

Double Degree Transnational Curriculum: University Internationalization Efforts in Malaysia with British Universities

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Abstract

Higher Education (HE) is central to advancing a nation's civilization. In the modern context, HE has been polarized into a different practice discourse. This is due to the effect of globalization which orients the neo-liberal economic paradigm. This current trend has resulted in a massive change in orientation (reform) of HE in Malaysia, which has forced policymakers to internationalize HE. One of these is the transnational double degree program. British universities are considered the most suitable partners for this program due to several factors, such as the historical trajectory of British colonialism and imperialism towards Malaysia. This study uses a qualitative approach with ethnographic and documentary methods. Using the three-pronged theory of "postcolonialism and education" as an analysis of the findings has shown the spectrum of colonial influence on the education of the former colonies. Education is considered a strategy for seeding international educational networks, as in other regions. Another finding is that the originators or writers of this curriculum face a series of latent problems, such as differences in the academic and cultural climate between the two countries, different regulatory rules, and a shared credit system that still needs to be fully synchronized. This article creates a new finding that the internationalization of HE through creating a transnational double degree curriculum is maximizing HE marketing efforts amidst the current wave of globalization competition.

Keywords: *internationalization, higher education, transnational curriculum, globalization, marketization.*

Introduction

Today's internationalization of higher education (HE) has developed into a polarized trend and brought two discourses that lead to different practices. Two discourses on HE internationalization have been identified to simplify this polarized issue. On the one hand, the globalization agenda contains a neo-liberal economy that directs HE towards competitiveness and commercial goals (Zajda, 2020). On the other hand, a purely educational agency still wants HE as a meta-reflection institution to produce alums who contribute socially and scientifically (Deem, 2020). This global force led to internationalization in response to globalization and economic agendas based on technological and information developments. World-class teaching and research, as well as a global competitive-based university governance model, have been introduced to pursue international rankings. This effort aims to position HE globally and reinvent a management system and curriculum that prioritizes internationalization.

The current trend of globalization touches the dimensions of higher education in the private sphere. For example, globalization has increased the movement of transnational flows where the flow of ideas, goods, human resources and knowledge occurs across borders (Bosire & Amimo, 2017; Xie, 2022). The increasing dominance of English in media literacy and communication between universities has enabled a new way of integration because HE is considered to be at the forefront of the transformation of science and human civilization. Mike Zapp assesses that transnational currents impact university curricula that require the mobility of people (students and lecturers), programs, and university management to make adjustments (Zapp & Lerch, 2020) and variations in courses, teaching substance and methods to degree programs. In Southeast Asia, *The Association of Southeast Asian Nations* (ASEAN) leaders call for a major transformation in their HE administrations by creating a shared higher education system space and a common credit transfer system. Reports from Hotta (2020) found that in the last two decades, as many as 24 countries in the Asian region have implemented a joint academic credit system by opening opportunities for universities

to collaborate with educational systems in other countries. The harmonization of the higher education system in this region has become the latest trend and is supported by the governments of each country.

This program is said to be inspired by Europe and its efforts to “regionalize Asia-Europe” in the higher education field (Cabanda et al., 2019; Chao, 2018; Robertson, 2008a, 2008b). Mobility of education between countries, especially Asia and Europe, is the key to opening up opportunities for the increasingly competitive internationalization of higher education. Malaysia, as a member of ASEAN, also aspires to create the internationalization of HE in the future by adopting this system (Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia, 2011, p. 43). Meetings with ASEAN heads of state have unanimously chosen Malaysia to use this pathway as a pilot project as happened in East Asia with the implementation of the Asian/European Credit Transfer System in the form of European Credit Transfer System (ERASMUS ECTS) and University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) Credit Transfer System (UCTS). One European country that has become an exchange partner in Malaysia is the UK.

This study uses three main theories, which I call “postcolonialism and educational” theories, which are divided to explain the “regionalization of Asia-Europe HE” where Malaysia implements a joint credit system with HE in England in the form of a double degree program, the internationalization of HE with national identity connectors and transnational policies, and “diaspora internationalization of HE” to change various perspectives and strategies for HE development such as response to global market demand and international scale measurements. These three theories are explained in full in the next section.

This article discusses the Malaysian HE curriculum by implementing a joint credit system with HE in England through a double degree program. This research aims to understand the implications of internationalization for higher education in Malaysia in the last decade. Malaysian education reforms have allowed dual degrees to be opened between universities in Malaysia and universities in England. This

research focuses on the process of designers and developers in creating a dual-degree curriculum. This research fills a gap in previous research which only discussed the internationalization of HE from management and policy aspects (Alsharari, 2020; Canaj, 2022; Heleta, 2022; Liu, 2021; Liu, 2022; Markovic, 2021; Romani-Dias, 2020; Texeira-Quiros, 2022; Zapp, 2021), the influence of globalization (Hsieh, 2020; Petti, 2020; Salih, 2021; Sibawaihi, 2022; Tight, 2021), and other aspects such as university vision and goals (Dumanig & Symaco, 2022). However, it is attractive to investigate aspects of curriculum related to inter-state double degree programs, especially when interpreted as transnational higher education programs. The transnational double degree curriculum is understood to be an effort in the internationalization of higher education in Malaysia to raise the ranking of higher education in the eyes of the world.

