

# **CAPITALISING ON THE STRENGTHS OF INTERNATIONAL BRANCH CAMPUSES IN MALAYSIAN TRANSNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE**

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22452/jati.vol25no2.10>

## **Abstract**

Recently, the Malaysian government announced the possibility of establishing a Japanese university's branch campus in Malaysia. The most likely candidate for the first Japanese university to pave the way to Malaysia is Tsukuba University. It is part of the Look East Policy 2.0 revived by the previous Malaysian Prime Minister, Tun Mahathir Mohamad. Before this, many universities from abroad have set up various forms of transnational higher education (TNHE) in Malaysia, including from countries such as Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, United States of America and China. The Malaysian Government in her Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (*Higher Education*) (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015) indicates that it intends to increase international students to 250,000 by 2025 to strengthen its position as an international higher education hub. Malaysia has acquired various strengths, opportunities and experience based on its past track record, which prove that this task is not monumental. This paper explores the strengths and opportunities that Malaysia has acquired and accumulated to enhance its capabilities as an international higher education hub to achieve the internationalisation goal by delineating the sustainability aspect of the transnational higher education plan in Malaysia. Malaysia, through the establishment of the IBCs, has identified various strengths involving TNHE. Those strengths include regional education hub, ability to attract a large pool of international students, capitalising on the power of the MQF, self-accreditation status given to TNHEs, cost advantage and education tourism potential.

*Keywords: transnational higher education, international branch campus, regional education hub, globalisation, Malaysia*

## **Introduction**

In the era of globalisation, Malaysia is attracting many countries worldwide to set up various transnational higher education (TNHE) arrangements. Some of those countries have been mainly English-speaking countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States of America. A recent development in Malaysia's TNHE landscape saw the establishment of higher education institutions (HEIs) from non-English speaking countries such as China, which opened up Xiamen University's international branch campus in Malaysia in 2015. The Malaysian government also recently announced establishing a Japanese university's international branch campus in Malaysia. The most likely candidate for the first Japanese university to pave the way to the Malaysian soil is Tsukuba University. It is part of the Look East Policy 2.0 revived by the previous Malaysian Prime Minister, Tun Mahathir Mohammad. A recent development in TNHE landscape is establishing another Australian university, University of Wollongong (UoW), which opened its campus in Malaysia in 2019. UoW acquired KDU University Colleges from an investment firm Paramount Corporation Berhad. This deal enabled UoW to pick up a majority stake in KDU through its subsidiary, UoW Global Enterprises, and create a physical presence in Malaysia for the first time (Crace, 2018).

The Malaysian Government in her Educational Blueprint 2015-2025 (*Higher Education*) (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015) indicates that it intends to increase international students to 250,000 by 2025 to strengthen its international higher education hub status further. Various strengths, opportunities and experience that Malaysia has acquired based on its past track record is a testament that, this task is not monumental. The general principle of transnational education is that students can study towards a foreign qualification without leaving their home country; meaning that the programmes and providers, cross-national and regional borders and not generally the student (British Council, 2013). It is pivotal for Malaysia to decide on the appropriate hub development in line with national aspirations and goals. There are three types of hubs that a country can potentially focus. Those are the talent, students and knowledge hubs. Talent hub focuses on human capital development; student hub concentrates on increasing student numbers while knowledge hub emphasises research. There is no clear cut line between these hubs because many countries globally combine at least two of those hubs, even though the Malaysian National Education Blueprint stipulates that by 2025 Malaysia will have 250,000 students.

This paper explores the strengths and opportunities that Malaysia has acquired and accumulated to enhance its capabilities as an international higher education hub to achieve the internationalisation goal by delineating the sustainability aspect of the transnational higher education plan in Malaysia. The focus is solely on the strengths of international branch campuses (IBCs) as Malaysia seems to be one of the preferred destinations to set up IBCs (Lim, 2009; Garrett, Kinser, & Merola, 2016; Knight, 2018; Chin, 2019). A qualitative approach is employed in the present study where published reports and secondary data from various sources are used to analyse the strengths and opportunities of IBCs involved in TNHE in Malaysia.

