ANALYSING HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY DESIGN TOWARDS DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE IN MALAYSIA

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ANALYSING HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY DESIGN TOWARDS DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE IN MALAYSIA

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To Mummy, Atikah, Fadli, Izyan, Faye, Roseline, Dr. Leeand Shieh Lin

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"There is a sense in which we are all each other's consequences."

Wallace Stegner, All the Little Live Things

The above quote summed up everything about the study, this thesis, and in a great scheme of things, life as a PhD candidate.

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ABSTRACT

In spite of the annual increase in the number of internationally mobile students travelling across borders for higher education, a holistic overview on the students' study and living experiences is lacking. International studentsencounter various difficulties in adjusting to academic, social and lifestyle challenges faced throughout their duration of study. As such, the main aim of this study is to develop the "international student experience" conceptual framework capable of facilitating higher education practitioners in designings policies and initiatives to support the international student population. The context selected for this study is Malaysia as student recruitment international underlines the country's agenda internationalising its higher education system. Towards this aim, five policy documents from four countries well - established in international student recruitment, namely Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Australia were coded and analysed following conventions outlined under the discourse analysis method. It was found that higher education institutions play central role in international student management, in collaboration with various participants within and outside the institutions. The design of policies significantly impact interpretation and delivery of "international student experience" across higher education systems. This include how each policy statement is written, the inclusion of policy instruments binding the participants to their responsibilities, the level of operation and tangible sanctions outlined, the legitimation and enforcement of policy statements among the participants, and the values and principles projected to the participants through the policies. As such, the design of policies defining the "international student experience" in the Malaysian higher education system must take into consideration the overarching principles underlying international student recruitment, targeted international student population, autonomy to higher education institutions, regulated segments, legal enforcement across public and private higher education institutions, empowered network of participants, and flexibility for future expansion.

ABSTRAK

Walaupun jumlah pelajar antarabangsa yang bergerak merentas sempadan negara untuk melanjutkan pengajian tinggi meningkat setiap tahun, namun gambaran holistik berkenaan pengalaman pengajian dan kehidupan mereka masih kurang. Pelajar antarabangsa menghadapi pelbagai cabaran akademik, sosial dan gaya hidup sepanjang tempoh pengajian mereka. Justeru, kajian ini bertujuan membangunkan kerangka konsep "pengalaman pelajar antarabangsa" yang berupaya membantu pengamal penagajian tinggi untuk mereka bentuk dasar dan inisiatif berkaitan bagi menyokong golongan pelajar antarabangsa tersebut. Konteks yang dipilih bagi tujuan kajian ini adalah Malaysia kerana pengambilan pelajar antarabangsa merupakan agenda utama dalam usaha mengantarabangsakan sektor pengajian tinggi negara. Untuk mencapai objektif kajian, lima dokumen dasar dari empat negara utama dalam pengambilan pelajar antarabangsa iaitu Jerman, Netherlands, New Zealand dan Australia telah dikod dan dianalisa berdasarkan konvensyen analisis wacana. Kajian mendapati bahawa institusi pengajian tinggi memainkan peranan utama dalam pengurusan pelajar antarabangsa, melalui kerjsasama dengan pelbagai pihak dari dalam dan luar institusi. Bentuk dasar yang direka banyak mempengaruhi intepretasi dan penyampaian "pengalaman pelajar antarabangsa" merentas sektor pengajian tinggi. Hal ini termasuk cara penulisan setiap kenyataan dasar, rangkuman alat dasar untuk mengikat setiap peserta kepada tanggungjawab mereka, peringkat operasi dan sekatan yang digariskan, pengesahtarafan serta penguatkuasaan dokumen dasar di kalangan peserta, serta nilai dan prinsip yang digambarkan kepada peserta melalui dokumen dasar tersebut. Justeru, dasar yang direka untuk mendefinisikan "pengalaman pelajar antarabangsa" di sektor pengajian tinggi Malaysia mesti mengambil kira prinsip utama dalam pengambilan pelajar antarabangsa, kumpulan sasar pelajar antarabangsa, autonomi kepada institusi pengajian tinggi, segmen yang dikawal, penguatkuasaan undang-undang kepada kedua - dua institusi pengajian tinggi awam dan swasta, pemerkasaan rangkaian peserta serta kelenturan bagi perkembangan sektor pada masa hadapan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEI - Australian Education International (Australia)

AIEA - Association of International Education Administrators

(USA)

CDA - Critical Discourse Analysis

CHC - Confucian Heritage Cultures

CRICOS - Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for

Overseas Students (Australia)

DAAD - German Academic Exchange Service (Germany)

DIMA - Department of Immigration and Border Protection

(Australia)

ESOS Act 2000 - Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000

(Australia)

ETP - Economic Transformation Programme (Malaysia)

GATS - General Agreement of Trade in Services

GNI - Gross National Income

HEA - Higher Education Academy (UK)

HRK - Association of Universities and other Higher Education

Institutions in Germany (Germany)

IAD - Institutional Analysis and Development

IAU - International Association of Universities

IBC - International branch campus

IEAA - International Education Appeal Authority (New Zealand)

IGT - Institutional Grammar Tool

IIB - Iskandar Investment Berhad (Malaysia)