Method

Research Design

This study assumes that the double degree HE curriculum can be studied in depth with a qualitative approach. We approach the curriculum as a cultural space that becomes material for curriculum designers looking at what motivates HE policies to create a double degree curriculum, and what realities (contexts) drive this program. Internationalization is a cultural product with the curriculum as its unit of analysis; and during the curriculum design process it involves much cultural understanding between the two countries (Malaysia and England) and of how the curriculum crossed Malaysia's borders. So this research uses ethnography and documentaries. As stated by Taylor and Francis, ethnography is the study of culture and the investigation of how people can live with the culture used to form their identity (Taylor & Francis, 2013). Ethnography shows the process of making a double degree transnational curriculum and the natural impact of implementing this program.

Sampling and Data Collection

Data mining was carried out using observation and ethnographic interviews, and document studies focused on transnational culture in forming a double degree curriculum. We use the Lizardo ethnographic interview method, divided into three techniques: declarative, non-declarative, and public (Rinaldo & Guhin, 2022). The declarative technique articulates data from the informant's language expressions and symbolic behavior that researchers can learn quickly and is easy to understand and access. Non-declarative designs are rooted in the practice of body movement and take time and more instinctive knowledge to understand. Public engineering refers to the general understanding known to the public, and sometimes sources of information can be represented through second persons or documented records. We use these three techniques because transnational cultural data from the two countries can be redundant, and informants and sources can say but do nothing or, conversely, not say but do something that contains deep meaning to support the data.

We conducted declarative and nondeclarative interviews with curriculum designers in HE who created double degree programs at private universities in Malaysia. Three key informants are designers of the HE curriculum in Malaysia, and three are designers of the British HE curriculum for Malaysia. The criteria for the six informants were based on the intensity of their involvement, such as their background, beliefs, experiences and curriculum practices that they had created. Meanwhile, the documents we analyzed are confidential (internal HE documents) and contain HE's internal curriculum policies and context. Meanwhile, general documents such as *The National Higher Education Strategic Plan Beyond 2020* are secondary sources supporting the main data.

Triangulation

Based on ethnographic observation and interview techniques, the triangulation used in this study was *method triangulation*. We use Lizardo Analysis to create coherence between data mining techniques and

triangulation. Lizardo helps articulate why this type of triangulation is important because observations and conversations help researchers understand the interactions between different cultural modes and data, such as in the techniques mentioned above (declarative, non-declarative, and public) (Lizardo, 2017).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this research uses the Spradley model (Spradley et al., 2004): (1) *domain analysis*: a general description of the position of Malaysian HE and British HE in opening up space for double degree programs. (2) *taxonomy domain*: describing the role of Malaysian HE and British HE curricula makers to determine the polarization of their performance in making the double degree program a success. (3) *component domain*: elaborating on what elements are the targets for forming a transnational double degree curriculum. (4) *cultural domain*: using Asia-Europe relations as an effort to market Malaysian HE in the global arena.

Literature Review

This study uses three main theories: first, the theory of “Asian-European regionalization of HE”, which was initiated by Cabanda (2019) and Chao (2018) because Malaysian HE implements a joint credit system with HE in England in the form of a double degree program (Cabanda et al., 2019; Chao, 2018). Second, the internationalization theory of HE with the connector of national identity and transnational policy was initiated by Hsieh (2020). This theory explains how the national HE political agenda is disturbed by international geopolitical conditions, which force national policies to rely on global measurements, so HE must elaborate between national identity and global interests (Hsieh, 2020). Third, the theory of “diaspora internationalization of HE” was initiated by Bamberger (2021). This theory explains how internationalization

changes various perspectives and strategies for HE development; for example, emphasis and connectivity towards global market demands (triggering demand for intercultural competencies and skills), national knowledge and measurements no longer being the only ones leading to success, and the opening of global knowledge circuits in universities (Bamberger, 2021). These three theories explain how Malaysian HE and British HE can comprehensively adapt to the double degree program.

1. Regionalization of HE Asia-Europe

Sectorally, European HE shows superiority; scholars are interested in studying it in the ASEAN context (Jones, 2010). This interest is supported because, since the early 1990s, European expansion of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Southeast Asia region has remained low. This includes the internalization of the European educational climate flowing into Southeast Asia. So, to overcome this, a joint higher education platform funded by the EU development agency EuropeAid was launched in the two regions. The project uses the inter-regional institutional structures of the ASEAN and the Asia-Europe Summit (ASEM). The initiation of this program generated European visibility and Asian capacity through the creation of networks and curricular initiatives within the internal and higher education structures (Robertson, 2008b). This project aims to create a regionalized HE system with different Asian and European cultures to increase competitiveness.

Feuer and Hornidge (2015) assess that international integration between Asian-European HE institutions has given rise to a triad of global academic collaboration and exchange of experience. Standardizing academic experiences aims to foster cultural, political and economic linkages to derive new models of competition on a geopolitical scale (Feuer & Hornidge, 2015). In this paper, we discover the discursive struggle of different curriculum systems by exploiting European

hegemony as an approach to standardization and international cultural exchange.

On the other hand, European universities must also take advantage of their role as non-ASEAN stakeholders and make themselves “ASEANized” when adapting the rhetoric and cultural practices of universities in the Asian region (Qiao-Franco, 2022). During this period of regionalization, there has been a similar wave calling itself a *World Class University* (WCU), and all universities in Asia, especially in Southeast Asia, are competing to meet WCU standards. Global competitiveness has triggered universities in ASEAN to establish integral collaboration with prestigious universities in Europe. They began to conduct a comprehensive review and restructure the higher education system to achieve the image of “world-class” universities (Deem et al., 2008). Global rankings are also a trigger to improve their performance through international standard research and learning (Balatsky & Ekimova, 2020). Regionalization of HE Asia-Europe is a way for universities to achieve the WCU ranking and raise their status in the regional area.