### **Past Studies**

According to Knight (2014), educational hub notion was announced and implemented in Malaysia in 2007. However, Singapore implemented the educational hub idea ahead of Malaysia in 1998. Singapore became a significant net importer of educational services, and it provides impetus to open up Singaporean territory to provide in-situ higher education degrees via foreign providers (Olds, 2007). Table 1 below illustrates the founding dates and progress of country-level hubs in several developing countries. Qatar seems to lead the pathway to the educational hub in Middle-East, while in Southeast Asia, Singapore is the leader. Malaysia, Botswana and Hong Kong appear to be focusing more on student hub status while Singapore focuses more on the formation of knowledge hub. Even though Malaysia is late-comer in the business of educational hub in the Southeast Asian context, Malaysia's various strengths may accelerate its status as an international educational hub.

**Table 1: Founding Dates and Progress of Country-level Hubs**

	<b>Qatar</b>	<b>UAE</b>	<b>Hong Kong</b>	<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>Singapore</b>	<b>Botswana</b>
Announce	1995	2003	2003	2007	1998	2008
Implement	1995	2003	2008	2007	1998	2008
Progress	High	High	Low	Mod-high	High	Low
The current type of hub	Talent/student	Student/talent	Student	Student	Knowledge	Student
Aspiration	Talent/knowledge	Talent/knowledge	Talent	Talent/knowledge	Knowledge	Student/talent

Source: Knight (2014).

According to Higher Education Funding Council of England, more international students are taking degrees offered by English universities in their home country than studying in England, with 545,000 students registered on TNHE courses in 2012-13 (Parr, 2014). British Council (2016) reported that the United Kingdom's existing and currently planned branch campuses are concentrated heavily in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), China, Malaysia, and Singapore. Singapore and Malaysia together account for 15% of all United Kingdom TNHE programmes. Likewise, for Australia, it is estimated that in 2007, more than 90% of the 71,000 Australian transnationals higher education students were internal students at an offshore campus mainly coming from Singapore, Malaysia, China, Hong Kong and Vietnam (AEI [Australian Education International], 2009).

Knight (2014) also distinguished three types of educational hubs: student hubs, talent hubs and knowledge/innovation hubs. In terms of rationales, why a country introduces an educational hub, Knight (2014) highlighted four main aspects: economic reason, education and training reason, skilled workforce, status, and research. As shown in Table 2 below, Malaysia gives higher importance to economic and education and training grounds. On the other hand, Singapore, known as a knowledge hub (Olds, 2007), provides more priorities to the economic, skilled workforce, status, and research reasons.

**Table 2: Ranking of Rationales by Country**

<b>Rationales</b>	<b>Overall rank</b>	<b>Qatar</b>	<b>UAE</b>	<b>Hong Kong</b>	<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>Singapore</b>	<b>Botswana</b>
<i>Economic</i> Diversify economy Income generation Attract investment	1	M	H	M	H	H	H
<i>Education and training</i> Quality of HE system Access for students Skill training	2	H	H	M	H	L	H
<i>Skilled workforce</i> Attract foreign talent Retain local/foreign workers Prepare a skilled workforce	3	H	H	M	L	H	M
<i>Status</i> Recognition in	4	L	L	H	M	H	L

region/world							
Improve competitiveness							
Geo-political influence							
<i>Research</i>							
Knowledge production	5	H	L	L	L	H	L
Innovation application							

*Note: H: high, M: medium, L: low*

(Source: Knight, 2014).

In terms of the qualifications offered via TNHE in a host country, it may take various forms as follow: (a) Double/Dual Degree programmes; (b) Joint degree programmes; (c) Franchise/Twinning programmes; (d) International Branch Campus; (e) Validation programmes; and (f) Articulation/Credit Transfer. According to British Council study in 2014, based on 859 TNHE students/graduates there are five main reasons for students to choose transnational education which are as follows: improve professional skills for career development; specific qualification on offer; improve intercultural competence; the prestige of TNHE institution/overseas education system and; improve language skills. Ahmad and Buchanan (2017) determine that institution and academic reputations, marketability of the degree, low tuition fees compared to the home institution, low cost of living, a safe country for study, and the similarity of education systems well as cultural proximity are key factors to study at IBCs. Dowling-Hetherington (2020) explored a lesser-known country namely Ireland which has established IBCs in Hong Kong, Singapore and Sri Lanka and identified that university's international ranking and accreditations rankings of its Business School is a critical factor in students' decision-making process to choose the Irish IBC.