IM - Iskandar Malaysia (Malaysia)

IPPTN - Institut Penyelidikan Pengajian Tinggi Negara (Malaysia)

MESDC - Main English Speaking Destination Countries

MOE - Ministry of Education (Malaysia)

MOHA - Ministry of Home Affairs (Malaysia)

MOHE - Ministry of Higher Education (Malaysia)

MQA - Malaysian Qualification Agency (Malaysia)

MRU - Malaysian Research University

MyQUEST - Malaysia Quality Evaluation System (Malaysia)

NEP - New Economic Policy (Malaysia)

NESB - Non-English speaking background students

NHESP - National Higher Education Strategic Plan (Malaysia)

NuMed - Newcastle Medicine Malaysia

OECD - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PEMANDU - Performance Management and Delivery Unit (Malaysia)

PHEI Act 1996 - Private Higher Educational Institution Act 1996

(Malaysia)

STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

UKCISA - UK Council for International Student Affairs (UK)

UKM - Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

UM - Universiti Malaya

UPM - Universiti Putra Malaysia

USM - Universiti Sains Malaysia

UTM - Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

WTO - World Trade Organisation

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CHAPTER 1

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study and outlines the structure of the overall thesis. The chapter is divided into ten sections. First, it starts with a narration on developments in internationalisation of higher education, international student recruitment and its impact on national higher education systems. This is followed by a discussion on the response of the Malaysian higher education system on the increasing inflow of international students into the country, and how these responses shape the motivation and intention in conducting the study. Next, the research process is briefly described alongside operational definition of key terms used throughout the thesis, the significance of study conducted and contribution to knowledge, as well as limitations of the study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a description of chapters forming this thesis.

1.2 Higher Education Going Global: Internationalisation, International Students and Changes in National Higher Education Systems

Higher education has a distinct operation as it is "at one and the same time global, national and local..." (Marginson, Sarjit Kaur and Erlenawati Sawir, 2011, p.5). The roles and responsibilities of higher education institutions are interconnected and interdependent with the society and economy. As such, they are at unique positions to respond to different stakeholders, both internally and externally, within local, regional, national and international contexts (Jongbloed, Enders and Salerno, 2008). In the second half of the twentieth century, the global component of the sector's operations has emerged as one of the policy issues receiving the most attention. Globalisation has reduced purpose, function, access, equity and management of higher education to one that is market – driven, subsequently reducing the nature of higher education as a public good (Tierney, 2004). Student mobility, transnational education, international research collaboration and institutional partnerships, among others, are evidence of the impact of globalisation on higher education (Stensaker et al, 2008). The global orientation is also referred to as internationalisation of higher education, a phenomenon describing efforts by governments and universities to integrate "...international, intercultural and global dimensions into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education..." (Knight, 2007, p.214).

The movement of students outside their country of origin for higher education, otherwise known as international student mobility, has set foundation for national governments and higher education institutions in intensifying their internationalisation activities. The number of international students grew from 0.8 million in 1975 to 4.3 million in 2011 (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2013). This figure will continue to increase due to increasing demand for higher education from developing nations, in particular China and India, which accounts for approximately 25 percent of the global international student population (Altbach, 2009). Among the push and pull factors cited in justifying the increasing international student mobility include lack of access to higher education in the domestic market, quality of higher education provided by local institutions,

scholarships and migration opportunities post-graduation and unfavourable employment opportunities in home countries (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002 and Li and Bray, 2007). Students are also enticed with possibilities of enhancing their employability and competitiveness through an international higher education experience (Kuznetsov and Kuznetsova, 2011). International student mobility is also viewed as a means in cultivating "...human resources better equipped for an ever more internationally oriented labor market..." (Stronkhorst, 2005, p.293). There is also immense potential for national governments in transforming international education as an instrument for public diplomacy (Bryne and Hall, 2013), such as the Colombo Plan, the world's longest running bilateral aid programme from Australia (Oakman, 2011, p.3).

The movement of students has stimulated system-wide innovation in curricular reform as well as improvements in education and research performance (van der Wende, Beerkens and Teichler, 1999). However, economic considerations are paramount to countries actively recruiting international students. An increase in international student enrolment, particularly full fee-paying international students has emerged as a national higher education strategy in achieving prestige, talent, revenue and institutional development (Patterson, 2005; Rui Yang, 2008; KH Mok, 2008; Long, 2010; Department of Business Innovation and Skills UK, 2011 and SW Ng, 2011, among others). As a result, internationalisation is seen as a global business endeavour with lucrative economic returns (Healey, 2008; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2012). International students in the UK paid £10.2 billion in tuition fees and living expenses in the 2011/2012 academic term, and this motivated the UK government to shelve plans on imposing a cap on the number of international students recruited by UK higher education institutions (Department of Business Innovation and Skills UK, 2013). In Australia, it is estimated that education exports will contribute AUS\$19.1 billion to the local economy along with 10,000 jobs in 2020 (Commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education Australia, 2013). The international student population is also cited as significant contributors to research in the US, with over 41 percent of them enrolled in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields (Institute of International Education US, 2011).

