

DETERMINANTS OF DECISION MAKING PROCESS FOR IRAQI
STUDENTS STUDYING IN MALAYSIAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

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This dissertation is dedicated to my family for their endless support and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

Internationalization of education has become a big phenomenon in recent decades especially with the entry of many Asian countries like Malaysia, that have surpassed many developed countries such as United States, England, Europe etc. Lot of studies has been conducted on student's choice to study abroad in developed countries, but very few have been done in the context of developing countries like Malaysia. Malaysia being a developing country has started attracting a lot of international students mainly because of quality of education as well as low tuition and living costs. The studies regarding international students in Malaysian context have focused on the undergraduate level and not on the perspectives of adult learners. The present study is an attempt to investigate the factors that help the international students especially Iraqi students in making decisions to pursue their tertiary education at post graduate level in Malaysian university specifically in Malaysian research universities. The study utilizes case study approach with Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) as a study context. The theoretical underpinning of the study relies on the theory of adult learning and self-determination theory for model building. The sample consisted of postgraduate Iraqi students pursuing their masters or PhD in various faculties of UTM. Secondly, focus group discussion was also carried out with international post graduate students of various nationalities for triangulation of results. Semi structured interviews were conducted from the respondents chosen using theoretical sampling technique. The results indicate that the decision making process of Iraqi students is influenced more by external factors as compared to internal factors. The study provides useful insights into the phenomenon of study abroad. The findings of the study have several implications for both higher education institutions and policy makers.

ABSTRAK

Pengantarabangsaan pendidikan telah menjadi satu fenomena besar dalam beberapa dekad kebelakangan ini, terutama dengan kemasukan kebanyakan negara Asia seperti Malaysia, yang telah mengatasi kebanyakan negara-negara maju seperti Amerika Syarikat, England, Eropah dan lain-lain. Banyak kajian telah dijalankan ke atas pilihan pelajar untuk melanjutkan pengajian di luar negara khususnya negara-negara maju, tetapi amat sedikit kajian dilakukan dalam konteks negara-negara membangun seperti Malaysia. Malaysia sebuah negara yang sedang membangun telah mula menarik minat banyak pelajar antarabangsa terutamanya kerana kualiti pendidikan, yuran pengajian yang rendah dan kos sara hidup yang rendah. Kajian tentang pelajar antarabangsa dalam konteks Malaysia telah memberi tumpuan kepada peringkat ijazah pertama dan tidak pada perspektif pelajar dewasa. Kajian ini adalah suatu percubaan untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor yang membantu pelajar antarabangsa terutamanya pelajar Iraq dalam membuat keputusan untuk melanjutkan pelajaran ke peringkat lepasan ijazah di universiti Malaysia, khususnya di universiti penyelidikan. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kajian kes dengan Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) sebagai konteks kajian. Teori yang mendasari kajian ini adalah teori pembelajaran dewasa dan teori penentuan sendiri untuk pembinaan model kajian. Sampel kajian terdiri daripada pelajar-pelajar Iraq yang mengikuti pengajian pascaijazah sarjana atau PhD di pelbagai fakulti di UTM. Keduanya, triangulasi dapatan juga diperolehi menerusi perbincangan kumpulan fokus terhadap pelajar-pelajar pascasiswazah antarabangsa dari pelbagai negara. Temu bual separa berstruktur telah dijalankan terhadap responden dengan menggunakan teknik persampelan teori. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pembuatan keputusan pelajar Iraq lebih dipengaruhi oleh faktor-faktor luar berbanding faktor dalaman. Kajian itu memberikan pandangan yang berguna terhadap fenomena belajar di luar negara. Hasil kajian ini mempunyai beberapa implikasi untuk kedua-dua institusi pengajian tinggi dan pembuat dasar.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to describe the background of the study focusing on why students choose to study abroad particularly in perspective of Iraqi students motivations to choose Malaysian Research Sector Universities for higher education. The chapter also covers the problem background and the overall purpose of the study. Furthermore scope and limitations will come under discussion.