Two complementing perspectives, namely 'delivery' and 'environment', explain Malaysia's TNHE landscape. First, the 'delivery' perspective enables one to identify the appropriate model currently used in the Malaysian context. Davies, Olsen and Bohm (2000) introduced three transnational education models: Direct Model, Outsourced Model and Partner Model. In the Direct Model, the university in the country of origin is responsible for all academic roles and functions. In the Outsourced and Partner Model, the academic roles and functions are either partially outsourced or fully outsourced to an offshore partner (Davies et al., 2000). In investigating IBCs in the Malaysian higher education landscape, the Direct Model seems to be more appropriate as the IBCs bestow the branch campus status and are considered part of the main campus in the country of origin. Second, the 'environment' perspective embeds under institutional theory. The institutional theory refers to the institutional

environment that can influence formal structures in an organisation compared to market pressures (see Dimaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1991). Wilkins and Huisman (2012) cited in Wilkins (2016) used institutional theory to explain how regulative, normative, and cultural structures and processes influence higher education institutions' transnational strategies. More specifically, the Malaysian regulatory framework's role is vital in promoting the strengths of IBCs in the Malaysian TNHE landscape.

### **Ensuring Sustainability of TNHE in Malaysia via IBCs.**

#### ***Creation of Regional Education Hub***

As part of the push to position Malaysia as a hub of excellence for higher education, the government has created several sub-national higher education hubs based on numerous local and international universities. An example of this is "EduCity", located in Iskandar Puteri, Johor, about 50 km away from Singapore. The concept of EduCity is that there are numerous HEIs located in a single 305-acre compound. It currently hosts several IBCs, including Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia, University of Southampton Malaysia, and the University of Reading Malaysia ("About EduCity", n.d.). As an education hub, it was developed as an "a feeder of talents to support Iskandar Malaysia's various economic activities" ("EduCity", n.d) as well as to "[drive] socio-economic development through knowledge, while bridging the skill demand gap across industries within Johor" ("About Educity", n.d.). In other words, the hub attracts local and international students and institutions into Malaysia and provide skilled graduates to the surrounding area who will drive socio-economic development in the area.

The concentration of universities in one location offers several benefits. In terms of development planning, the government can more efficiently provide infrastructure such as roads, highways, and public transportation services to serve these education hubs. It allows students, teachers and staff to more conveniently access their universities, making it cheaper for the government and the relevant developers to provide these facilities in the first place. For example, a property developer can look at the education hubs and see opportunities to build student accommodation and affordable housing in order to serve the sizeable educational community that exists there. In the case of "EduCity", the universities there "have equal access to quality shared services and facilities" ("EduCity", n.d.). These shared services and facilities may include a Student Village which can house up to 800 students at a time; recreational facilities such as an athletics track certified by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF); an Olympic-sized swimming pool and a 1,500-seat indoor

arena (“About EduCity”, n.d.). Therefore, creating a hub where several universities can share the same services and facilities means that it can be developed more efficiently in terms of cost.

Having a university student community in one area will create a more welcoming and vibrant environment for local and international students who go there to study. With the existence of a student community in the education hub, various activities and attractions will emerge, giving students a more engaging and stimulating life outside of their studies. They have many things to do while studying in Malaysia; they may find other students from their home country and mix with other students worldwide. In “EduCity”, the various shared facilities can help students live a more wholesome and fulfilling social and academic life. As a result, education hubs can help Malaysia to be a more attractive destination for international students to come to the country to study. Attracting local and international students is key to the sustainability of TNHE in Malaysia. Education hubs can help serve this purpose.