1.3 Malaysia and Its Agenda in International Student Recruitment

Malaysia has been intensifying international student recruitment since the late 1990s (Morshidi Sirat, 2008). The introduction of the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act (PHEI Act) 1996 marks a historical move in the country's higher education development. It underlines provisions that allow establishment of degree – granting, for – profit private higher education institutions (Mazzarol, Soutar and YS Sim, 2003) besides providing opportunities for local operators to collaborate with foreign higher education institutions in setting up international branch campuses (IBCs), with Monash University Sunway Campus Malaysia becoming the first IBC established in the country in 1998 (Banks and McBurnie, 1999). The Act impacted the Malaysian higher education system in three ways: first, it increased access to quality higher education for domestic consumption; secondly, it reduced the impact of critical student outflow abroad for higher education; and finally, it became a catalyst for private operators to enrol international students into their institutions (Wilkinson and Yusoff Ishak, 2005; Marimuthu, 2008). By 2010, the country hosted more than 86,919 international students in both its public and private higher education institutions (SY Tham, 2013).

International student recruitment is part of a bigger agenda for Malaysia in positioning its higher education system at a global level. Internationalisation is one of the strategic thrusts under the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP), the country's blueprint for higher education transformation. Under this strategic thrust, the country aims at enrolling a total of 200,000 international students by 2020 (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2007). The document also outlined initiatives in enhancing inbound and outbound international mobility among students and staff in Malaysian higher education institutions. The movement of students and providers into the country is expected to generate a total of RM33.6 billion in Gross National Index (GNI)along with 535,000 jobs by 2020 (Performance Management and Delivery Unit Malaysia (PEMANDU), 2010). The ultimate goal is to transform Malaysia into an education hub, using higher education to cultivate the required talent force and institutional capacity in support of the country's focus to be a high – income developed nation:

The education sector is critical, not just as a means in cultivating first-class human capital and creating social mobility, but also as an engine of growth in its own right. In higher education, our vision is nothing less than to develop Malaysia into a regional centre for excellence in tertiary education. We aspire to produce more researchers and scientists, more engineers and professionals, more specialists and skilled technical talent who can succeed in an increasingly competitive global market. Both private and public higher education institutions in Malaysia must rise up to this challenge...

(Performance Management and Delivery Unit Malaysia (PEMANDU), 2010, p. 476)

1.4 Statement of Problem

Large-scale international student recruitment, at times using questionable and even unethical practices, may cause a variety of problems... This can overshadow the highly positive intellectual and intercultural benefits that international students bring to the classroom, campus, and communities in which they study and live.

(International Association of Universities (IAU), 2012, p.3)

The quote is taken from Affirming Academic Values in Internationalisation: A Call for Action, a policy document prepared by the International Association of Universities (IAU) in response to the expansion of international student body across higher education systems. The note is curated by an expert group appointed under the IAU in response to the growing sense of unease concerning the adverse impact of internationalisation on higher education. International student recruitment is raised as one of the key issues under this document. Even though the incoming students facilitate national governments in raising the capacity and capability of domestic higher education institutions, their presence might serve more harm than good to local higher education ecosystems. The document outlined 12 values and principles

in designing and implementing internationalisation strategies, one of them made specific reference to international student management:

In designing and implementing their internationalisation strategies, higher education institutions are called upon to embrace and implement the following values and principles...Treatment of international students and scholars ethically and respectfully in all aspects of their relationship with the institution...

(International Association of Universities (IAU), 2012, p.5)

Support services and infrastructure offered by higher education institutions to the international student population contribute to international student security, or the "maintenance of a stable capacity for self-determining human agency" (Erlenawati Sawir et al, 2012, p.436). While the challenges faced by the international student population throughout their sojourn are well ascertained through research, the interpretation has been fragmented and the gap in terms of a holistic overview of the students' experience are not fully explored (Harris, 1995). Current conceptualisation on the students' experiences focused on a top-down managerial approach or a customer service approach (Gatfield, Barker and Graham, 1999). Consequently, there is a gap on reviews concerning the role of participants involved in managing the students' experiences. Managing internationalisation in general and international students in particular requires

... a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education...it is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units...

(Hudzik, 2011, p.6)

Forbes-Mewett and Nyland (2013)'s case review on funding allocation to international student management of an Australian university revealed the general concern among academic staff that international students are exclusively recruited

for their fee – paying status, as well as the diverging perception between academic staff and senior management on the type of support services provided to international students.

On the home front, given the rapid expansion of the international student body, higher education practitioners have raised concerns related to institutional readiness in hosting the international student population. International students in Malaysia reported a myriad of issues affecting their well-being in the country, ranging from culture shock, home sickness, miscommunication between international students and the domestic student population, dietary adjustments, academic truancy and students' failure to adhere to rules and regulations of hosting institutions as well as the difficulties faced by the students in adjusting to domestic academic conventions (Institut Penyelidikan Pengajian Tinggi Negara (IPPTN), 2009). The three biggest problems faced by the students as they adjust to life in Malaysia consisted of climate, the use of localised English and the varying quality of support services offered by higher education institutions (HEIs) (Zuria Mahmud, Saleh Amat, Saemah Rahmanand Noriah Mohd Ishak, 2010). They look forward to assistance from family members, peers and local contacts in order to navigate their way around academic and social conventions in the country (Yusliza Mohd Yusoff, 2011). Students also reported expectation mismatch in terms of the academic experiences anticipated in the country (Manjula and Slethaug, 2011). Faculty members experienced difficulties in managing the international postgraduate students as they failed to meet the language proficiency required to function at the postgraduate level (Marlyna Maros, Siti Hamin Stapa and Mohd Subakir Mohd Yasin, 2012). These snapshots may not be representative of the overall picture but they are sufficient in raising alarm on the lack of cohesive framework that guides Malaysian higher education institutions in managing their international student population.