1.2 Background of the Study

Over the past 30 years, the internationalization of higher education (HE) has been a major growth industry worldwide (Bodycott, 2009). In the 1980s and 1990s, international education emerged as one of the more significant service industry (Mazzarol, 1998). The main content of internationalization of higher education is cross border movement of students. It is expected that in upcoming years there will be remarkable increase in mobility of students from less developed countries to newly-industrialized & developed countries. Globalization has cut down the gap among countries and internationalization of tertiary education plays an outstanding role since decades. There is remarkable expansion in international students'

population after World War II (Sandhu, 1995). According to the statistics of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) drastic change is viewed in terms of internationalization of higher education (UN, 2012).

In today's progressive interdependent worldwide community, there is a need that current and prospect generation must develop the sense of international and worldwide consciousness. It can be done via travel to foreign country that one gain experience and in-depth know how of other cultures. Universities and the government agreed upon on this fact that international education is an important way to compete in worldwide market and in the end it will result in economic strength of country (Sowa, 2002). Buchner (2000) stated, there are many advantages to study abroad, those who study abroad attain academic excellence comprising of global knowledge, personality building, enhancing maturity, and improvement in communication skills. These students changed in to person with enhanced sense of community and accountability and greater knowledge. Hadis (2005) highlighted drastic changes in personality and attitude of students after completing their foreign degree and coming back to their home country, foreign qualified students have better sense of understanding and greater sense of maturity and interdependence.

It is believed that those students who spend part of their Higher education career in abroad benefited from their experience (IIE, 2008). According to this assumption students get greater cross-cultural skills, deep thoughts, self-sufficiency and high self-confidence (Durbin, 2006). Moreover, many students get knowledge of extended worldviews, language proficiency, knowhow of culture, professional development, problem solving techniques, critical thinking skills and understanding and sensitivity towards environment (Vande Berg, 2003; Vande Berg *et al.*, 2004). In many universities around the world international students constitute a significant segment and their academic excellence is important issues not only for students but also for higher education administration and for research communities (Buddington, 2002; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002).

Study abroad programs pay back every single student. In current years, to study in foreign country is become a matter of public policy, and it is emphasizing on benefits of participation which is broadened and it is beyond the individual participation (Chin, 2003; Open Doors, 2005). The growing understanding of the significance of foreign education programs at the government level resulted in pressure on higher education management to internationalize colleges and universities. As well as, institutions of higher education have been contacted by agencies to enroll students in study abroad programs (Durbin, 2006).

In 2004, there were 2,455,250 students enrolled in higher education abroad, instead of studied in their own country; in 2005, the number increases into 2.7 million, with an increase of 5%. , Moreover till the year 2009, almost 3.7 million students were enrolled in tertiary education outside their home country (OECD, 2011). Theses statistic indicate that majority of students are involved in pursuing their higher education abroad. The report published from World Education News and Reviews (2001) shows that the highest percentages of the tertiary enrollments of overseas students are in United States, Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and New Zealand. In general, the 75% of tertiary students choose the institutions in countries belonging to OECD which include US, UK, Germany, France and Australia. The developing countries like Japan, Canada and New Zealand share 13% of the global student market. Moreover Malaysia, Singapore and China become the emerging contenders to share 12% of the international student market together. Majority of the Asian students study abroad and according to an estimate 52% enrollment of foreign students all around the world belong to Asian countries (OECD, 2011).

Kivinen, et al., (2006) described that universities are recognized as a hub of scholars that maintain self-sufficiency and privileges as they are responsible to educate the population and providing the managerial trainings for public servants. Since many years universities have shown their adjustments in new political and social contexts as they are fulfilling their traditional role of teaching and development of country (Cardoso, Santiago and Sarrico, 2012). In response to global market forces in the twenty-first century, universities have been given a third mission

of commercialization of academic, research and industry academia linkage, in order to generate revenues and in the end production of goods for the betterment of society (Brennan and Osborne, 2008).