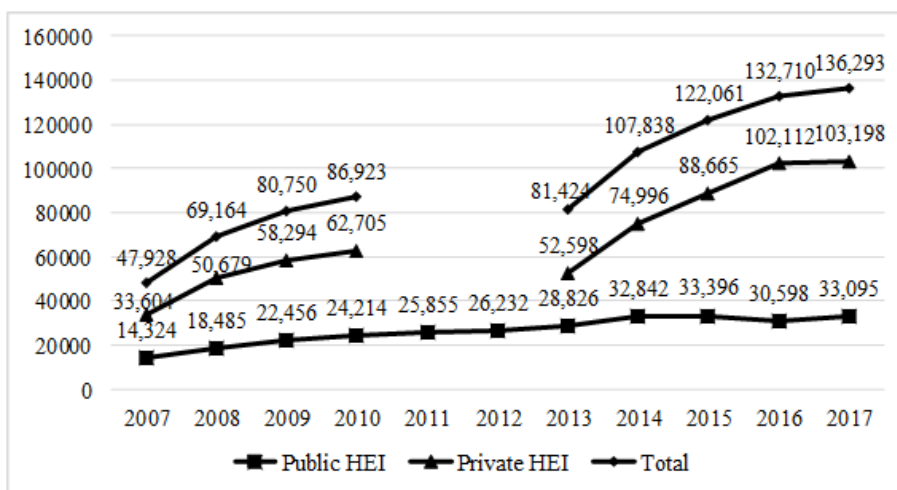
“EduCity” was developed by Iskandar Investment Berhad (IIB), whose shareholders include two government-linked investment companies, namely Khazanah Nasional Berhad and the Employees Provident Fund (“Our Story”, n.d.). It is an Entry Point Project (EPP) under the National Key Economic Area (NKEA), which is part of Malaysia's Economic Transformation Programme (“About EduCity”, n.d.). Hence, it's argued that government support and development policies play a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of TNHE in Malaysia in the future. The creation of sub-national education hubs like “EduCity” can help position Malaysia as a hub of excellence for higher education and help ensure the sustainability of TNHE in Malaysia. Education hubs play a crucial role in attracting foreign higher education providers to the country and encourage a concentration of local and international students into a one-stop centre for higher education, making it easier to create a more vibrant TNHE educational community.

### ***Ability to Attract Large Numbers of International Students***

Sustainability of TNHE programs in Malaysia requires the country to attract large numbers of students, both foreign and local, to enrol in TNHE programs. By maintaining a high number of student enrolment in TNHE programs, higher education institutions (HEIs) can be autonomous as they receive revenue from the fees that the students pay. The enrolment of international students will especially be important to the sustainability of TNHE in Malaysia, as HEIs can earn more revenue from the higher value of the foreign currency. International students also tend to pay higher fees. Therefore, HEIs in Malaysia can make

more money when they attract more international students. Given this, Malaysia has declared its ambition to become a hub of excellence for higher education under the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (PSPTN) which began in 2007. Under this plan, they targeted 200,000 international students enrolment by the year 2020 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011). This aim later tweaked in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education), which targeted the enrolment of 250,000 international students by 2025 to position Malaysia as a global education hub that is "renowned for its academic and research expertise" (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2015).

So far, Malaysia has seen a steady increase in international students' number in public and private HEIs across the country. Figure 1 shows that in Malaysia public HEIs have 131.0% and private HEIs have 207.1% increase in international students from 2007 to 2017. The steady rise in the number of international students in Malaysia shows that Malaysia's has opportunities to ensure the sustainability of TNHE in the country, as international students continue to see Malaysia as a destination to pursue tertiary education.



Note: Data for private HEIs for 2011 and 2012 is unavailable.

Figure 1. The number of international students in Malaysian HEIs, 2007-2017.

(Source: Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi, various issues).

Based on data from the past few years, international students in public and private universities in Peninsular Malaysia tend to originate from the same ten countries, as shown in Table 3. Bangladesh, China and Nigeria are consistently the top three countries that send their students to Malaysia, followed by countries such as Indonesia and Yemen. There has been an increase in the



number of international students enrolled in Malaysian HEIs, but those students come from a limited number of countries. To become a hub of excellence for higher education, Malaysia must attract students from other countries. In the beginning, Malaysia may target Southeast Asia, Central Asia and East Asia countries. The proximity of these regions makes it more convenient for students to study in Malaysia.