Reviews on regulatory frameworks shaping experiences of international student at the national level are in existence (Lewis, 2005 and Marginson, 2012) but appears to be lacking. Information asymmetry was cited as the main rationale driving national governments in introducing performance measures that demonstrate the

quality of institutional teaching and research activities of HEIs (Kivistö and Hölttä, 2008). However, such intervention evoked mixed responses. On one hand, Carrington, Meek and Wood (2007) claimed that government intervention is required in terms of liberalising higher education for export, establishing indicators illustrating the quality of higher education provided and granting financial allocation to increase competitiveness of local higher education providers. On the other hand, Mause (2010) argued that government intervention is unnecessary as it is the students who should take the lead in regulating the international student market with the help of private third parties such as certifiers and information intermediaries. Blackmur (2007) believed that some form of government intervention is still required as the higher education institutions are expected to demonstrate strict quality assurance mechanisms in order to survive in a market – regulated environment.

The stakes are high for the Malaysian higher education system in achieving the targeted international student enrolment figures and its education hub aspiration by 2020. At current point of time, there is no regulatory framework established to safeguard the international students throughout their stay in Malaysia. Institutional checks and enforcement activities, which assess readiness of HEIs in hosting international students, are limited to implementation at private HEIs, highlighting a blind spot in policy implementation. As such, Malaysia must reaffirm its commitment in safeguarding the international students' higher education experience. The commitment in hosting international students can be projected through formulation of specialised policies that ensure all parties involved are aware of the values and responsibilities in managing the international student population. In addition, all stakeholders involved in the provision of services and support structures to international students must be assigned explicit roles and responsibilities so as to ensure quality in the services and support structures offered. This would enable the country to leverage on the international students' positive higher education experience as a catalyst that would enhance their appeal as capable global higher education providers.

1.5 Research Objective and Research Questions

The objective of this study is to develop a conceptual framework capable of providing a holistic overview on the study and living experiences of the international student population within an internationalised higher education landscape. This conceptual framework, to be called "international student experience", will serve as the foundation in addressing the above – mentioned gaps, consequently paving the way in building a multi – stakeholder, multi – perspective, multi – faceted policy intervention in support of the students' sojourn.

In a broader picture, the conceptual framework delineates each stage of an international student's "experience" as he/she embarks on his/her higher education experience abroad. The delineation process enables national governments and higher education institutions to administer appropriate support structures and services throughout the student's stay in a host country. On the home front, the conceptual framework serves as a backbone in formulating strategies and policy initiatives capable of supporting the expansion of higher education and the increased international student population. The framework, if incorporated into existing legal frameworks such as the PHEI Act 1996 and available higher education blueprints such as the NHESP, would safeguard an international student's higher education experience in Malaysia, consequently protecting Malaysia's reputation as a higher education exporter. Additionally, the conceptual framework also contributes to the existing body of research and literature on internationalisation in general and international students in particular either as an overall, end - to - end "ideal" experienceor segments that are interrelated with one another, an example being the students' language competency, academic success and social interactions with domestic students.

The objective is broken down into three main research questions. Each research question is then further defined into sub – questions. Tierney (2014) noted that higher education research covered four distinctive areas, consisting of systems of higher education, privatisation, academic work, and technology. These areas require careful analysis through multiple lenses and perspectives in order to understand

changes occurring as a whole, how the changes impact different countries in different ways, and the desired response by different participants. As such, it is necessary to refine each research question into sub – questions to ensure the exploration process can be conducted as comprehensive as possible, covering as many lenses and perspectives under the subject.

Research question 1: What is the current status, depth and breadth of issues and concerns related to the international student population?

Sub – questions to research question 1:

- 1. What is/are the sectors characterising international students' lived experience in higher education systems?
- 2. What is/are the issues and concerns associated with the international students' lived experience in higher education systems?

Research question 2: How do national governments interpret "international student experience"?

Sub – questions to research question 2:

- 1. Who is the "international student"?
- 2. How do national governments justify the presence of international students in respective higher education systems?
- 3. How does the presence of international students impact higher education systems?
- 4. How does the presence of international students affect behaviour of participants in higher education systems?
- 5. Who are the participants in the policy process?
- 6. What do the participants do?
- 7. How are the participants bounded to their responsibilities?
- 8. What are the formal boundaries that must be adhered to by the participants?

9. Is there any sector in relation to the international student population that has yet to be addressed by higher education systems?

Research question 3: How might we design policies that that can be implemented in support of the international student population?

Sub – question to research question 3:

1. How might national governments, with Malaysia as a case identified, prioritise its focus, resource allocation, regulation and enforcement in managing its international student population?

