

Tat-Chee Wan:

Alright, good afternoon. And my talk today is basically about the changes in the Malaysian education system regards to internationalization as well as double degree efforts. Okay, just for some basic background in terms of Malaysian education system, we do have a compulsory six years of lower education as well as three plus two years of secondary education.

So, at the lower secondary this is pretty much undifferentiated. As they graduate from this part to the upper secondary they tend to have more specialized division between the more traditional education system as well as the vocational system. And beyond that there will be various opportunities for the students to focus on, whether practical in terms of more vocational studies or else towards university degrees.

So, in terms of the history of tertiary education in Malaysia we actually consider a lot of young in terms of universities in terms of age. So, the first university, the most oldest was the University of Malaya established in 1949. Subsequently, it was divided into two, one is - - became the National University of Singapore and the other one became the University of Malaya which is now in Kuala Lumpur.

And the other universities in Malaysia include Universiti Sains Malaysia, which is where I'm from. And so, as Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Putra Malaysia which was originally formed as the Universiti Pertanian or Agriculture University. So, the first five universities in Malaysia are now currently known as research universities, which I'll talk about later. But because of the lack of spaces in the public universities in the '70s, so many students find very difficult to get places, and the entrance is quite competitive.

So, since there has been rapid economic growth in Malaysia and the Asian region in the '70s, '80s, and '90s, we find that there is a lot of demand for tertiary education especially, for social advancement. But however, because of this, the emphasis has been mostly on professional qualifications that is law, medicine, accounting and financial as well as for engineering.

So, as I think some of you probably are aware before 1980s the only avenue for tertiary education beyond public universities was overseas. So, I think Malaysia has been one of the

contributors to many foreign exchange for various different countries. And the traditional countries that were focused were mostly English speaking, namely the British Commonwealth as well as the United States.

However, in the late '80s and '90s the financial burden became increasingly high because of several changes. One is that the foreign exchange outflow was quite significant to the economy in Malaysia, and also in some sense the various universities increased their fees for foreign students, alright. So, there's a great push for local tertiary education offered by the private sector. And one of the key legislation was in 1996 where the Private Higher Education Institutions Act enabled the creation of local private universities, alright. And now, the aspiration by the Malaysian government is to have a regional tertiary education hub as a growth industry.

So, in terms of collaboration with foreign universities as an outcome of these changes initiated in the 1990s, one of the main avenues has been through bilateral government arrangements, which means that the Malaysian government has signed agreement with specific governments whether it's Japan, or Britain, or other countries like Germany as well, where certain institutions of higher learning has been established, which is jointly managed as well as advised by the universities and institutions from both countries. But typically they are focused on technical and engineering programs.

So, all these institutions also granted the right to confer degrees. And the example of this is the Malaysia-Japan International Institute of Technology, and Universiti Kuala Lumpur which is formerly known as Institute of Technology MARA. There's also several agreements with French, British, Spanish, and so on, and even German organizations. However, I think the highest growth comes from the private sector, where various private colleges and universities have started what is called twinning programs.

Now, in Malaysia twinning programs are very popular, because it gives an avenue for the students to pursue an education without having to spend all the time overseas. So, some of these options are for example, two plus one, where they spend two years locally, and one year overseas in the three year program. And so, there's two plus two for the obvious case. But typically in this arrangement the local institution will offer a diploma whereas the degree level qualification will come from the overseas partner.

Then typically there's also credit transfer, so that enable them to finish the degree in less time than if they have spent the entire duration of their Bachelors overseas. Okay, however even though we have these two plus one, two plus two programs, we find that the financial cost is still quite high. So, some franchise programs where they try to complete entire degree locally have been developed also, which are known locally as three plus zero, or four plus zero programs.

So, in this case the courses are conducted fully locally, in a local institution, but the degree is conferred by the foreign university. So, there would be some kind of quality assurance and visitation by the foreign university to the local partner to check on the progress as well as the, you know, the grading standards and so on, alright. So, these have been quite established and is not new in Malaysia.

But more recently the development of foreign university branch campuses have become more popular, where the foreign university would setup a joint venture with the local entity. And it's pretty much evolved from the franchise program approach. So, the branch campus will basically have the name of the foreign university. For example, Monash University from Australia does have a campus in Sunway, near Petaling Jaya. And the degree itself is conferred by the foreign university. And in terms of the actual degree, it does not differentiate between whether they studied in Monash in Australia, or Monash in Malaysia. Of course the transcript have some other details indicating where they did their courses.

But beyond that I think more recent phenomenon in Malaysia is this idea of what is called transnational private university, where organizations establish a new private university where it is jointly owned or managed by local and foreign university. So, one of the earliest or the first examples of this is International University of Malaya-Wales, which is a new private university setup between the University of Malaya and University of Wales. And it is recognized both in Malaysia and also in the United Kingdom, okay.

So, in this case the degree is actually conferred by the new entity. But in this configuration it is also of course easier to consider double degree arrangements because both universities have a say in the management, and they can provide for additional exchange programs and so on. So, to summarize in Malaysia there's actually several pathways. The first one is a public university pathway where the student will go through the undergraduate program in the local public university. And the degree of course will be conferred by the local university.

So, although, we have five established universities from the '70s, there also have been new universities have been setup to cater to the increasing demand from students. Secondly, we do have the private university pathway, where various organizations have setup private universities in Malaysia including the Multimedia University, University of Petronas, and so on. And the degree is of course conferred by the local university as well.

So, among the private institutions there are many colleges which confer diplomas, and at the same time have some agreement with foreign partners to offer a twinning program, where do you have either a two plus one, or two plus two, or else to have a full degree program being offered locally. And the degree would then be conferred by the local university while the diploma is conferred by the local college, okay.