In the countries like USA, UK, Australia, NewZealand, Singapore and Malaysia growth and expansion is observed with the growing international intermingle of public policies and higher education modifications (Mazzarol, Soutar, and Seng 2003; Abdullah 2006). Higher education institutions transformed slowly in to business like organizations with the development of mission statements, performance indicators that has propped up the practice of responsibility, competence, excellence assurance and managerial skills (Scott 2000; Lomas 2007). Higher education institutions are now concerned with consumers' quality excellence perception and contentment (Blackmore 2009).

Rapid economic development in many countries, especially in Asia, has created a strong demand for science, engineering and graduate training (Davis, 1995). Foreign countries that have not developed higher education are being abandoned as individual families are able to afford sending their children to study overseas (IIE, 2014). In addition, it has been highlighted that international education promotes the relationship building and knowledge exchange between the communities that are necessary for solving global challenges (IIE, 2014). Little research is done on the post graduate international students (Mori, 2000) and majority of the international students study at undergraduate level (IIE, 2014). These post graduate students enrolled at masters or Ph.D. level are considered highly skilled workforce (Mavroudi & Warren, 2013) and relatively little is known about the experience of the international graduate students in selecting a particular host institution and destination. Thus, the present study focuses on one subgroup of international post graduate students – Iraqi graduate students – and understand their decision making process of selecting Malaysia as a host destination and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia as a host institution.

In the perspective of Malaysia, national mission in the Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006–2010 highlighted the efforts to build Malaysia as a centre of excellence in proviso of tertiary level education. The main plans comprise of development of strategic actions to improve and increase the excellence of tertiary education, where local tertiary institutions will be benchmarked against international standards (Economic Planning Unit 2006). Moreover private universities are also encouraged to enhance their participation and prop up the inventiveness towards development of knowledge base economy by developing highly skilled and knowledge driven workforce (Sam 2008). In Tenth Malaysian Plan (2011-2015) emphasis is on growth of the quality of university education which sees Malaysia as a choice of foreign students for higher education and center of education system (Economic Planning Unit 2010).

Malaysia has diversified foreign students as most of the students prefer to join Malaysian universities for higher education. Studying abroad is a common practice whether the experience is short-term or long. Moreover to spend few months in another country is to gain intercultural understanding, language, know how or to complete a degree in specific discipline. There is variation among international students belong to different countries. Most of Middle East market of international students is from Iraq, especially the Kurdistan region. Iraq is one of the countries where Higher education has faced intense destruction in 2003, all higher education institutions and colleges building were destroyed and looted during war. There is remarkable destruction in Iraqi education system in terms of development, policy making and overall management of higher education programs (www.unesco.org). The present study is in the context of why students choose to study abroad particularly in perspective of Iraqi students motivations to choose Malaysian Research Sector Universities for higher education

1.3 Higher Education in Iraq and Malaysia

In our present worldwide economy, foreign education, and international skills and experience are in great demand. On February 24, 2009 President Barack Obama in his speech to Congress stressed on these international skills, Our children will compete for jobs in a global economy that too many of our schools do not prepare them for” (White House, 2009). These international skills can be gained only by international opportunities. Jane Knight’s (2003) stated internationalization is the process of integrating, international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of postsecondary education. Internationalization is to study in foreign country is one of the main key to produced competent workforce and in the end economy boost of country. Traditionally, when foreign education has been come under discussion it has been in the context of foreign language proficiency or international student exchange. This is main fact that is very important in international education. At present field on international education based on assorted activities and programs. Mestenhauser (2002) highlighted seven learning areas in the field of international education. These leaning areas are follows:

- worldwide studies/relations
- district studies
- foreign languages
- international dimensions of academic disciplines
- learning exchanges of students and scholars
- development contracts and inter-university agreements
- organization, management policy, governance, and financing

The number of international students in countries varies. A study sees most of Middle East market growth coming from Iraq, especially the Kurdistan region. There are up to US\$200 million in scholarships available for higher education studies abroad for Iraqi students. For example, the Human Capacity Development Program in Higher Education (HCDP) alone provides US\$100 million in scholarship support for students from Kurdistan (MHESR-K, 2010). Altogether a total of 22,000

scholarships have been given to Iraqi students to pursue their Masters and PhD studies (ICEF, 2013). Under these scholarship programs students study in approved universities abroad, it is mandatory for them to come back to Iraq soon after completion of degree and work for the welfare of their own homeland. Most of the Iraqi students are studying in USA, UK, Turkey and Malaysia.

Malaysia has public and private higher education institutions. Malaysian higher education commission is struggling to achieve the status of high income and knowledge base economy, private sector of higher education is working side by side with public sector higher education in order to produce competent and expert graduates to help them to achieve this goal (MOHE, 2012). Private sector universities are working as an agent to increase the participation of foreign universities in Malaysia via their linkages and collaboration with foreign higher education institutions, and the possibility of branch campuses inaugural in Malaysia. Private sector is playing an important role since 1990s and given the broad list of institutions for students for higher education. With the main focus of higher education, the number of public and private higher education institutions increased.

In 2002, there were 17 public and 11 private universities in Malaysia which reached to 20 public and 20 private sector universities in 2009 (MOHE, 2012). In Malaysia, MOHE has categorized universities according to their research activities. Currently there are five public research universities: Universiti Sans Malaysia (USM), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Malaya (UM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). These universities are actively participating in research activities that are helping them to mobilize a considerable pool of knowledge and develop linkages with the industries that results in fund raising for the university as well as economic boost of the country and making the institution able to come in the row of best ranking institution in the world (MOHE, 2012).

Presently, Iraqi Higher education system is composed of twenty-six public universities and twenty-three private universities. The higher education system in

Iraq is managed by Iraq Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR). The main vision of the ministry is to make changes qualitatively and quantitatively in the scientific, technical and cultural movement and directs the scientific and research organizations to reach towards making a generation equipped with science and knowledge to be an active and influential power in society. The higher education ministry is following a strategy of establishing a new culture in higher education in Iraq, which is to match higher education outcomes with the needs of the society and developing scientific and cultural relations and expanding the friendly relations in these fields with other countries and different scientific organizations all over the world to achieve harmony and integration in the fields of science and knowledge (www.moheer.gov.ir).

Developing countries host a remarkable number of foreign students, although they create the small number of global students flow. Developing countries look for international students to join their universities in order to make better the excellence and educational composition of human body to earn revenues and gain prestige. As compared to other developing countries India and Philippines have remarkable strength of international students. India hosts more than 8,000 international students, 95 percent are from developing countries. Malaysia, China and India are making strategies to gain the attention of more and more international students and to export their educational program and institutions (www.moheer.gov.ir).

The motivation factor that persuades the international students' decision making process to study abroad has many faces. It is a mixture of thrust and drag factors which give strength to student to study in a foreign country. It is considered that financial systems are the most important factor that results in enhancing the growth of international students' mobility. The rising internationalization of employment with skilled and foreign experience as a part of studying abroad results in rise of income level in some developing countries, that has encouraged the foreign university education. Moreover, with new technology, and the expansion of internet and more easy to get to and reasonable transportation all merge together to support and influence the students to study abroad (Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008; OECD, 2007).