The questions are formulated based on the following principles:

i. In considering the delivery of positive and meaningful higher education experiences to international students, "the sum is greater than its parts". There are three aspects which are critical in delivering high – quality and holistic higher education experience: one, supporting students through every stage of their academic and personal higher education journey; two, identifying key services student need in order to achieve success; and finally, combining the two aspects in a professional manner (Morgan, 2012, p.15). Much analysis has "universalised" the international student population without dealing with their lived experiences and the complex and dynamic environment that confronts them (Kell and Vogl, 2010). Moreover, the current "culture" in which international students are discussed in the academia have disregard the larger context in which learning takes place, which often occurs outside classroom setting and involves the greater higher education community (Montgomery, 2010). External influences, such as higher education funding models at institutional, state and national levels might significantly impact the students' higher education experience (Conner and Rabovsky, 2011). As such, an overall picture of the segments that forms the sum of the students' higher education experience will facilitate higher education systems in better coordination of efforts and resources in managing the international students at all levels of implementation.

- ii. In prescribing solutions beneficial to the international students' sojourn, the process of designing solutions at the start of the policy cycle is as equally important as the implementation of said solutions in later stages of the policy cycle. The identification of the "ideal state" facilitates decision makers in articulating the desired end state and expected outcome achievable within particular contextual setting (Howlett, 2011). This "ideal state" can only come into being when decision makers consciously ensure the knowledge and intelligence obtained is consistent with the environment in which the solution is to be implemented. As such, details matter; the goal setting process and alternatives designed to address the goals will directly influence the ultimate policy choices (Sidney, 2007). The ideas, values, social and cultural structures, processes and relations of power as well as political and organisational objectives concerning recruitment of international students should be embedded in the solutions crafted from the outset. This allows participants at all levels of implementation to interpret and translate the "ideal state" in their daily operations, with the ideal view that their efforts will facilitate the international student population to fully reap the benefits of an international higher education experience.
- iii. Solutions formulated in providing positive and meaningful higher education experiences to international students should be sustainable, taking into consideration on the existing structures at national and institutional levels as well as the participants involved in shaping operations in each level of implementation. Changes in higher education systems are often observed in well established structures; while participants within the systems are accountable to the transformations introduced, their actions are consecutively bounded to structures, "...a socially constructed entity in which similar patterns and relationships interact..." (Saarinen and Ursin, 2012). As the number of international students will continue to increase in the coming years, national governments should seek to undertake long term standpoint

on managing the international student population in respective higher education systems. This standpoint requires policy makers to consider solutions and possible innovations to be introduced in the long run, rather than devising temporary solutions that correct existing issues at the margins, or serve issues of interest to current electoral systems and management terms (Voß, Smith and Grin, 2009)

1.6 Scope of Study

The following outlines the scope covered under this study:

- i. In its broadest sense, the study seeks to develop a comprehensive overview of international students' study and living experiences as they pursue higher education opportunities outside of their country of origin. This includes the decision making process prior to the students' arrival, preparation in country admission as well as admission to selected higher education institutions, the students' experience upon arrival, the academic and social domains impacting their higher education experience, and the students' experience after completion of their studies.
- ii. Upon identification of the comprehensive overview, the study narrowed its exploration to policy action and initiatives concerning the international student population. Specifically, the study seeks to establish understanding on the responses of national governments in view of the influx of international students in respective higher education systems. This includes the motivations underlying increased international student recruitment, potential segments regulated by the national governments, particular responsibilities prescribed to higher education institutions and relevant participants, actions that are allowed and prohibited, as well as possible penalties, punishments and sanctions in the event of non compliance.

- iii. Once the policy action and initiatives are established, the study then focused its attention on identifying a general backbone that is required in formulating strategies, policy initiatives and implementation programmes concerning management of international students in higher education systems. This backbone facilitates formulation of appropriate policy recommendations in support of the international student population.
- iv. The context to which the policy recommendations are formulated is Malaysia. As reviewed in Section 1.3, Malaysia is actively pursuing initiatives in increasing the volume of international students in the country. The formulation of policy recommendations appropriate for the Malaysian context would support the country in achieving its ambition of 200,000 international student enrolment by 2020, consequently positioning the country as an education hub.

1.7 Methodology

As can be seen in Section 1.5, the research questions and sub – questions under each research questions are in – depth and descriptive in nature. They provide understanding on how different cases give rise to consequences and events that have occurred under a phenomenon (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, and Morales, 2007). These questions frame the approach or design used in this study to collect and analyse the data. As such, it is ascertained that the study prescribes a qualitative approach in data collection and analysis.

Teichler (1996, as cited by Tight, 2003) explained that there are four categories or "spheres of knowledge" in higher education. They consist of quantitative – structural aspects of higher education, knowledge and subject – related aspects of higher education; person – related as well as teaching and research – related aspects of higher education; as well as aspects of organisation and governance of higher education. Tight (2003) carried this idea forward by proposing eight key methods or methodologies used in higher education research: documentary

analysis, comparative analysis, interviews, surveys and multivariate analysis, conceptual analysis, phenomenography, critical or feminist perspectives, and auto or biographical and observational studies. The selection of categories and methods underlying research on higher education would thus depend on the lens of the researcher, in particular the need to understand and explain what is going on in higher education research, and the ability to participate in research concerning higher education (Tight, 2003). As the "international student experience" conceptual framework involves interpreting the phenomenon across different "spheres of knowledge" in higher education, objectivity and empirical evidence should be embraced by the researcher while identifying the different "ways of knowing" (Taber, 2012, p.136) underlying experiences of international students across higher education systems. As such, it is ascertained that an interpretative paradigm is adopted throughout the course of this study.

