysian education centers overseas are perceived by the administrator respondents in the private sector as bringing in more international students, not on the recognition of Malaysian degrees overseas. This is due to the pressure of achieving the target number by 2010. This challenge of recognition is becoming more serious at university colleges like Taylor's College which are able to offer their own degree programs as well as transnational programs.

Government Initiatives

What emerged quite clearly as a challenge are the government initiatives, not control, that influence the sustainability of transnational education in Malaysia. Listed below are the initiatives identified by administrator respondents.

- Easier procedures for entry of new in-coming international students
- Deregulation of part-time work permit for international students
- Deregulation of work-permit for international graduates
- Deregulation of searching for international teaching staff
- Recognition of Malaysian degrees overseas at the government level
- More financial support to the private sector for teaching and research
- Responsiveness to changes in the education market worldwide

As stated above, transnational education in Malaysia is to some extent seen by international students as a stepping stone to a third country for a career. However, some administrator respondents commented that some countries, such as Cyprus and Japan, are bringing in international students since they provide more flexibility for the students to work in the local market after graduation. The more flexibility and options available for international students, the more likely students may choose to come.

In this regard, there appears some struggle within Malaysia whether to preserve the local market for local graduates or to open it up for international graduates. At present, Malaysia is leaning more toward preserving the local market for the Malaysians as stated in the Ninth Malaysian Plan:

> In line with the policy shift to technology-intensive and high value added activities, there will be judicious employment of foreign workers. The number of foreign workers will be reduced gradually to provide greater employment opportunities to local workers to reduce administration costs as well as the outflow of foreign exchange (p.250).

Such limited job opportunities available for international graduates may gradually influence the interests of international applicants in choosing Malaysia for their studies.

Increasing Competition of New Players in the Education Market

It is interesting to note that private institutions are more responsive and analytical to the

competition in the education market than the Malaysian government. One example is the possible target regions for recruitment that are identified by the government and the private institutions. The Middle East, which is identified as a target region for recruitment by the government, is not necessarily considered an attractive market at the institutional level. This is due to new competitors coming into the Middle East for recruitment as well as having Dubai as a new education center in the region. Since the transnational education program is being treated as a profitable product, recruitment and branding seem to require more business-related skills to cope with the change of the market.

Local Agent Management

Given the competition of the student recruitment market, local agent management is seen as a newly emerging challenge. One administrator respondent referred to it as a "headache" since local agent management deals not only with recruitment. Since the commission fee that an institution can offer for local agents is limited and varies from institution to institution, it is likely that local agents send students to the institutions which pay higher fees. Quality of education is not much considered by local agents; it is more business-oriented for gaining profit. Some administrator respondents revealed the worst cases in which local agents deceived students and their parents and ran way with the money they collected. It appears more challenging for the institutions to look for a new market where they cannot visit frequently and reply on local agents for recruitment.

Pre-University Courses

Many international students who come to Malaysia for a degree program have to go through pre-university programs because their high school diplomas from their home

countries do not necessarily meet the entry requirement. Coleman (2000) states that the pre-university course plays a role as a gatekeeper for international students to have access to higher education and also to acquire the tools of active learning. Given that transnational education is so common, Coleman (2000) also discusses two new roles of the foundation course: one is for international students to secure admission to Western university programs and the other is for transnational education providers to financially secure the number of students in their programs.

Some student respondents expressed concerns over pre-university courses. Although they finished their local high school, their high school diploma was not sufficient to get admitted directly to a degree program. One student stated that she had wasted time taking a one-year foundation course after finishing the local high school. She even suggested that her fellow students should come to Malaysia for the foundation course without finishing high school. Such recognition of pre-university courses as a secure gateway to transnational degree programs will devalue the local high school education system in other countries; a guideline needs to be developed to accredit the high school diploma issued by the Malaysia government. However, the data imply there is no common framework for such accreditation at the national level in Malaysia, and thus it is up to individual institutions and their international partner universities to decide if international applicants meet the admission requirement.

Preserving Asian Values

The data indicate that there is a concern over protecting Asian values while exposing students to transnational education programs and other Western values in Malaysia. In this regard, Lee (1999a) also states that there are also some cultural concerns, in which

teaching English as a medium of instruction has more benefits, but also some risks as well, particularly the loss of cultural heritage.