In the end, Asian regionalization is lagging behind the development of European regionalization, and the two have different models. I found this difference based on the network regionalism model and the institutional regionalism model. In Europe, institutional regionalization is by giving independent authority to universities in the form of policy making (Yeo, 2010). This contrasts with network regionalization in Asia, where university autonomy is centrally given. Chao (2014) provides illustrations.

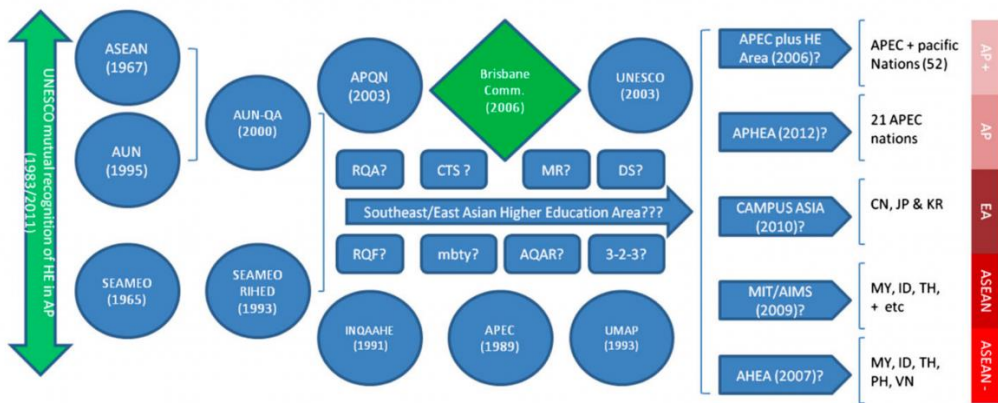


Figure 1 Regionalization of HE in the Asian Region (Southeast, East, Pacific) (Chao, 2014, p. 567).

As presented in Figure 1, HE regionalization considerations are based on regional consensus. Like ASEAN Universities – Quality Assurance (AUN-QA), it was formed based on network regionalization in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, in East Asia, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO-RIHED) is a regionalization of the network in the East Asia Region. Likewise, with *Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN)*, quality assurance is made for the Asia Pacific Region, which is connected to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), resulting in the formation of the University for Asia Pacific (UMAP). However, this example of network regionalization has yet to have a clear evolution because it was formed by extra-regional powers such as Europe. So, they received funding support from the European Union worth 9.6 million Euros from 2015–2018. This funding was later referred to as the *EU-Share* (Geuna, 2001), and Malaysia was involved in this funding (Robles, 2012).

With the formation of Asia-Europe HE regionalism mentioned above, a definition of HE regionalization has been drawn along with a conceptual framework that will inform the tasks of administrators and

leaders in mapping the development of HE research regionalization in Southeast Asia. This emphasizes that the regionalization of HE is a continuous evolutionary process deliberately built on integrating new cultures and academic climates within a single framework.

2. Internationalization of HE, normalizing national identity and transnational policies: between the colonial country (England) and the former colony (Malaysia)

In using this second theory, Hsieh (2022) found that the involvement of European universities could cause internal conflict at Malaysian universities. This then gives rise to “academic nationalism”, which can potentially disrupt the internationalization of HE. Hsieh (2022) offers a new framework in which the internationalization of HE connects national identities and transnational policies. In this case, national identity is the regional policy of Malaysian universities between ASEAN universities and the transnational policies of the European Union (Hsieh, 2020). In this section of the literature review, I reiterate that there is new space to strengthen our understanding of the internationalization and nationalism paradigm of public policy between countries. Of course, this framework can undoubtedly give rise to geopolitical challenges and problems that, in turn, disrupt HE, internal policies, and the country’s national policies. To make this framework work smoothly, Hsieh is trying to get local responses from internal parties at the university with the government as a national policy maker. Apart from that, how the idea of internationalization of HE was created and initiated national universities to accept global influences, taking into account existing challenges, opportunities and problems.

On the other hand, national governments (Malaysia and England) routinely exploit this internationalization of HE for domestic interests on a global scale. Bamberger and others describe this as an intervention in values and control of academic areas with economic and colonial motives. Bamberger gives the example of Ariel University (AU), the only Israeli university in the West Bank, part of the occupied Palestine (oPt).

With the motives and objectives mentioned above, Bamberger found two reasons why Ariel University was installed as a surveillance destination for the invaders. First, internationalization aims to gain legitimacy for its operational presence in controlled (colonized) territories. This means that the government uses all the achievements and academic performance it has achieved to normalize colonialism and reduce international criticism of Israel. Second, the internationalization of Ariel University is set as a goal to gain global academic recognition and obtain academic funding from all over the world (such as funding for scholarships, research, operations, and recruitment of international students and lecturers) (Bamberger et al., 2019).

Even though international scholarship and research schemes are more challenging to obtain, the government continues to encourage the adoption of more considerable scholarship and research schemes, with the guarantee that graduates can return to strengthening the country with contributions after studying so this has led to a shift in their focus to the transnational HE system (Obamba, 2009). Besides that, the target of Malaysian universities is to confirm their national identity as a former British colony. This indicates that Malaysia was a model of colonization under British rule, which was associated with neo-patrimonialism (Hutchinson, 2015). This means that Malaysia's culture and political climate indirectly confirm the nature of the British federal-colonial government from various aspects. This character was then taken advantage of by the administrators who were the originators of the double degree to open up new opportunities with British universities.