The study is conducted in five stages:

The first stage involves a general literature review on existing research related to the international student population.

The second stage involves selection of countries as cases for analysis under this study. Four countries that are well – established in international student recruitment are selected, consisting of Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand and Australia. Data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OCED) is used as indicators for case selection and benchmarking as it provides a consistent set of data that is readily available for comparison.

The third stage involves selection of policy documents from the identified countries. The documents selected for analysis are as follows:

National Code of Conduct on Foreign Students at German Universities
 (Germany) (to be referred to as Code of Conduct Germany)

- ii. Code of Conduct with respect to International Students in Dutch Higher Education (Netherlands) (to be referred to as Code of Conduct Netherlands)
- iii. Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students (New Zealand) (to be referred to as Code of Practice New Zealand)
- iv. National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2001 (Australia) (to be referred to as National Code Australia)
- v. Code of Practice and Guidelines for the Provision of Education to International Students 2005 (to be referred to as Code of Practice Australia)

At this juncture, it is appropriate to provide a rationale for the selection of policy documents as the main units of analysis in this study. The policy texts selected are derived from recruiters that are well – established in the business of recruiting international students. Learning through policy texts of these recruiters is a form of 'lesson drawing', defined as the voluntary act of transfer by rational actors working in specific political contexts (Benson and Jordan, 2011). It also draws from Phillips and Ochs (2003)'s conceptualisation of 'cross-national attraction' in education policy borrowing, where foreign examples are used to inform on processes of educational change at all levels of the policy process.

The aspect that is of particular interest in this study is the unique position of policy texts as platforms in transferring ideas between transnational, national, local and global levels, and the role of policy documents in representing collectively agreed ideals and decision that have gone through a multi – stage policy process (Saarinen and Ursin, 2012). The discourse used in official documents transports the participants' attitudes, ideas and beliefs about policy issues, subsequently precede policymaking process and institutional change (Wentzel, 2011). Problems and issues would only come to light if it forms part of a discourse within a policy, where language is used as a political tool reflecting the struggle between power, language and reality (Watts, 2006). The analysis on policy statements allows exploration on

how the objects, participants and spaces within the policy are constructed, besides revealing the "rules of formation" or conditions of existence of the policies formulated (Grimaldi, 2012). It could also reveal the values and goals that are perceived by the decision makers as more worthy than others besides studying the ways in which domination and subordination of participants and actions are presented within a policy (MacDonald, 2003).

The fourth stage involves discourse analysis of the policy documents selected. The discourse analysis is conducted based on two analytical elements, that is, policy contextualisation and policy recontextualisation. In policy contextualisation, the policy documents are repeatedly read and coded following syntax components under the Institutional Grammar Tool (IGT). In policy recontextualisation, Fairclough (2006)'s dialectical – relational exploration on globalisation and language is used as a model to identify themes discussed within the policy documents. Both analytical elements were divergent, in the sense that the former unpacked all statements in each policy document down to its semantic components while the latter analysed each document as a whole; however, when combined, the analytical elements uncovered findings that provide an overall narration on international students and responses of national governments in addressing the inflow of the students at respective higher education systems.

The final stage involvesdata analysis and construction of policy recommendations for consideration within the context of the Malaysian higher education system as a case identified for this study.

1.8 Operational Definition

The major terms used throughout the thesis are defined as follows.

Internationalisation of higher education

- "the process of integrating international, intercultural and global dimensions into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education..."
 (Knight, 2007, p.214)
- "... a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education...it is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units..." (Hudzik, 2011, p.6)

International student

- "...those students enrolled in a university in a foreign country, where they do not have permanent residence..." (Mehtap-Smadi and Hashemipour, 2011, p.418).
- "...students who have crossed a national border to study or to undertake other study related activities, for at least a certain unit of a study programme or a certain period of time, in the country to which they have moved... "student mobility" is used as an abbreviation for "international student mobility.".... A "foreign student" could be equated with an "internationally mobile student" if and only if all students had actually lived in the country of their nationality prior to crossing a border for the purpose of study and if no students had changed their nationality during the course of study abroad to that of their country of study." (Kelo, Teichler, and Wächter, 2006, p.210)

International student experience – The lived experiences of international students as they undergo higher education experiences abroad. It consists of four major stages: the pre – arrival stage, the arrival stage, the stage throughout their studies and the after – mobility stage. The lived experience of the students is shaped by a number of participants across different levels of operation; however, higher education institutions are situated at the heart of the action.