Transnational education is crucial in the current Malaysian education system where the access to public higher education is limited. However, such a rapid growth of transnational education in Malaysia appears to be perceived by some respondents as undermining the local values among the younger generations. While the Malaysian government claims to have a holistic human capital development in the Ninth Malaysian Plan (Malaysia, 2006), it is a challenge for the government to maintain its national values as well as developing highly skilled manpower since Malaysia, being exposed to external change, is "at a crossroads" (One administrator respondent).

Growing *Demand of English as Medium of Instruction*

The growing demand of English as a medium of commerce and the rapid expansion of transnational education programs have changed the situation in which English should be used more at the higher education level. The Malaysian government is thus facing issues of how to meet the local demands and global needs of education simultaneously.

English is being used as a language for instruction at transnational education programs in the private sector while public higher education institutions use primarily Bahasa Melayu to preserve national unity and cultural values. However, the Malaysian government is now pushing public universities to offer English-medium graduate programs for their international presence. Such a gradual use of English as a language of instruction at the public sector has challenged the government to meet the growing needs of English proficiency for Malaysians to compete in the world and to "enhance their ability to access knowledge and undertake research" (Malaysia, 2006, p. 257). This

concern over the use of English as a language of instruction has been discussed in other countries; for example, the Cambodia's case by Clayton (2002) also illustrates that English has become perceived as a crucial tool for the "country's political, economic, and development transitions" (p.15).

Given this growing perception of English as a tool "to be competitive in the global market" (Malaysia, 2006, p.257), it appears that the Malaysian government had to shift its focus from preserving its national values to achieving the target number of international students; since 2006, Bahasa Melayu classes and Islamic/moral studies for international students in transnational education programs have not been compulsory, which might have caused a dilemma for the Malaysian government. This is actually a positive change for international students who come to Malaysia for a Western degree. On the other hand, this policy changes might bring about cultural concerns; teaching English as a medium of instruction has academic and social benefits, but also some risk, particularly the loss of cultural values and heritage by not teaching these studies.

Possible Threat to Increase a Gap between the Haves and Have-Nots

The data show that the recruitment effort, locally and internationally, is targeting middle-class families. Despite the economic crisis of 1997, the steady economic recovery in Malaysia and the neighboring region has been creating more middle and upper class families that are affluent enough to send their children for higher degree programs (OECD, 2004a). One administrator responded that they attract a certain group of Malaysian students from a certain group of middle-class families where English is spoken at home. He also added that these students from the certain group tend to remain within the same group of friends at school. This poses a concern over expanding a gap

between the haves and the have-nots in terms of their access to higher education and also their way of thinking. Other researchers (Damme, 2002; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007) also alert that the current expansion of higher education provision across borders will create huge problems of access and equity. Those who can afford to spend the time and money to take transnational education programs including English language courses are more likely to participate in the global job market; those who cannot will be left behind.

5. What are the theoretical implications?

This research has used the world system theory as a principal conceptual framework for the analysis of transnational education in Malaysia. The Malaysian case implies that transnational education makes center-periphery dynamics more complex. This is corroborated by Altbach (2004a) as indicated in chapter II.

The findings identify that the expansion of transnational education in Malaysia has been greatly pushed by the demand for Western degrees that are marketable. However, initiatives in transnational education programs in terms of curriculum are dominated by international partner universities in the center (Altbach, 2004a) while international recruitment efforts in the case of Malaysia have been initiated by Malaysian local institutions, the Malaysian government, and local agents in other countries. The one common interest among these stakeholders is the financial benefit of selling educational products.

The data also suggest that there are other new countries in the international education market, such as Singapore and Dubai, which also claimed to be regional

education centers. As identified in Chapter II, the regionalization in the Malaysian case can be interpreted as "part and parcel of the globalization process, establishing co-operation among neighbors in order to counteract the pressure from other parts of the world" (Enders, 2004) to protect the regional market. However, the education delivery across borders and the opening of the local education market to other international education providers appear to have brought more economic competition or market-sensitivity among the countries in the region rather than building up the regional consensus to protect their market and education. As one marketing staff remarked, they attract international students to Malaysia by saying, "No need to go to UK or Australia. Come to Malaysia to get a Western degree." Other countries are now using the same approach to attract students.