**Table 3: Top 10 Countries of Origin of International Students in Peninsular Malaysia (2015-2017)**

Country of Origin	2015	2016	2017
Bangladesh	30,829	34,455	30,525
China	5,078	11,718	14,854
Nigeria	11,322	15,262	13,529
Indonesia	4,938	8,653	9,762
Yemen	4,802	5,942	6,248
Pakistan	3,732	5,292	6,033
Libya	2,499	3,246	3,317
Iraq	2,577	3,264	3,257
Sudan	2,309	3,002	3,104
Iran	3,116	4,055	3,068

Note: Figures based on international students enrolled in HEIs in Peninsular Malaysia only.

(Source: Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi, various issues)

Several IBCs and foreign programmes in Singapore highlight the importance of attracting enough students for their financial sustainability. The failure of which results in the discontinuation of student enrollment. Table 4 data indicates that the most frequent factor cited behind the closure of 6 IBCs or foreign programmes of study in Singapore is the lack of financial viability or sustainability. Economic viability is a problem faced by the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV), New York University (NYU), Tisch School of the Arts Asia and the University of New South Wales Asia (UNSW Asia). These foreign HEIs faced financial problems despite some of them receiving significant funding from the Singaporean government. For example, UNLV received a USD3.5 million loan from the Economic Development Board (EDB) in Singapore (Yung & Sharma, 2013). Tisch received USD10 million in loans and USD4.3 million in grants from the Singaporean government up to 2011. In contrast, UNSW Asia received approximately USD12 million in loans and USD14 million in grants from the EDB (Yung & Sharma, 2013), even though they only operated for five

months. Not only did these foreign universities depend on financing from the host country, but the injection of public money into these foreign universities also did not produce a positive return on the Singaporean government's investment.

**Table 4: Factors behind Singaporean IBCs and Foreign Programmes Closure**

IBC / Foreign programme	Factors			
	Lack of students	Financial issues	Performance issues	Move to other markets
Booth School of Business, Uni. of Chicago (2000 – 2014)				X
BSc. Hospitality Management, UNLV- Singapore Institute of Technology (2006 – 2015)		X		
Division of Biomedical Sciences, Johns Hopkins in Singapore (2003 – 2007)	X		X	
Master of Laws, NYU-NUS (2008 – 2014)	X	X		
Tisch School of the Arts Asia (2007 – 2015)		X		
UNSW Asia (2007 – 2007)	X	X		

(Sources: Tan (2016); Briggs (2013); LLM Guide (2013); Azam (2006); Redden (2013); Fuyuno (2006)).

Closely related to the financial issues faced by these IBCs and foreign programmes was the fact that they failed to attract enough students, leading to low enrolments and thus exacerbating their financial problems. NYU and UNSW Asia cited low student enrollment as the reason they could not continue to operate in Singapore. NYU offered Master of Laws (LLM) programme in collaboration with the National University of Singapore (NUS) and targeted enrolment of 80 students every year. But they only managed to average around 40 new students per year over the six years they were in Singapore (Briggs, 2013). Meanwhile, UNSW Asia only lasted five months between its launch in February 2007 to its closure in June 2007. It has targeted 300 students enrolment for its first cohort but only managed to enrol 148 students (“UNSW Asia to close”, 2007). One reason behind the low enrolment of students in these universities was high tuition fees that students need to pay to enrol in these

programmes of study. NYU-NUS, LLM programme costs students around USD50,000, which was twice the fees of a graduate law programme offered solely by NUS (Briggs, 2013). Singaporean students who enrolled in UNLV's programme paid around USD33,000, whereas international students paid USD58,000 (Redden, 2013). International students at Tisch paid between USD100,000 to USD165,000 in tuition fees (Yang, 2016). The high tuition fees can understandably limit the pool of students who can enrol in the programmes offered by these foreign HEIs, which then feeds into the institutions' inability to generate revenue and become self-sustaining.