This confirms that the colonial government had an essential role in shaping Malaysia's identity and inherited a lasting legacy important for forming a modern, independent post-colonial state (I. Y. C. Ng, 2022). However, the legacy of colonialism gave rise to the reality of racism in former colonies and became a security for the assertion of national identity. This formed a multicultural society that opened itself to developments in specific European fields (Goh, 2008). This is a new transition for Malaysia to reduce the tension between national and transnational identity and the narrative of pluralism supported by the

state to mobilize certain practices such as HE to be integrated into formal institutional structures (Gabriel, 2015).

3. HE Diaspora

Internationalization is the main characteristic of HE involved in developing the modern contemporary academic world. Many scholars examine various forms of HE internationalization, for example, lectures, curricula and funding for research. According to Buckner and Stein, these aspects show an unequal engagement relationship where historical and political elements are deliberately ignored (dehistoricization and depoliticization). For Buckner and Stein, this shows the global inequalities that constantly emerge in the internationalization of HE (Buckner & Stein, 2020). The current understanding of internationalization assumes that local academics are credentialed to global standards. Of course, this requires a diaspora concept, which allows a double degree program to have appropriate positions and roles. So, in this paper, the theory of the HE diaspora explains the position of Malaysian-English universities in organizing double degree programs.

Traditionally, the term “diaspora” is a Greek translation from the Hebrew Bible, which refers to the dispersion of the Jewish people (ancient Israel) where they experienced “exile” and were forced to become immigrants and look for a country where they could return to continue their survival. This has a negative connotation where diaspora is defined explicitly as a (traumatic and forced) depression (Cohen, 2022). Over time, the term began to be used more widely. It changed more subtly from its initial connotation (Tölölyan, 2018), especially in situations that align with these criteria (e.g., the British university diaspora in Malaysian universities).

At the time of the birth of the university, nationalism was formed as an effort to emphasize HE’s academic identity (Joseph, 2006); the diaspora was connected to the form of insider or outsider, which was feared because of its dual role and stiff resistance to assimilation (Sari et al., 2022). On the one hand, the HE diaspora is subject to restrictive laws in both countries and is supervised by the state. This is triggered by

suspicion of external entities that can disrupt national identity (as previously discussed above). However, with the emergence of modern contemporary globalization, this diaspora stereotype has increasingly faded and confirmed its new identity (Welch & Zhen, 2008). Current HE internationalization policies and practices are shaped by market rationalities that have steered HE towards a particular diasporic form aligned with increasingly volatile global academic exchange (Rizvi, 2021).

In other words, the double degree program emphasizes that the presence of international students from both countries to obtain different degrees, gain lecture and research experience, and compete globally remains connected to HE academics in their home countries. Therefore, diaspora in the HE context does not have permanent ties regarding a particular academic identity. However, it has become a global necessity that academic competition and skills have changed transnationally.

Results

Creation and Implementation of the Transnational Double Degree Curriculum in Malaysia

This section is a continuation of the grassroots internationalization of HE in Malaysia, which is the basis for creating a double degree transnational curriculum. This section presents the results of interviews with key informants from this corpus. As mentioned in the method section, key informants are divided into several roles in this curriculum program. The aspect of “who” or who made this curriculum was raised by their profiles from two different backgrounds (Malaysia and Anglophone¹). This shows that writing curriculum is an investigative lens and that the designer’s scientific background determines the building’s structure. Their different views, work culture, level of knowledge, and

¹ *Anglophone* is a state system that uses English as the country's official language. This system is one of the national development identities for countries that use English as the state's official language. See in (A. H. S. Ng, 2018, p. 66; A. Poon, 2021)

social status will influence the design and handling of conflicts or the approach of university partner regulators.

Malaysian Curriculum Writer

The Malaysian double degree transnational curriculum makers were designed by Chandra Sen, Fred Tan and Molly Chong. All three are Malaysian citizens but grew up in Malaysian public schools, which are more Anglophone than Malay. These three designers brought their “western” culture as the basic capital in HE; They offered a double degree program formula as one of Malaysia’s education reform efforts. They needed help convincing people and policy makers to bring this curriculum to HE in Malaysia. In practice, they apply this curriculum to more flexible private universities. Below is a brief profile of Malaysian curriculum writers for the needs of the double degree program and their journey during the curriculum of this dual degree.

1. Chandra Sen

A Malaysian national of Indian ethnicity, he aspires to study further, but in his situation, people from ethnic groups do not get quotas to pursue higher studies. Financial constraints also prevented him from studying abroad, leading him to look at private universities. He said:

It was not easy to enter a public university during my post-secondary education. Despite my qualifications as an Accountant Diploma graduate from the Tuanku Abdul Rahman College, continuing to state universities is complex, including with mixed Malaysian-Indian citizens. Meanwhile, quality tertiary institutions are state universities.

Unable to find a place to continue his undergraduate program at a public university, Chandra Sen ended up studying privately while working part time in Accounting at a British branch of a professional agency in Malaysia. Then he joined as one of the lecturers and study program administration staff at a private campus in Malaysia. At that time, the campus where he worked as a lecturer was expanding its network with student exchange programs between universities in England and Australia:

Transnational higher education began in the 1990s when this program began to mushroom and was used by universities throughout Malaysia. I was a lecturer at English exchange program campuses such as the University of East London and the University of London and the exchange program manager.

Chandra Sen has been investigating implementing a double degree program so that Malaysian students fully experience the climate of obtaining knowledge from Europe and their titles. However, as previously suspected, this takes work. Some of the things that Chandra Sen found were issues of quality assurance managed by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) which had to clash with quality assurance managed by the UK, namely the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA):

The curriculum development model set by MQA is different from QAA, as well as the final goals. So, we have to adjust at length how these qualities can be combined. For example, English courses are required in Malaysia, while in England, these courses are not required. Another area of difficulty is the semester system. In Malaysia, the

semester system has three different time frames and takes place without interruption. In England, the semester system follows the weather climate; for example, British universities start lectures in early September and last until the following year, with long holidays until summer.