How can Malaysia differentiate itself from other countries that also offer transnational education programs? What is the strength of coming to Malaysia to study that is different from other countries? These questions add additional challenges to the Malaysian government and institutions in order to maintain the current expansion of transnational education. These challenges also include research capacity-building and recognition of Malaysian local degrees in other countries, as previously mentioned.

This Malaysian case suggests that transnational education pervades different layers of the center-periphery dynamics in Malaysian higher education. The more available transnational education programs are in the developing countries, the more profit gained by degree-conferring universities in the developed countries in terms of money and related branding. In this regard, Malaysia seems to be periphery as a net provider of transnational education programs. However, when it comes to the

Malaysia's role in attracting international students from the neighboring regions, Malaysia seems to be center by providing transnational education programs at an affordable cost. This degree-conferring dynamics in transnational education will make the periphery-center dynamics more complex in Malaysian higher education.

What also emerged from the data is that the increasing competition in pursuit of financial gains in education seems to underestimate trust issues among different stakeholders. Hefferman and Poole (2004) identify that one of the three factors that affect the sustainability of the relationship between Australian universities and their international-linked program partners overseas is trust as well as communication and a shared vision. This may also apply to Malaysian institutions and their local agents in various countries which bring about cultural conflict issues. Underneath these cultural differences, the data reveal that there is mistrust against some of the local agents which are more money-oriented for higher commission fees. In this regard of the trust issue, Mestenhauser (1998) urges that we should be more concerned with the problem of trust; "In the era of globalization in which education is more treated as an affordable commodity, trust issues are more important than ever among individuals, but also among universities and governments" (p.22). Likewise, Friedman (2007) argues the importance of trust in the global world by stating, "Without trust, there is no open society. Trust is essential for a flat world, where you have supply chains involving ten, a hundred, or a thousand people, most of whom have never met face-to-face" (p.557). His statement relates to the problem that international students come to Malaysia without knowing the quality of transnational education programs; they come to Malaysia for Western degrees at an affordable cost. Such "local ignorance" (One administrator

respondent) can be a factor for Malaysia to become a growing market in transnational education. These trust issues in transnational education will affect the sustainability of their programs and are thus worthy of further exploration since trust is the "foundation of innovation...and increase the level of trust in any group, company, or society, and only good things happen" (Friedman, 2007, p.424).

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Future Research

The case study outlined in this study is significant since it provides a broader understanding of the challenges facing transnational education in Malaysia in the era of globalization, in which there has been only limited research available as stated in Chapter I.

I suggest from this study that different interests in international education marketing among different players in transnational education and its possible impacts onto education should be further explored. Mazzarol and Soutar (1999) also argue that research on services and international marketing and interests in international education marketing are comparatively new academic fields. Especially, research on local agent management and its relevant cultural conflict issues can be further explored to understand the complexities imposed by globalization and the increasing perception of education as a profitable product.

While this is a small-scale case study, future study can be developed by using large-scale surveys to explore quantitatively the impact of transnational education. In the case of Malaysia, for example, large-scale surveys in international education marketing at private higher education institutions have never been conducted (based on

the interview at MAPCU). Such surveys and its analysis will be supported by case studies of more diverse institutions engaged in transnational education.

Cross-country analysis of transnational education in the Asian countries will also bring more insights into the discussion of international higher education. Given the fact that the student mobility worldwide is dominated by Asian students, comparative research of transnational education in the Asian countries will reinforce the importance of international education as an academic field.

Final Thoughts and Reflections

Malaysia has embarked on a new phase of economic development in which education, especially transnational education programs, plays a crucial role in providing a sufficiently skilled workforce to compete in the world. These transnational programs have been attracting international students with an aim to gain more foreign exchange. Economically, such programs are just like exports. The market of transnational education, however, is getting more competitive than ever despite the governmental efforts in opening up its private education sector and promoting Malaysian education overseas as a regional center. The increased demand for higher education is now shaping an environment in which "for-profit providers can successfully expand the supply of educational services" (Damme, 2002, p.25) across borders. The current expansion thus appears to be economically motivated in a short span.