Therefore, financial problems can affect any higher education institution, regardless of their reputation and experience. To ensure the sustainability of TNHE programmes in Malaysia in future, government and HEIs should work together to attract both local and international students to enrol in the TNHE programmes. There are two ways to attract the best talents in the region to enrol in the HEI which are charging competitive fees and offer programmes with a high value-for-money. It will help HEIs in Malaysia to become more financially self-sustainable without relying on government funding which can sometimes be limited.

### ***Capitalising on the Strength of the Malaysian Qualification Framework (MQF)***

The quality assurance of TNHE programmes in Malaysia is overseen by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), which assures higher education programmes quality based on the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF). The MQF intends all Malaysia qualification to "improve mobility of learners, portability of qualifications and credits, ensure comparability, and promote recognition of Malaysian qualifications at national and international levels" (Malaysian Qualifications Agency [MQA], 2017, 2018). In other words, the MQF developed as a response to the diversity and globalised nature through which delivery of higher education programmes occurred. MQF identified the learning outcomes required from each learning level using a credit system to represent "the volume of learning or academic load to attain the set of learning outcomes" by each student (MQA, 2017). The MQF also benchmarked against several national and regional qualification standards, including the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) (MQA, 2017).

In contrast, Singapore lacks a national accreditation framework that harmonises higher education quality standards in the country. The EduTrust scheme certifies the administration and management aspects of delivering education services. It ensures that HEIs have put systems to design programmes and assess student performance based on learning outcomes set by the

institutions themselves. But the EduTrust scheme does not determine what learning outcomes expected at various levels of qualifications, and how students performance assessed. There is no unified system of accreditation that oversees the quality of the contents of the programme itself. Therefore, the onus to ensure the quality of programmes offered in Singapore is on HEIs. Different institutions have different benchmarks of quality and use different standards. It leads to dissonance in quality measurement and translates into the skills and knowledge obtained by a student after completing their studies. It negatively affects students and employers since both groups may interpret quality in different ways, and use indicators that are not reliable to determine whether a study programme is of high quality.

Malaysia has an extensive, harmonised, yet flexible quality assurance framework to manage the quality of TNHE programmes that help students and parents make better decisions regarding the best HEI to obtain a foreign education. These institutions follow the same ground rules in getting their programmes of the study assessed and accredited. Similarly, employers are also better able to determine the level of knowledge, skill and ability of job seekers, thus making more informed decisions about which candidate they want to hire. The harmonisation of the credit system under the MQF means that there is standardisation in terms of students abilities and achievements assessment, acting as proxies for the time spent for learning a subject or obtaining a skill to understand the issue. The use of credits as a proxy allows students to engage in credit transfer arrangements between universities and countries. As a result, the TNHE sector benefits from harmonising credits due to the increased opportunity for students to mobilise across programmes and borders. A harmonised credit system can also encourage lifelong learning. HEIs will determine the extent of an applicant knowledge and skill-based on how many credits the applicant has in the related subject. MQF, in its current form, will be able to contribute to the long-term sustainability of TNHE in Malaysia. It must continue to strengthen by responding to the higher education future needs and the country's job market, especially in an age where careers are increasingly fluid, and where workers may end up working across different sectors throughout their lives.

#### ***Self-accreditation status given to IBCs.***

Four IBCs and four other Malaysian public Universities were granted self-accreditation status in April 2010 (Table 5). Those four Malaysian public universities are Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). While for IBCs, those are Monash University Malaysia (MUM), The University of

Nottingham Malaysia Campus (UNMC), Swinburne University of Technology Sarawak Campus (SUTS), and Curtin University, Sarawak Malaysia (CUM). The self-accreditation status is a stepping stone for IBCs to be more creative and innovative in the programs offered according to Malaysia's market needs regionally and globally.