So, this finally has been evolved to the foreign branch campus where the management and the offering of the program is conducted by the foreign university itself. So, some background for the information about the statistics regarding higher education institutions. We now have 20 public universities in Malaysia, where the five initial public universities are now called research universities, but the focus is on research and post graduate programs.

We do offer undergraduate programs but the enrollment is less compared to the other comprehensive universities which are focusing on general degree offerings. Whereas, we do have additional public universities, what we call focused universities, which depending on the particular university will focus on one particular area of studies, for example, in agriculture or engineering related topics and so on. If you like to get further information it's available from the Ministry of Higher Education website in Malaysia. I've given the link here.

In terms of private higher education institutions we do have a lot of institutions of which most of them are at the diploma certificate level. So, I cannot in fact keep track of all of them either. But in terms of the private universities, the famous ones is obviously established earlier, but there are actually less well-known universities that are catering to more of the professional level certifications, for example, in ICT related topics, subjects and so on.

And they do offer degree in post graduate studies. And we have 29 college universities which offer degree programs, and these evolve from the polytechnic system in Malaysia,

okay. So, as mentioned the foreign private university branch campuses, currently they have seven registered to operate in Malaysia. And the statistics can be obtained from this URL as well.

Okay, so what about the postgraduate education scenario? I think since the 2000s, when we are developing rapidly, Malaysia has moved towards knowledge economy, the emphasis has always been on increasing the number of post graduate students, before this the emphasis was on professional undergraduate degrees. But now, the focus is more on developing additional master's and PhD students and graduates.

So, under this scheme most of the master's and PhD programs can be summarized in these various modes. So, the first is the coursework mode master's, second is what you call the mix mode master's where you combine some coursework component with a small thesis, and of course the traditional research mode master's as well as the research mode PhD. Now, we also have certain specialized doctorate, which is coursework based, for example, the Doctorate in Education, Ed.D, which is offered at USM as well. So, these are the typical modes for the post graduate degrees in Malaysia.

Now, we have some examples of double degree offerings among the various institutions of higher learning. One that I'm aware of is the bachelor of engineering at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia or National University of Malaysia, which is at the undergraduate level. And this is actually in existence for something like fifteen years; it's been in discussion for many years, but actual running of the program only started in the early 2010. But the students spend their final year of their degree at the partner university, okay.

But the other one that's under development by the Universiti Malaysia Pahang, where they have some agreement with another German university. I'm sorry, I'm not sure how I should pronounce this, so I will not attempt to do so. However, I think the issue here is to sustain the interest among the students, because I see that a lot of students they're not really convinced of the benefit of such a double degree arrangement because they incur additional expenses. Especially, for public university students where a lot of them are not so financially well off, alright.

So, without financial assistance either offered by the universities or by the government many of them are very reluctant to undertake such a program. At the postgraduate level

there are many such bilateral agreements whether at USM or in other universities where there is double degree for PhD level by research, there is no need for any additional paperwork other than the bilateral agreement between the universities, alright.

So, the idea behind the joint PhD program is that there will be joint supervision, there will be two supervisors, one from each host university. But at the same time there will be some residency requirement, for example, a student, a candidate is expected to spend at least 6 months to 12 months at the other university in residence. So, in this case PhD program, the degrees will be conferred by both universities. One example that USM has in the past has been in the so called Cotutelle program with French partner universities.

And double degree for Master's by Coursework program is complicated because this involves the university's senate approval to sign it. And the duration of programs are a concern to many students. Because most of the master's by coursework program is one and a half to two years in Malaysia, which means three semesters or four semesters. And if increase the duration due to the double degree requirements then the students are less keen.

Now, the issues we found, for master's by coursework program, we have tried to do this discussion with other universities, but so far we have not succeeded, at least for Universiti Sains Malaysia, we have not successfully launched it yet, because of the revenue sharing model and cost issue. Because after the Asian Financial Crisis we have a lowered exchange rate. In addition, as you may be aware, the Malaysian Ringgit is not very conducive in terms of the exchange rate these past few months. So, that is one of the biggest challenge I think for double degree programs at the master's level.

Okay. So, what are the opportunities for Double Degree Programs in Malaysia? I think if you want to consider double degree arrangements research more postgraduate programs is probably easiest to implement. And we do have various established double degree programs at the PhD level. For coursework or mix mode programs mostly at the master's level, I believe that some cross disciplinary programs maybe more suitable. Because they will leverage the strengths of each institution where we will be able to complement each other. For example, Universiti Sains Malaysia may not have a particular expertise or program in that particular area, but if it is a cross disciplinary program than it gives us opportunity to expose a student to more than one particular discipline.

The disadvantages of coursework master's is that a lot of detailed preparatory work. I think earlier there was presentation at what is needed to setup program in Tokyo. And it's pretty similar kind of problem for anyone interested in offering such a program. Now, undergraduate programs for public universities, you have various constraints, because the policy is dictated by the government. So, it is not so easy to setup such double degree programs unless it is by government to government agreement. The earlier examples I've indicated with the Germany mostly are government to government initiatives.

Whereas, for transnational private universities, if both universities will like to setup such an arrangement then obviously extensive planning, approval, and accreditation process needs to be undertaken. But so far we have one successful example which is ~~IMUW~~ IUMW. Whereas, in terms of private colleges and universities they will be more open to such an idea, because existing twining programs are already quite popular among the students.

And of course in Malaysia because of our relatively young educational institutions, prestige associated with foreign degree has some draw for the students themselves. The issue to consider is to come up with a suitable revenue model and the cost sharing, so that there is a way to ensure the cost advantage compared to studying fully overseas in foreign university, or else to have the foreign university setup a branch campus within Malaysia itself. Alright, so I come to end of my presentation. I appreciate any questions, and thank you.