What emerged during the course of this research is that transnational education and competition in the international education market are now forcing Malaysia to develop its own capacities of research and teaching, and branding of their education in

order to make the growth of transnational education sustainable. This incentive in capacity-building will also enable Malaysia to make their local education effective in the long run. This needs to be initiated by the Malaysian government with sufficient support for capacity-building to both public and private higher education. The Malaysian government should also lead the assurance of the educational quality at the national and institutional level.

This Malaysian case study illustrates the dilemma that Malaysia has been facing. Malaysia has emphasized more focus on attracting students to their transnational programs, but the risk of devaluing their education and cultural identity should be further explored. The opening-up of the local job market to international graduate is also another dilemma for the Malaysian government that is now protecting the local job market for the Malaysian students.

This study also describes the reality in Malaysia in which transnational education has been changing the faces of players such as local agents, international students from a new market, and other countries that are offering similar programs. These new players with different motives are shaping the dynamics of transnational education in Malaysia, and thus affecting the local context to survive in the global education market as aforementioned.

In conclusion, this study is not merely a case study of transnational education in Malaysia; it illustrates the competitiveness of education market in the world that is similar to the reality stated by Friedman (2007), "When the world is flat, whatever can be done will be done. So if you have an idea, pursue it. Because someone else will have a similar idea, and pursue it, rather than you think" (p.442). Therefore, this study

contributes to a better understanding of complexities posed by transnational education that is growing worldwide.

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Appendix A

Letter of Invitation

Dear (name),

I am Hiroko Akiba, a PhD student at the University of Minnesota. I am currently working on my dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Gerald Fry. For my dissertation, I am looking at the current phenomena of transnational education in Malaysia with specific focus on international student recruitment/services. The purpose of this study is to identify the current issues and challenges of transnational education in Malaysia. The main method for my research is qualitative by doing interviews and documentation. Sharing your experiences and knowledge working in transnational education programs would be appreciated.

I am planning on visiting Malaysia in June, 2006 for data collection. It would be appreciated if you would take an hour to share your knowledge and experience in the field of education.

I have attached an interview protocol for reference.
Thank you very much and I look forward to seeing you soon.

With regards,

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Appendix B

Consent Form for Interview

The changing face of transnational education in Malaysia: A case study of international offshore university programs

You are invited to be in a research of a qualitative case study of transnational education. I am doing this research for my dissertation at the University of Minnesota. You were selected as a possible participant because you are also considered as an important **stakeholder of transnational education programs.** Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in the study.

This study is being conducted by Hiroko Akiba, a graduate student in the Department of Educational Policy and Administration, University of Minnesota, USA.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to describe the current phenomena of **transnational education programs with specific focus on international students recruitment and services.** If you agree to participate, you will be asked to do the following things: I will ask you to talk about your experiences in the programs.

Interview questions are formed to answer the following research questions:
1. What is the current status of transnational education in Malaysia?
2. Why do international students choose Malaysia as their study destination?
3. How do international-linked programs identify and respond to the needs of international students in Malaysia?
4. What are the major challenges of transnational education in Malaysia that influence its sustainability and effectiveness?
5. Are there any theoretical implications?

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, I would like to ask you to do the following.
You will be asked to answer the questions regarding your international linked program. An interview will be one-on-one, about 50 minutes and tape–recorded with your permission.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
The anticipated risk in this study is that of identification. Every possible effort will be made to protect your identity. Only the researcher will have access to your name, which will be kept in a locked drawer. No name will be used in any report of this study; Only code or pseudonyms making it difficult to identify you. The tape will be stored in the locked drawer for two years.

This study has no direct benefits. Participants will be able to reflect their efforts and experiences and thus build their future direction by participating in this study.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might write or publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be kept in a locked drawer; only the researcher will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Compensation:
You will receive no payment.