**Table 5: Self-Accreditation Status**

IBCs	Year established	Number of programs offered
<i>With Self-accreditation status</i>		
Monash University Malaysia	1998	115
Curtin University, Sarawak, Malaysia	1999	77
The University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus	2000	168
Swinburne University of Technology, Sarawak Campus	2004	74
<i>Without self-accreditation status</i>		
Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia	2007	4
University of Southampton, Malaysia Campus	2011	4
Heriot-Watt University Malaysia	2012	28
University of Reading Malaysia	2013	7
Xiamen University Malaysia Campus	2013	7
Royal College of Surgeons In Ireland And University College Dublin Malaysia Campus	2018	8

Source: Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) (n.d.)

### *Cost Advantage*

The cost advantage of IBCs is worth the investment made by potential students. It is evident from Table 6 below, where it shows that studying at a Malaysian IBCs is much cheaper compared to the parent institution in the country of origin. Bachelor of Arts degree in an Australian IBC in Malaysia, the cost appears much lower than studying in the country of origin such as the United Kingdom and Australia. Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical) programme at the University of Nottingham, Malaysia charges only \$40,000, but in the United Kingdom, the fee paid is double. Likewise, for Australians IBCs such as Curtin Malaysia and Monash Malaysia, they charge \$40,900 and \$50,300. The cost charged in the country of origin by these two institutions is more than double ranging between \$90,000 -\$150,000.

**Table 6: International Branch Campus (IBC) Fees**

	The University of Nottingham Malaysia	Curtin University, Malaysia	Monash University Malaysia	Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia	Average cost in host country
Bachelor of Arts	–	\$23,400	\$29,200	–	United Kingdom \$50,000 – \$60,000 Australia \$30,000 – 60,000
Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical)	\$40,000	\$40,900	\$50,300	–	United Kingdom \$80,000 – 150,000 Australia \$90,000 – \$150,000
Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS)	–	–	\$134,600	\$131,800	United Kingdom \$200,000 – 300,000 Australia \$200,000 – \$300,000
Bachelor of Accounting	\$32,800	–	\$30,000	–	United Kingdom \$80,000 – \$150,000 Australia \$90,000 – \$120,000
Bachelor of Computer Science	\$33,000	\$28,800	\$32,000	–	United Kingdom \$80,000 – \$150,000 Australia \$80,000 – 150,000

(Source: Education Malaysia Global Services (n.d).)

In terms of cost comparisons among various IBCs globally, such as those in Dubai and China, United Kingdom (UK) IBCs based in Malaysia charges the lowest fee, as shown in Table 7 below. For BA & BSc programme, UK IBCs in Malaysia only charged £6,300 - £8,600, while in Dubai a higher fee is charged for an undergraduate degree. Similarly, for an MBA, UK IBCs in Malaysia charge a much lower cost than those in Dubai or China.

**Table 7: International Branch Campuses: Location of Delivery, Level and Subject of Study, Fees and Course Duration Full-Time (FT) or Part-Time (PT)**

Country	Level	Subject	Course fee	Course duration
Malaysia (1)	BA & BSc	Various	£6,300 - £8,600	4 years
Malaysia (2)	BA & BSc	Various	£6,100 - £8,200	4 years
Malaysia	Masters degrees	Various	£7,900 - £8,900	12 months
Malaysia	MBA	Business	£10,000 (full fee)	12 months FT (PT options available)
Dubai	BA & BSc	Various	£7,700 to £8,600	4 years
Dubai	MBA	Business	£13,000	12 months FT (PT options available)
Dubai	Masters degrees	Various	£10,900 to £13,300	12 months FT
China	MBA	Business	£30,000	24 months PT

Source: UK Department for Business Innovation & Skills (2014).

Based on the comparison of educational costs for various degree programmes presented in Table 7, it is evident that Malaysia ranked as the country with the lowest annual tuition fees. In addition to that, Malaysia also has the advantage of incurring the lowest annual living expenses compared to Singapore and other developed countries. As such, this would enable Malaysia to enhance its competitiveness as a global education hub. The dual advantage of lower fees for studies and lower cost of living in Malaysia for students makes

Malaysia an irresistible destination for obtaining an international qualification through various IBCs from reputable TNHEs available in Malaysian shores. Education Malaysia Global Services (n.d), for example, promotes that:

In Malaysia, annual tuitions fees are from USD 4,000 – 6,000 whilst living expenses would be circa USD 400 – 700 per month. By comparison, Singapore's tuition fees would cost USD 7,000 – 10,000 and living expenses are at least twice as high. Only in Malaysia can you strike that balance between uncompromised quality and unmatched affordability – receiving a world-class education and living in comfort yet without the hefty price tag.