Chandra Sen also highlighted the difference between lecture hours, assessment classification systems, passing grades, and awards:

Malaysians have difficulty understanding how scoring points are calculated based on British criteria, and vice versa. It takes time and an adjustment because assessment is complicated and messy.

Chandra Sen also explained through the sidelines after we interviewed him that Malaysians must properly understand the Ministry of Education's demands and students' expectations. Chandra Sen feels that both parties (the Malaysian university and the British university) do not understand each other's higher education goals which can be adapted: "Often we rework the double degree program that has been set". Another thing that, according to Chandra Sen, poses a serious problem is the issue of academic culture:

Malaysians think that this crossover program can improve academic quality. While the British think we are below them in terms of quality. This gap then causes differences in vision and mission so that, in the end, they cannot adjust to the joint academic credit system.

The initial conclusion from Chandra Sen's various statements is that the differences in culture, skills, and orientation of higher education from each country made it difficult to develop a double degree transnational curriculum. Another issue discussed is the historical issue of British imperialism in Malaysia which still makes an impression on the minds of each university.

2. Fred Tan

Unlike Chandra Sen, Fred Tan is a Malaysian-Chinese national who can study at state universities in Malaysia. Financial problems are the same as for Chandra Sen, and Accounting is a field he is passionate about. Fred Tan considers English the first language of instruction because he often uses it during lectures. Fred Tan's knowledge and experience are broader in terms of transnational higher education, starting from the life of students and lecturers and the climate of lectures to the differences that arise from this program. He says:

My involvement in transnational higher education started when I obtained my Master's in Finance degree from RMIT UK through its branch program at the Malaysian Institute of Management. My next involvement was in the Malaysian branch of the University of Victoria as a lecturer and head of its study program for a year. Moreover, now I am involved as a lecturer at a British University.

Besides that, Fred Tan's PhD degree is a collaborative system between private HEs in Malaysia and HEs in Australia:

You could say I am a product of a transnational curriculum between Malaysia and Australia. I enjoy the program and have learned much from their professional setting.

Apart from that, Fred Tan's involvement as a senior lecturer and acting head of the Accounting and Finance Department at a university holding a transnational program between Malaysia and Australia led him to formulate a transnational curriculum similar to the double degree system between Malaysia and England. He said:

We must realize that there is a market that we have to fill, namely globalization which requires cross-continental scientific exchanges to achieve a more competitive quality of Malaysian higher education. For example, when I moved to a business school in Malaysia, this campus offered a dual degree program with a British university, namely at British University. I learned from RMIT and the University of Victoria from my experience teaching at those British universities and my time as a lecturer in Australia. This experience is very useful for me in developing a transnational curriculum. It is undeniable that market needs for skills in the modern age have opened up opportunities for anyone to improve their academics through cross degrees.

In Fred Tan's explanation, he revealed that the character of Malaysians was already "pro-Western", so the problem he was thinking about was related to adjusting the local curriculum in Malaysia. Fred explained that university management views Western universities as better and more established. This disposition convinced Fred that the dual degree program decision was the best:

From the point of view of Malaysia's mindset, management wants Western standards as a reference to improve quality. Western preferences influence the decision of this curriculum to be accepted by all parties in Malaysia. This was proven when we opened double degree registration; market demand was very high for Western brand names as one of the degrees. They were proud to get this title as alumni from one of the top universities in England.

Unlike Chandra Sen, the different cultural climates and orientations of the two countries were not taken too seriously by Fred Tan:

England is the “home” for Malaysia because the origins of Malaysia's history were influenced by the British.

Fred Tan explained students know about the West and England as one of the super power countries that master knowledge. In incorporating English content into the Malaysian curriculum, Fred Tan included it in the exams created by the UK's Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) as one of the transnational accounting and finance certificates and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) as a joint certificate. Fred Tan believes incorporating English elements into the local Malaysian curriculum will increase public trust and interest in HE in Malaysia and bring in more sponsors.

3. Molly Chong

Like Fred Tan, Molly Chong is a Malaysian-Chinese academic who has been able to study at public universities in Malaysia for Bachelor's to Masters degrees. She got her British cultural experience at the University of London. After completing her PhD, Molly Chong worked in public and private HE in Malaysia for approximately twenty years. She has had the opportunity to teach in undergraduate and postgraduate programs involved in education projects at international organizations such as the World Bank, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and organizations involving the British Commonwealth of Nations. At the time of the interview, Molly Chong was a senior lecturer in HE in Malaysia and was in charge of a double degree program at a private university and the UK as a partner university. She teaches four business courses in a double degree program. From this experience, Molly Chong stated:

The “local-foreign” HE is in stark contrast to “public-private” in the Malaysian context.

While Molly Chong was working, the transnational double degree program experienced serious problems, which caused her to stop the curriculum and use the local curriculum. As was the case with Chandra Sen, Malaysian universities could not adapt to the academic programs of British universities, and academics there needed to learn how to develop one. The glaring problem is that when students apply to study, and after graduation, their diplomas and skills are not recognized in places such as graduate colleges and government agencies:

We have a serious problem regarding government regulations that do not recognize transnational titles. As a result, many regulations do not accept student expertise and how government agencies receive their diplomas. However, on the other hand, private HEs in Malaysia are experiencing concern in the form of the ineffectiveness of the programs offered, which resulted in a decrease in the number of students. They are more interested in state universities fully funded by the government and receive special treatment from them.