Contacts and questions:
The researcher conducting this research is Hiroko Akiba. You may ask any questions you have now or later. If you would like to contact me, they are my contact info: **my telephone number: +1-***-***-**** and email address: akib0001@umn.edu**. My advisor is Dr. Gerald Fry. His telephone number is +1-612-624-0294, if you would like to talk to him.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than me or my instructor, contact Research Subjects' Advocate line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware Street S.E., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; telephone (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Appendix C

Interview Guide for International Students Recruiter

Interview questions

Economic, social, cultural environment

1. What do you identify as the major attraction of your programs for international students?
2. Why do you think international students choose your program in Malaysia?
3. What kinds of international student recruitment/advising efforts has your program/university been making? Are there any efforts that are quite different from other offshore programs in other institutions? Please describe it with specific examples.
4. What is the composition of your IT undergraduate program by the country of origin?
5. Do you have any target country of recruitment, if any? If so, can you specify why it is a target market?
6. How do international students adjust to your international offshore programs in Malaysia? Are there any difficulties in terms of educational and cultural adjustment?
7. How do you respond to the needs of international students in the program?
8. What are the major challenges that you have faced in recruiting international students?
9. In what way do you foresee that international offshore programs in Malaysia will affect the local educational system?

Administrative environment

10. To what extent do you cooperate with overseas-based universities with regard to international student recruitment/advising? Any professional training provided? Can you give me some examples, if any?
11. What factors can be identified that influence the on-going expansion of transnational education in Malaysia? Any barriers?

Other

12. Is there anything that you would like to add regarding the transnational program at your university/college?

Appendix D

Interview Guide for Program Coordinators

Interview questions

Economic, social, cultural environment

1. What do you identify the major attraction of your programs for international students?
2. Why do you think international students choose your program in Malaysia?
3. What kinds of international student recruitment/advising efforts has your program/university been making? Are there any efforts that are quite different from other offshore programs in other institutions? Please describe it with specific examples.
4. How do international students adjust to international offshore programs in Malaysia? Are there any difficulties in terms of educational and cultural adjustment?
5. How do you respond to the needs of international students in the program?
6. What are the major challenges that you have faced to recruit international students?
7. In what way do you foresee that international offshore programs in Malaysia will affect the local educational system?

Administrative environment

8. To what extent do you cooperate with overseas-based universities with regard to international student recruitment/advising? Any professional training provided? Can you give me some examples, if any?
9. What factors can be identified that influence the on-going expansion of transnational education in Malaysia? Any barriers?

Other

10. Is there anything that you would like to add regarding the transnational program at your university/college?

Appendix E

Interview Guide

for the Ministry of Higher Education and MAPCU

Interview questions

Economic, social, cultural environment

1. What do you see as the driving factor for the expansion of transnational education in Malaysia?
2. What do you identify as the major attractions of transnational programs for international students in Malaysia? Can you list the factors that you can think of?
3. What kinds of international student recruitment efforts have you been making? Please describe them with specific examples.
4. Do you have any model country for your international marketing strategy for promoting transnational educational programs of Malaysia overseas?
5. What do you identify the major challenge for international students to adjust to international offshore programs in Malaysia? Are there any difficulties in terms of educational and cultural adjustment?
6. What are the major challenges that you have been facing to make Malaysia a center for educational excellence?
7. In what way do you foresee that international offshore programs in Malaysia will affect the local educational system?

Other

9. Is there anything that you would like to add regarding the transnational education in your country?

Appendix F

Interview Guide for International Students

Interview questions

Student profile

1. Where are you from?
2. How old are you?
3. How and where did you take an English course to get admitted to this IT program, if any?

Economic, social, cultural environment

1. How did you get to know about this IT program?
2. Before coming to Malaysia, did you think about studying in Malaysia?
3. Why did you decide to come to Malaysia to take IT-related programs?
4. What do your parents think about your studying in Malaysia?
5. Why do you think international students like you have chosen IT-related programs in Malaysia?
6. Are there any challenges that you have faced when you came to Malaysia to attend this course in terms of educational and cultural adjustment? If any, please describe it with specific examples.
7. How does your school/program respond to the needs of international students like you?
8. What do you think is Malaysia's major attraction as a study site?
1. How does your school/program help you to achieve your career goal?
2. Do you recommend that other prospective students to take international programs in Malaysia? Why? Why not?

Other

3. Is there anything that you would like to add regarding your program and your experience in Malaysia?