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) described that there are three main stages of international students decision making process while choosing a final country to go for study. The first stage is that in which student finally decide must be study in foreign country. After finalization to study in foreign country, the second step is finalization of host country. At this point host country pull factors are very important these differentiate it from other countries. The third stage is deletion of institution in particular country. At this stage many pull factors combine and make the institution more striking than others.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is investigation of factors that play an important role in international students' decision-making process to choose a foreign university to study. What are the factors that persuade Iraqi students to study in Malaysian Research sector Universities? This study is particularly in context of Iraqi students in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

1.5 Problem Statement

Higher Education is one of the sectors in Iraq that has faced severe destruction in 2003. Universities, colleges and school buildings were destroyed and looted in war (www.moheer.gov.ir). According to UNESCO (2011) Iraqi students and educators are still facing after war effects and will not be able to achieve the targeted level of education reforms and goals due to apprehension and variance. Although, Iraq has started building its higher education infrastructure by giving financial and administrative independence to universities and is working on a strategy to persuade foreign universities to open their sub campuses in Iraq (Wagdy, 2011) yet these reforms would take some time to materialize. In this scenario,

internationalization of education is very important phenomena in Iraq as most of the Iraqi students have been granted scholarships for higher studies to study abroad.

It has been highlighted in an OECD (2011) report, that there is a remarkable rise in the number of students who are studying outside their homeland from 0.8 million worldwide in 1975 to 3.7 million in 2009 (OECD, 2011). Moreover, Bohm, et al., (2004) is also of the opinion that till 2020, student's strength who goes for studies in foreign universities will reach to 5.8 million. This is reflected in the change that higher education institutions are experiencing worldwide. Bagheri and Beheshti (2010) stated that Higher education institutions have changed from isolated special purpose institutions into customer oriented and collaboration based organizations, which emphasize on revenue generations.

Petruzzellis & Romanazzi,(2010) stated that the number of investigation in the process that influence foreign students decision making regarding higher education in a foreign country is increased due to worldwide rising competition in Higher Education Sector. If comparison is made on the strength of international students for popular destinations of study like USA, UK and Canada, we can clearly see a decline in strength of foreign students in higher education institutions in these countries mainly due to rise of countries like Malaysia, China and India, where international students population is increasing dramatically because of lower fees structure and higher quality of education. Majority of the studies on the topic have been conducted in developed countries (Chin, 2003; Durbin, 2006; Cardoso, et al., 2012; Brennan & Osborne, 2008; Blackmore, 2009; Padkee, et al., 2010) and focus mainly on the undergraduate students (McDermott, 2011).

The studies that have been conducted on Malaysian perspective are few and have mostly focused on the change and causes in Malaysian higher education (Hunag & Li, 2006); influence of domestic policy (Hunag, 2009; AnNaMu & Chen-wen, 2006); satisfaction and adaptation of international students (Sohail & Saeed, 2003). However, studies regarding motivation of international students especially

postgraduate students from Iraq to select Malaysia as choice destination is none to be found.

Malaysia is one of the very few Asian countries that are becoming a popular destination for international students. There are two kinds of higher educational institutions in Malaysia – public and private. If comparison between these two is made that public sector higher education institutions are the most favored institutions for international students due to low tuition fees as compared to private sector educational institutions. The low tuition fees pulls the international students to enroll in public sector universities as cost and quality of education are two main key factors that pull students towards public sector universities (www.mohe.gov.my).

Malaysian government has been focusing and emphasizing on the importance of adult learning for economic development (Tan, et al., 2004). These adult learners are active part of graduate education (Mwaura, 2008) and are considered more independent and autonomous in their decisions (Shallenberger, 2009). Keeping in view the importance of adult learning, it is important to study the behavior and decision making processes of adult learners towards tertiary education.