Seeing this big problem, Molly Chong has an agenda so that the partnership with universities in England must be with HE, which is popular in England.

After everything that happened to us, the university permitted us to return to holding this transnational program but on the condition that HE partners must be more bona fide and classy. Somehow we have to build this unequal partnership.

Molly Chong describes the need for more confidence that private HEs in Malaysia have to partner with UK universities, and remedial action solutions do not accompany their concern. Apart from that, other countries' preferences are the focus of Molly Chong's university work, namely Australia. However, Molly Chong believes that the historical background in which Britain was a colonial country that once colonized Malaysia is a key factor in the success of this transnational double degree program which will one day be in demand. Molly Chong says:

Universities of the United Kingdom continue to cooperate with Malaysian universities, just as Malaysia continues to cooperate with the UK in the context of the state. Despite Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's statement: "Do not buy British products, but we are close to each other."

Molly Chong asked for collaboration with HE in Australia and America. However, during the search process, it turned out that British universities were more suitable and allowed program adjustments to be made. In a historical trajectory, England's preference as a colonial country has influenced higher education policy to date, although culture is one of the triggers, Molly Chong and Chandra Sen found.

English Curriculum Writer

Three authors of the double degree transnational curriculum from Anglophone circles were interviewed: Edward Jones, Harry Porter and Tom Cooney. They have confirmed that demand is higher among Malaysian universities. A more striking finding is the issue of the climate of academic culture and the logic of compiling a curriculum with a different orientation. Regarding regulations, Anglophone is more straightforward, firm and simple in setting criteria based on needs. Meanwhile, as Molly Chong found above, Malaysia is more concerned with political interests and certain concerns. Despite this, Malaysia remains open and more inclined to follow the standards set by British universities. The following is a summary of findings from interviews with the English curriculum writers for the double degree program, each described below.

1. Edward Jones

Edward is a British senior lecturer who has worked at private universities in Malaysia for approximately fifteen years. His experience managing European Credit Transfer System (ERASMUS), United Kingdom of the Quality Assurance Agency (UK QAA), and Trans-European Mobility Programme for University Studies (TEMPUS) has made him trusted as the person responsible for designing and managing dual degree programs from British universities. In the trajectory of that experience, we exclusively interview Edward Jones:

I have been involved in this double degree transnational project for a long time because my team and I designed the curriculum based on experiences at ERASMUS, TEMPUS, and UK QAA. Initially, students came from transferring various study programs where they wanted an additional degree from abroad. The background behind this idea was that I was involved in many foreign universities that opened transnational double degree programs. Unlike in other countries in Europe and America, it seems that very diverse cultures and ethnicities influence Southeast Asia.

Continuing Molly Chong's findings, British universities have seen very high demand from universities in Malaysia that want HE partners to be bona fide and popular as a brand of European higher education. Edward Jones says:

As young HEs, we must compete with older, more established UK HEs. Their popularity is highly sought after by Malaysian universities. This can be seen from the recruitment of new students where our institution is not

well known by students. On several occasions, students have asked: “What are the advantages of taking a bachelor’s degree at your campus? Do our certificates or diplomas sell well in the market?” This certainly evokes our preferences.

To overcome this, lecturers and staff involved as partner universities must present the background of graduates, and universities must collaborate with popular HE in England. Edward shared this solution with us after the interview. Currently, the campus is still collaborating with other universities in England so that the brands of British partner universities are better known and trusted by Malaysians.

Whomever he is, a Malaysian citizen still considers British universities to be at the forefront. The above statement is an example of a question asked by graduate students who understand more about the ins and outs of world university rankings. So, Western HE, especially in Europe, is a preference that attracts students to take transnational double degree programs. Because Barat is a well-known brand that makes students more confident.

Edward developed a dual degree curriculum in business management with a European trajectory model adopted from his three experiences above (ERASMUS, TEMPUS, and UK QAA). When he presents this background, many students are interested in taking this double degree program:

The three of them were very popular among Malaysian students; when we presented them, they were enthusiastic. I observe their interest because they think

England is a superior country in Europe whose quality can support the skills of Malaysian students.

Despite these preferences, the tendency for Malaysians to see British people as their “teacher” who teaches many things is the ruling country in Europe. This provision is a potential for Malaysian universities to open and enhance double degree program partnerships with universities in the UK.

2. Harry Porter

Harry Porter is the founder of Harry’s Malaysia Private University, a branch of the foreign university franchise. In its implementation, the university provides its curriculum and degrees independently. Harry Porter said HE Malaysia has grown into a “producer” of education programs with the courage to open a foreign branch in his country. Harry Porter says:

It takes time and courage to be confident in using the curriculum with your own decisions. A double degree transnational curriculum is a form of academic independence that can mature and increase wisdom.

Like Edward Jones, Harry observes that proud Malaysian students highly prefer British HE qualifications. Harry understands that Malaysian universities are slowly learning from their British partners for quality improvement:

Curriculum dualism has evolved from the franchise pattern. However, when it becomes a university, the construction of materials such as curriculum, aspects of

measurement and assessment methods, and the substance of the material.

Several of Harry's colleagues come from England and work in Malaysia, but he felt "uncomfortable" developing the double degree program alone. In continuing his explanation, Harry explained the problems he encountered during this program. As found by fellow curriculum writers from Malaysia, Malaysians still consider English to be the standard of reference for Malaysian universities.