Higher education – "...education provided by a higher educational institution" (Education Act 1996)

Policy – "The word policy is commonly used in government documents, academic writings and daily conversations... Policy can cover a very broad arena and can be understood and used in various ways, including plans, decisions, documents and proposals. In addition to written forms, policy can include actions, practices and even the inactions of governments. The most popular of these definitions, amongst policy researchers and the public at large, are those that define informally produced commentaries which offer to make sense of the official texts; the speeches and public performances of relevant politicians and officials; and official videos..." (Rui Yang, 2007, p.241-245)

Policy process – "...the study of change and development of policy and the related actors, events, and contexts... the policy process should not be singly interpreted as the policy cycle, an evolutionary depiction of diffusion and selection of policies, ongoing adaptation and adjustment, or enduring conflict. Indeed, each interpretation has its place. The objective is to learn how to draw lessons from each of these processes at the appropriate point in time and not to focus just one as the single process lens..." (Weible et al, 2012, p.3-4)

Policy consideration – Points that steer the thought process and design of policies concerning the international student population, emphasising key elements that should be included during goal setting and objective formulation during the policy design process.

Policy takeaway – Practical tips in conducting design and operationalisation of policies in support of the international student population.

Policy paradoxes – Findings of the study that contradict concepts and theories reviewed in available literature on higher education policy development and internationalisation of higher education.

Discourse - "...an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination and reception, that brings an object into being..." (Phillips and Hardy, 2002; as cited by Jedlicka, 2012)

Institutional Grammar Tool (IGT) – "...The purpose of the IGT is to unravel the minute components—analogous to genetic codes in living cells—of formal institutions, such as policies, laws, legislation, and regulations... offering refined definitions for systematically dissecting institutional statements in policy designs... (Siddiki et al, 2011, p.81)

Institutional statements – "...the shared linguistic constraint or opportunity that prescribes, permits, or advises actions or outcomes for actors (both individual and corporate). Institutional statements are spoken, written, or tacitly understood in a form intelligible to actors in an empirical setting... institutional statements were composed of five working parts: The Attribute (A), Deontic (D), aIm (I), Condition (C), and the Or else (O)... From these five working parts, institutional statements could then be identified as strategies, norms, and rules..." (Siddiki et al, 2011, p.81)

1.9 Significance of Study and Contribution to Knowledge

The following outlines the impact of the study on internationalisation of higher education and higher education policy development:

i. The study provides a framework for national governments and higher education institutions to undertake continuous improvement over the services and support structures in support of their international student population. The main outcome of this study is the "international student experience" conceptual framework. The "international student experience" conceptual framework is developed in order to paint a holistic picture on the study and living experiences of the international student population within the global higher education landscape. This framework presents the "ideal state" of providing positive higher education experience to international students; the outcome of the cross – reference process showed gaps between policy formulation and policy implementation to be addressed by national governments intending to benefit from the inflow of international students

into respective higher education systems. While the experiences of the students may vary on the basis of demographic, socio – economic and other forms of indicators, the overall components that make up the students' experiences are similar across higher education systems. The segments covered under the framework provide a general overview into the lives of the students from the moment they decide to undertake higher education opportunities outside of their country of origin to the point of graduation and beyond.

ii. The study considers the subject of international student management from multiple perspectives, and proceeds to propose policy recommendations that highlights the needs of three groups of participants involved in the policy process, consisting of the international student population, higher education institutions, and national governments overseeing the overall operation of higher education institutions. A higher education institution may not be able to oversee or provide the complete "experience" for their international students; however, it would be appropriate to have an overall picture so as to comprehend the students' perspective in adapting to conditions in the host country. For example, policy recommendations concerning the international students' country admission involve participants operating within and outside the higher education institution, such as the Immigration Department and the ecosystem in which country admission procedures are managed. Urias and Yeakey (2009)'s case study on international student enrolment in the US post-9/11 demonstrated the need in looking both internally and externally for efforts in enhancing the international students' higher education experience, in particular matters outside the purview of higher education institutions. It also underlines the importance in coordinating efforts on international student management both within and outside the higher education institution, in order to enable Hudzik (2011)'s conceptualisation of internationalisation, that is, "... a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education...it is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units..." to flourish.

- iii. The outcome of the study addresses critical concerns on international student management in the Malaysian higher education system. Malaysia has come a long way in internationalisation of higher education, standing tall as one of "emerging contenders" (Verbik and Lasanowski, 2007) hosting international students for post-secondary education globally. It is also the innovative platform in international higher education for the past twenty years, delivering different modes of higher education such as twinning programmes and the "3+0" foreign degree arrangements (Wilkinson and Ishak Yusoff, 2005). The country's ability in recruiting large volume of international students has led to its current status as a student hub (Knight and Morshidi Sirat, 2011). How might Malaysia improve and strengthen its appeal in a highly competitive global international student market? It is timely that Malaysia takes stock of the current progress in internationalisation and restrategise exisiting efforts in internationalisation. This study contributes to the country's strategic focus in internationalisation by proposing that good practices in international student management, followed by strong commitment in ensuring the students' well being throughout their studies, would enhance the country's appeal as a destination of choice for higher education. The outcome of this study provides a basis to this strategy and the possible directions, both strategic and tactical, to be undertaken by the country in leveraging on the international student population as a means in realising its ambition of becoming an education hub.
- iv. The study builds on the topic of international student management from a macro perspective, complementing existing information gathered from research projects and practitioner insights at the micro perspective. In a review of the state of research on internationalisation of higher education, Kehm and Teichler (2007) noted institutions, people, and knowledge as the core of internationalisation in higher education, and there is a strong political undercurrent, in terms of institutional commitment, mission and vision statements and national value systems embedded in internationalisation activities. Current research initiatives on the phenomenon are more people focused, that is, addressing issues by looking at the perspectives from those directly involved in the process, such as students, staff and institutional

leaders (Kehm and Teichler, 2007). The approaches also rely on conventional mode of inquiries such as interviews, surveys and small – scaled samples of case studies. This study explores international student management with an emphasis on institutions or policies governing national higher education systems. Such initiative complement, rather than contradict, ongoing efforts on the topic, paving the way for similar explorations on the subject matter to be carried out in the future.