***Education Tourism (Edutourism) potential***

In promoting tourism as an economic strategy, Malaysia also promotes education and health tourism. In line with transforming Malaysia into an international educational hub, various TNHE arrangements can attract more international students to continue their studies in Malaysia. It will enhance Malaysia's status as one of the educational tourism destinations in Asia. Education Malaysia Global Services (n.d) promotes eight reasons why one should choose Malaysia as a study destination. Those reasons are; world-class universities presence, affordability, widely spoken English, modern and progressive country, multicultural society, dynamic lifestyle, strategic location and being ranked as the third most peaceful country in Asia. With well-established IBCs (Table 8) which offers quality education in Malaysia can attract international students to study in Malaysia and at the same time boost the tourism earnings of Malaysia.

**Table 8: Reputable IBCs in Malaysia**

No.	Name of Foreign University Branch Campus	Year Established	Location in Malaysia	Ranking According to the QS World University Rankings 2020: Global	Country of Origin
1.	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and University College Dublin Malaysia Campus * Founded as Penang Medical College	1996	Penang	185	Ireland
2.	Monash University Malaysia	1998	Selangor	58	Australia



3.	Curtin University, Sarawak Malaysia	1999	Sarawak	230	Australia
4.	The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus	2000	Kuala Lumpur/ Selangor	96	United Kingdom
5.	Swinburne University of Technology, Sarawak Campus	2004	Sarawak	383	Australia
6.	Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia	2007	Johor	146	United Kingdom
7.	University of Southampton, Malaysia Campus	2011	Johor	97	United Kingdom
8.	Heriot-Watt University Malaysia	2012	Putrajaya	314	United Kingdom
9.	University of Reading Malaysia	2013	Johor	205	United Kingdom
10.	Xiamen University Malaysia Campus	2015	Selangor	451	China
11	University of Wollongong Malaysia KDU	2019	Penang & Selangor	212	Australia

Source: Education Malaysia Global Services (n.d.).

### **Conclusion**

This study attempts to identify Various strengths involving TNHE through the establishment of IBCs in Malaysia. Those strengths include regional education hub, ability to attract a large pool of international students, capitalising on the power of the MQF, self-accreditation status given to TNHEs, cost advantage and Edutourism potential. IBCs play an important and significant role in the Malaysian higher education landscape. Even in terms of sustainability, IBCs seem to be more sustainable in the Malaysian education sphere than other types of TNHE arrangements. It is possibly due to the recent shift in courses offered by many local private higher education institutions (PHEIs) offering their homegrown degree, which is less attractive than programmes offered by IBCs. Stiff competition between local PHEIs and IBCs offers higher-quality TNHE programs similar to those provided by the mother institution abroad. In addition to that, most IBCs emphasise research, innovation, and postgraduate studies compared to local PHEIs that significantly focus on undergraduate programs, which undoubtedly enables Malaysia to boost its student hub status. Finally,

IBCs also have a better reputation as the mother institution tend to be a more established institution in the country of origin, enabling them to hire more qualified, internationally renowned scholars as academics. These factors contribute to the sustainability of IBCs, offering TNHE programs in Malaysia. Provision of sustainable environment especially concerning regulatory framework (Wilkins, 2016) for IBCs to flourish is vital as they can contribute significantly towards realising the aim to increase international students to 250,000 by 2025 and simultaneously strengthen Malaysia's status as a global higher education hub.

### Acknowledgements

The University of Malaya funded this research under the Research University Grant - Faculty Program (project number: GPF008J-2018). The authors also wish to thank The 13th East Asian Triangle International Symposium participants at the Otaru University of Commerce, Japan from October 17-18, 2019 for their constructive comments and suggestions.

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Date Received: November 15, 2020

Date of Acceptance: December 20, 2020