Malaysians still see Britain from a historical trajectory, and because there were previously many twinning programs with franchise patterns more than 20 years ago from early 1990 to mid-2000. When this franchise spread, no Malaysian university dared to cooperate with a British university at the same level as this double degree program.

So, according to Harry Porter, the problem of different cultural climates is caused by the proliferation of franchised universities which were only "dictated" by the British as the managing university. Meanwhile, the transnational double degree program requires equal cooperation, on the same level as partner universities in the UK, which allows Malaysian universities to provide lectures, assessment systems, and legality of certificates so that the same degree is applied in England.

3. Tom Coney

Tom is a British academic and practitioner who wrote a double degree transnational curriculum in Malaysia. He completed his PhD studies in England and started his career at British universities before

expanding to Australia. In the 1990s, he became involved in teaching in Melbourne and took part in a double degree program between the UK and Australia.

When Malaysia got permission to internationalize HE, I started discussing the dual degree program between Malaysia and England. Challenges finally emerged, especially from the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MOHE), which emphasized that the government did not approve of degrees with two different university logos and from two different countries. To open up this understanding space, I went to see the head of the LAN, who has now changed to MQA. I said that the double degree program is a local degree validated by a Malaysian university and validated by a British university. This fact they accept.

Tom is pleased that MOHE has officially approved his business management dual master's degree program as the validator authority.

Discussion

Internationalization of higher education in Malaysia

Globalization has made HE in Malaysia oriented towards the neo-liberal economic paradigm. This view resulted in a major change in the orientation (reform) of HE in Malaysia, which will be discussed in the next sub-discussion. They try to balance the gap in the country where social and multi-ethnic order in Malaysia is still high (Neo, 2006; Sulong et al., 2019). Affirmatively, neo-liberal economic policies coexist with Malaysia's persistence in maintaining multi-ethnic Malays in the Southeast Asian region. The neo-liberal paradigm can indirectly create latent conflicts that also influence Malaysia's economic and political life (J. P. H. Poon et al., 2018; Simon, 1995). In this position, HE in Malaysia

has been influenced by the mindset of global trends such as international marketing in tertiary institutions. The use of English impacts the larger academic climate in harmony with the West, and they believe that HE harmonization can move a ready society towards world-class universities.

The chief curriculum writers from Malaysia (Chandra Sen, Fred Tan and Molly Chong) were concerned about the academic and cultural climate differences. The historical trajectory of Malaysia and England during the colonial period influenced students' perceptions of this double degree program. They, especially lecturers and staff, are still finding dead ends regarding education policy regulations, assessment systems, and the timing of lectures. This problem must be addressed, considering that both countries are sovereign countries with their arrangements in the higher education system.

Over the past three decades, HEs in Malaysia who have followed this path have developed in terms of numbers and academic programs through a shared (transnational) credit system, such as twinning or opening branch campuses and double degrees. Some scholars such as Molly Lee, Chang Da Wan and Morshidi Sirat attribute this increase to Malaysia's history of economic crises in the mid-1980s and 1990s (Lee, Sirat & Wan, 2017; Lee, Wan & Sirat, 2017; Lee, 2013), as well as requests from local students to be involved in foreign student exchanges which open up wider opportunities for Malaysia to carry out this transnational double degree project. Apart from that, statutory legality allows Malaysia to open up opportunities for this path with the enactment of the Private Higher Education Act (PHEIA) in 1996, which allowed liberalization and internationalization of the inclusion of foreign university curricula into the local curriculum, and these efforts have been able to stem foreign exchange losses. Due to the economic crisis, countries attracted more international students to pursue higher education in Malaysia (Nor & Asmawi, 2018; Zin, 2013).

This practical trend has given rise to an academic debate about the importance of internationalization for HE in Malaysia. Many studies on the internationalization of HE are enthusiastically focused on efforts to welcome globalization (Mustapha, 2021). Initially, this globalization hit

the economic and construction fields in Malaysia (Rani, 2021; Thambiah, 2018; Wang, 2017), then penetrated higher education which began with the use of English and Mandarin as the language of instruction for lectures and everyday conversations on campus (DeWitt & Chan, 2019; Hashim, 2012; Kasuma, 2020). There was contact between cultures because students from abroad studied at HE Malaysia (Yassin, 2020). Some argue that global economic and trade effects exacerbate ethnic-cultural tensions already mixed in HE Malaysia (Abd Aziz & Abdullah, 2014; Bennell & Pearce, 2003; Morshidi et al., 2011; Munusamy & Hashim, 2021; Wan & Abdullah, 2021).

The term internationalization creates a different narrative about the academic culture in Malaysia, especially regarding the ability of human resources and educational orientations in Asia and Europe, which have differences. In this context, HE Institutional leaders need help implementing HE's internationalization mission. *Transnational* is the keyword that represents the problem which is the focus of this research. It is this context that we use in this research in the double degree curriculum, which combines the curricula of Malaysian universities and British universities and exchanges between students of the two. Besides that, we also highlight how the law in Malaysia advocates for this program where we found several studies looking at the effect of the law changing English as an introduction to lectures in Malay (Ali, 2013; Hanapiah, 2004; Heng & Tan, 2006; Powell, 2020). Our argument about the internationalization of HE in Malaysia in the context of the curriculum has yet to receive a touch of study from a sociological aspect is the question of this research.