Thus, the present study is an attempt to understand and investigate the decision making process & factors those influence the Iraqi students to study abroad especially in a Malaysian research universities. This study is particularly in context of UTM, Malaysia. The reason for choosing UTM is based on the number of Iraqi students in UTM as indicated by the Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Numbers of Iraqi Students in Malaysian Public Universities

Institution	Iraqi Post Graduate Student Enrollment		
	Ph.D	Master	Total
UM	94	51	145
USM	180	51	231
UKM	129	176	305
UPM	166	121	287
UTM	158	186	344
UUM	72	88	160
UIAM	47	43	90
UNIMAS	3	0	3
UMS	3	3	6
UPSI	1	3	4
USIM	7	7	14
UTHM	1	30	31
UTeM	14	27	41
UMP	26	6	32
UNIMAP	44	19	63
UMK	5	0	5
Total	950	811	1,761

Source: Ministry of Higher education, 2013 (Unofficial data gathered through email)

The table indicates that altogether there are 1,761 post graduate Iraqi students enrolled in various universities in Malaysia with the highest number of students in UTM. Thus, the present study focuses on Iraqi post graduate students studying at Masters and PhD levels in UTM.

1.6 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To investigate the decision making process of Iraqi students in selection of Malaysia as a host destination.
2. To explore the factors that influence the decision making process of Iraqi students in the selection of Malaysian Research Sector Universities.
3. To discover the dominant factors that help in the decision making process of Iraqi students to study in the Malaysian Research Universities.

1.7 Research Questions

Based on the research objectives following research questions have been formulated that will guide the study.

1. What are the determinants affecting Iraqi students' decisions regarding study abroad in Malaysia?
2. What are the factors that influence the Iraqi students to select Malaysian research universities as host institution?
3. What are the students' perspectives on the meaning of their study abroad in Malaysian Research Universities?

1.8 Significance of the Study

With the globalization, trends among students to study abroad enhanced as before. In 21st century internationalization of education is the key to success. Higher education in abroad is the main factor that results in economy building of countries when students back to their homeland after getting expert knowledge. Internationalization of education is centre of attention in most of the countries to attract international students and maintain quality education in their institutions. What are the factors that influence students to choose a particular host institution has significant meaning for that specific country because this is the main area on the base of which any country can take proper measures for betterment and expansion.

Moreover, the study will be informative for those who wish to study abroad. Making the right decision for adult learner is very important, whatever choices they will made will further influence their life. Therefore it is mandatory to analyze all the factors based on their findings and make suitable decision in host destination selection to professional field selection. Furthermore, the study would be useful for government agencies like education ministries of both Malaysia and Iraq, as it would highlight the factors that compel international students' especially Iraqi students to study in Malaysia. This would help the Malaysian government agencies and institutions to develop strategies help attract international students to come and study in Malaysia. The study would also help the Iraqi education agencies and ministry to look at the factors that compel Iraqi students to study abroad and make appropriate strategies to help them to find suitable host destinations for study abroad programs.

1.9 Scope of the Study

The present study is primarily focus on the investigation of factors influencing the Iraqi students to choose Malaysia as their host destination. This study will employ qualitative research and the sample is limited to Universiti Teknologi

Malaysia. Internationalization of education is very important phenomena in Iraq as most of the Iraqi students have been granted scholarships for higher studies. This study focuses on the one Research sector University of Malaysia. The research will be based on the judgment of motivational factors and other determinants that persuade Iraqi students to select University of Technology as their host destination. From researcher perspective, the factors those pull the Iraqi students to choose University of Technology for study will be the focus of study.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

Following are few of the limitations that can be encountered during the study. The focus of the study is only one Research Sector Higher Education Institution of Malaysia, Private sector institutions are not the part of this research. This is due to financial cost and time constraints. All the Iraqi students studying in different Public and Private sector universities of Malaysia cannot be catered as only few Iraqi students of university of Technology will be the part of research in investigation of factors involved.

1.11 Conceptual Definitions

The following terminologies have been used in this study:

1.11.1 Host Destination

Studying abroad is a common practice whether the experience is short-term or long term. Host destination is the particular country where student moves for

higher studies and host institution is the particular university where student enrolled for higher education in foreign country.