- v. The study explores the use of the Institutional Grammar Tool (IGT) in higher education policy analysis. The IGT is a methodological tool stemmed from the institutional analysis and development (IAD) framework that is used to rationalise policy operations, in particular the participants, their actions, their interaction with one another and the opportunities and constraints underlying their actions and interaction. This study expands the use of the IGT as there are currently no published attempts on the use of this tool in higher education policy research. Moreover, this study also demonstrates the complementarity of the tool alongside discourse analysis methods. Such complementarity is reflected in Chapter 7, where possible policy recommendations are formulated based on findings presented in the two chapters.
- vi. The study highlights two emerging themesunder internationalisation of higher education with the potential for further exploration. Both themes are briefly discussed in Chapter 6. The first theme is risk management involving international students. In a nutshell, this theme describes responses made by hosting universities towards critical incidences involving international students. The theme is raised in view of various critical incidences involving the international student population. The lack of review on this theme presents opportunities for further exploration on the subject. Given the increasing intensity in international student mobility, national governments should enhance institutional readiness not only in facilitating the students' study and living experiences in the country as outlined under the "international student experience" framework, but also to prepare for any adversities and the consequences that might affect the students, the hosts and

the whole higher education system in general. The second theme is ethics in internationalisation of higher education. In a nutshell, this theme discusses actions that are considered "the right thing to do" in internationalisation and elements of reciprocity in conducting internationalisation activities with others. Current discussions on the theme concentrate only on macro issues such as negative perception on the inflow of international students into particular higher education systems, selection and establishment of international partnerships and transnational education. Reviews have yet to be made with regard to ethics in hosting international students, and given the intensity in which students move across borders for higher education, such omission is detrimental to the students' well being. Similar to the theme on risk management, the theme on ethics in internationalisation of higher education has yet to be fully explored, which provides opportunities for further exploration beyond the scope of this study.

1.10 Limitation of Study

The following outlines three limitations of the study.

- i. The study identifies Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Australia as countries selected for document analysis. These countries are well established in international student recruitment and good practices can be drawn and adapted from their experience. However, not all practices can be adapted as the countries may have different motivations and operational models, which may not be apparent through the policy documents analysed. As such, the findings presented in this study, and the ensuing policy recommendations formulated, may need to be selected and adapted based on current capacity of the Malaysian higher education system in recruiting international students.
- ii. There is a limit on what a country can do for its international student population. The four paradoxes presented in Chapter 5 are some of the

limitations identified throughout the data analysis process. As such, the findings presented in this study may be ideal in conceptualisation but not feasible in full implementation.

iii. The study focused on textual analysis of policy documents on management of international students from four selected countries. The policy documents represent formal conventions of the countries for their international student population. There might be informal conventions that are only known to the participants and not policy makers tasked to draft the policy documents. As such, the findings of the study are limited in terms of the scope of exploration and the actual implementation realities encountered by participants in the policy process.

1.11 Organisation of Thesis

The thesis is organised as follows:

- i. Chapter 1 (this chapter) provides an overview of the study and outlines the structure of the overall thesis.
- ii. Chapter 2 describes international students and their experiences in the global higher education system as interpreted through existing literature on the subject, as well as the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings guiding the research.
- iii. Chapter 3 chronicles the Malaysian higher education system, its initiatives in internationalisation and related studies concerning experiences of international students in the Malaysian higher education system.
- iv. Chapter 4 outlines the research method used to address the research objective and research questions.

- v. Chapters 5 and 6 present findings from the data analysis process.
- vi. Chapter 7 puts forward policy recommendations derived from the analysis.
- vii. Chapter 8 features a summary of the study and presents directions for further research.

1.12 Summary and Conclusion

This study looks into experiences of international students in the global higher education landscape and seeks to understand responses of national governments towards the increasing inflow of international students at respective higher education systems. Specifically, the aim of this study is to develop the "international student experience" conceptual framework capable of providing a holistic overview on the lived experiences of international students as they pursue higher education opportunities abroad. This is achieved through three research questions and 12 sub – questions. The study is conducted in a three – stage exploration process involving literature review, analysis of policy documents from fouridentified higher education exporters using discourse analysis method, and building policy recommendations based on findings derived from the analysis. The findings are matched with Malaysia as the identified local setting, given the intensity of the country in growing its international student volume, as well as the country's target to be a higher education hub by 2020.

This chapter forms the first part of this thesis, which gives a general introduction to the research, covering the research problem area, research objective, focus area and research questions, scope of study, methodology and operational definition. The next part demarcates the study in detail with regard to an overview of literature concerning experiences of international students and the conceptual underpinnings guiding the progression of the study.

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