Colonialism and Europeanism: Relations and Transnational Curriculum Effects

The evidence for a transnational curriculum stems from our findings on the post-colonial effects of Malaysia's linkages in the past. Since being colonized by the British in 1786 in the Malay Peninsula, the portrait of Malaysian education has been controlled by British

colonialism. In West Malaysia, for example, people from four different cultural traditions (Malay, Chinese, Indian and British) met and settled to live side by side. Even after the British had left, the colonial era formal education system was still strong and influenced the academic culture in West Malaysia. This context sparked the seeds of the separatist Malay States of the Perak Peninsula and Selangor. Divisive West Malaysian society in the contemporary era (Wicks, 1980, pp. 1786–1874). Monograph records published by several individuals in West Malaysia found that the educational policies implemented were still under British colonial control between 1874 and 1940 (Hirschman, 1972). Malaysia has now become a post-colonial country in Southeast Asia with cultural colors from the Portuguese and the Dutch, the most dominant being the British (Akashi & Yoshimura, 2008; Kheng, 1979). The British occupation of Malaysia for nearly two centuries was briefly interrupted by the Japanese invasion of Malaya and Borneo (Sabah and Sarawak) in 1941–1945 as part of the turmoil of World War II (Gin, 2010). Japanese imperial rule involved propaganda in escaping British and European domination.

Although Malaysia had become a sovereign nation in the 1960s, this past relationship also influenced the introduction of the double degree transnational curriculum that we investigated. Raman and Sua have found various forms of ethnic segregation, which have become a feature of the education system reform in Malaysia at all levels of education delivery (Raman & Sua, 2010). To understand the character and culture of Malaysia in the context of the higher education space, one has to consider how post-colonial countries are involved in the global arena of domination of European power in higher education.

To understand the involvement of this relationship, we use the theory of “postcolonialism and education” from Penny Enslin, which estimates the spectrum of colonial influence on the education of its former colonies (Enslin, 2017). Education during the colonial period gave its former colonies a pattern for building education. The Education Room is also the seedbed for Indonesia’s international education network, which previously entered into other aspects such as economics, politics, and culture in the modern era (Joseph & Matthews, 2014). Penny Enslin’s

theory places the colonial as the axis to control the colonial countries with educational seedbeds built since Malaysia was colonized (Enslin, 2017). Education is controlled and coordinated by the centre of imperialism, namely Britain and Europe. Education was the most frequently used strategy in colonization and was the main force of European colonialists. This theory explains how Western hegemony still resides in colonial countries with educational strategies built since colonization and is a new form of transformation of colonialism in the modern era where neo-liberal influences have created new forms of an empire that make education a good means of control.

Colonialism was born from the cultural process of European expansion to the colonial countries (Bryant, 2006). This reveals how the colonial style is very dominant with a European face, then what we call “Europeanism”, namely as a process of clusterization, diffusion, and institutionalization of the European way of cultivating its influence with education as a tool (Dale, 2009; Hirschman, 1986). Indirectly, the face of internationalization initiated by the Malaysian government is a product of the face of Europeanization, which adheres to a system of openness in a joint credit system such as a double degree. Although this argument is still one-sided, we confirm it with some data and information from informants in this study which validates this argument as a step to finding out the grassroots of the HE transnational curriculum in Malaysia.

Transnational Double Degree: HE Malaysia’s Marketing Efforts

The curriculum’s authors believe that the nature of private HE in Malaysia needs to catch up compared to public HE. To maintain its existence amid competition with domestic HE, in addition to tackling the wave of globalization that has hit HE in the world, private HE is in the form of opening up a space for internationalization, beginning with the opening of a transnational double degree program. To realize this, the traditional approach needs to be more relevant.

The description of the designers or writers of the Malaysian double degree HE transnational curriculum as a market demand-oriented “Educational company” is not entirely new and surprising. Some of the

studies on this subject are known as college marketing. Kotler and colleagues (2021) and Raya (2016, 2019), in their findings, consider that current HE institutions have adopted a business model to exist in the midst of globalization. Nonetheless, efforts to commercialize education remain in the view of the world community as an unavoidable cross-border reality.

The experiences of the designers or writers of the Malaysia double degree HE transnational curriculum are also influenced by the effects of globalization which mobilize people and programs and promote the exchange of ideas through higher education, as discussed in the previous section. In this regard, Anglophone curriculum designers such as Edward Jones and Harry Porter brought HE Malaysia to collaborate across borders with universities in other countries. They are not too worried about the problem of differences in cultural climate as Chandra Sen and Fred Tan. They both (Edward Jones and Tom Cooney) introduced Malaysia to the idea of “HE marketing” practiced by world-class universities. Even though the constraints on Malaysia’s local regulations, such as in Molly Chong’s statement, still overshadow intercontinental, regional policies, which are indeed different.

Conclusion

Globalization has made HE in Malaysia orientated towards the neo-liberal economic paradigm. This view has resulted in a massive change in the orientation (reform) of HE in Malaysia, forcing policymakers to reform higher education from many aspects. One of these is the transnational double degree program. British universities are considered the most suitable partners for this program due to several factors, such as the historical trajectory of British colonialism and imperialism towards Malaysia. By using the theory of “postcolonialism and education” from Penny Enslin (2017), we estimate the spectrum of colonial influence on the education of the former colonies. Education is considered a strategy for seeding international educational networks, as in other regions. Another finding is that the originators or writers of this curriculum face a series of latent problems, such as differences in the

academic and cultural climate that is different in the two countries, different regulatory rules, and a shared credit system that still needs to be fully synchronized. Even so, this article creates a new distinction in that the image of a transnational double degree curriculum is in the form of maximizing HE marketing efforts amidst the current wave of globalization competition. This study only examines aspects of the double degree curriculum between Malaysian and British universities. The double degree program process flow at the universities in these two countries needs to be discussed thoroughly. This opens up opportunities for further research to examine the managerial aspects of double degree programs at Malaysian and British universities.

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