1.11.2 Adult learners

An adult learner is 18 years old that can take independent decision and involved in postgraduate education. Researches highlighted those students over 25 years of age are considered as "adult students" (Masgoret; Bernaus; Gardner, 2001) stated six characteristics: adults have life experiences and knowledge, goal-oriented, relevancy-oriented, autonomous and practical.

According to Sissel, Hansman and Kasworm (2001) adult learners are the ones who actively engage and value family, work and engagement in the community and are often considered part time or evening students.

Correia and Sarmiento (2005) highlight that adult learners are the ones who are above 25 and have been out of education system for some time and are working full time. They return to higher education to change either their profession or advance their careers in their present jobs.

1.11.3 Decision Making

It is thought process of selecting a logical choice from the accessible option. While taking a good decision a person overview all the negatives and positives of each option and then consider all options. For an effective decision making a person must be able to forecast the outcome of each option as well and based on this best option is determine for a particular situation. Maringe and Carter (2007) stated that normally decision making could be conceptualized as a five-stage process consist of

recognition of a problem which requires a clarification, the investigation of information ,an assessment of alternative , settle on a purchase decision and finally access the purchase decision.

According to Cole (2004), decision making relates to identification of a problem, evaluating alternatives and selecting one alternative. During the process, people make best choice from among several options based on their current situation.

Decision making is a cognitive process, estimating which of various alternative actions would bring in the most positive outcome (Loewenstein and Lerner, 2003). Saaty (2008) opines that to make a decision, one should know the problem, the need and purpose of the decision, criteria of the decision, groups affected by the decision and alternative actions to take.

1.11.4 Foreign Student/International Student

The mobility of student across border after leaving his/ her country, territory or origin with a single objective of studying is called Foreign/ International Student.

In Malaysia recently, international students are considered as a new group of students who go to higher learning institutions in order to enroll in higher education studies outside their own country (Padlee, Kamarruddin, and Baharun, 2010).

According to John (2008), international graduate students can be also described as adult learner. In this study, the international postgraduate students represent the students, who come to Malaysia from Iraq without the citizenship of Malaysia and for the purpose of graduate study, include master, doctorate, and post doctorate students. The institute of International Education generally distinguish between foreign students who have foreign citizenship, and international students

who "undertake all or part of their higher education experience in a country other than their home country OR students who travel across a national boundary to a country other than their home country to undertake all or part of their higher education experience" (Bhandari et al., 2011, p. 4). (as cited in (Lauermann, 2012)).

1.12 Operational Definitions

1.12.1 Host Destination

Host destination is considered to be a particular country of an institution where individuals move for study or work. In the present study host destination is country that is Malaysia and within Malaysia the host destination is the university where international students come and stay for their studies. In this study the host destination in case of institution in Malaysia is Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

1.12.2 Adult Learners

Adult learners are the adults of age 18 and above that are physically and psychologically matured to take their decisions. These adult learners are considered to have some field experience (job experience). In the case of present study, adult learners are the adult students who are pursuing their postgraduate study that is either Masters, Doctorate and post doctorate degrees in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and have prior job experience.

1.12.3 Decision Making

Decision making is the process of selecting a logical and suitable choice from amongst the various available options. This choice represents best option for a particular situation faced by an individual. For the present study, decision making is the choice of studying in Malaysian Public Sector Research University.

1.12.4 Foreign Students / International Students

Foreign or international students are the students who decide to go to a foreign country for study purposes. For the present study, foreign or international students are the ones who have left their home countries and travelled to Malaysia for study purposes. In the present research, adult students from Iraq are considered as foreign or international students who have enrolled in the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) in either Masters, Doctorate and post doctorate degree program.

1.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a brief overview of factors that influence the Iraqi students to move abroad for higher studies formed the background basis of this research. Problem statement along with research objectives and questions has been presented. All this helped the researcher in the development of theoretical foundations and framework in the subsequent chapters. The scope, significance, limitations of the study has been discussed.

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