Internationalisation in Brunei's Higher Education and Its Policy Implications: Case Study of Universiti Brunei Darussalam

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Abstract:

The international dimension of higher education has evolved into a central feature of Brunei's higher education sector for more than a decade. Despite the many benefits of internationalisation to students, host universities and host countries, challenges remain. While the internationalisation process has become the norm in the education sector, its outcomes and impacts are complex to measure as they manifest in a myriad of ways. One can argue that higher education has become part of globalisation and thus should no longer be strictly viewed from a national context. But the success of progress made in internationalisation depends on higher education institutions (HEIs)' strategic goals and priorities operating within specific contexts and environments, and their rationales for internationalisation. Technology has not been adequately addressed in the literature as a rationale for internationalisation and no studies have looked into the internationalisation process and policy in Brunei context. This paper examines the motivations behind Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD)'s internationalisation goals, and the ways UBD aligns their internationalisation strategies with the country's planned vision (Wawasan 2035). Secondary sources of data and semi-structured interviews were employed to achieve the objectives of the study. Results showed that the growing needs for new and improved IT infrastructure, collaborative high impact research thrusts, and internationalisation of the curriculum, to name a few, have posed new thoughts and challenges to the landscape of Brunei's higher education. Several recommendations were proposed to enhance current practices and the study highlights the need for a comprehensive internationalisation policy for Brunei's HEIs.

Keywords: *Internationalisation, Higher Education, Policy, Brunei Darussalam, Universiti Brunei Darussalam*

1. INTRODUCTION

Internationalisation is no longer just a buzzword but a requirement for higher education institutions to achieve excellence. The motives for their internationalisation have always been associated with quality assurance, accreditation, a rating or ranking system, with the ranking system appearing more noticeably than others. Although ranking gives stakeholders an overall sense of an institution's performance, it can never come close to showing the full picture. This is especially true for small and newly-established universities. It is important for higher education institutions not to let themselves be consumed by ranking, rather to use ranking as a way

to measure how well they are performing in relation to their strategic goals and objectives. Therefore, we pose the question: is ranking a new opportunity or a burden? Part of the answer lies in an institution's ability to generate quality programmes and produce employable graduates. Regrettably, mass media tends to focus on a university's achievement by ranking as the one true measure – after all, is it not the quality of graduates that matters? Many universities also reported that even making it to the lowest level of the world university rankings is a great achievement, however longer-term trends suggest that university ranking can be a burden to success. There are two sides of the argument. On the one hand, university's ranking has shaped the world of education in pursuit of quality and excellence, but on the other hand, it is a data-driven business aiming to remain relevant and profitable. For universities to be in world rankings, it inevitably come at a cost. It also does not come cheap, and to maintain and sustain a university's standing in global rankings are relevant to the complex problems that educational leaders face. Besides institutional positioning, funding and raising graduation rates, internationalisation in higher education is increasingly tied to a universal experience of wider community participation and cross-cultural communication. With the increased complexity and rapid evolution of the global higher education landscape, each dimension of internationalisation (including global student mobility, the expansion of branch campuses, dual and joint degrees, and the use of English as a language for teaching and research worldwide, to name a few) comes with challenges. Thus, universities need to recognise the changed realities and that current, and possibly future, developments are beyond the control of the academic community. These new realities will have significant implications for higher education and all those involved needs to respond to the possibilities and challenges that lie ahead. To deal with the challenges, this study highlights the need for a policy in a higher education setting, and Brunei Darussalam

(Brunei) is no exception. To date, no national policy is yet in place, but the Ministry of Education's Strategic Plan (2018-2022) has included calls for increased internationalisation activities in the higher education sector. A number of studies in literature have examined internationalisation of higher education from defining terms and positing conceptual frameworks, to shaping relevant debates by drawing the attention of a multitude of stakeholders. There has also been some research that connects theory with policy and practice in different national contexts, and that reflects on how internationalisation intersects with the formation of individual and national identities as well as regional engagement in various regions of the world. Qiang's (2003) conceptual framework for the internationalisation policy of a given country, has widely been used by researchers to evaluate the rationale for internationalisation of higher education (Daquila, 2013; Munusamy & Hashim, 2019; Tham, 2013). While political, socio-cultural, academic and economic rationales posited by Qiang (2003) are equally important, this study raises an important consideration that technological development, beyond its role as an enabling mechanism, should be seen as a rationale or driving force of the internationalisation process. Furthermore, no policy research on internationalisation has been conducted in the context of Brunei's higher education sector. The main purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which internationalisation of a higher education institution in Brunei (with a specific reference to Universiti Brunei Darusssalam [UBD]) align their strategies with the country's 2035 vision. It has three main objectives: to analyse the motivations behind UBD's internationalisation drive; explore the ways in which UBD's internationalisation goals are achieved; and provide several recommendations on how internationalisation policy in UBD can be improved to meet Brunei Vision 2035.

2. The Changing Landscape of Higher Education in Brunei

Formal education in Brunei was introduced in early 1900s and since then, internationalisation began to evolve over the years. The internationalisation was largely in the form of study abroad for higher degrees mainly in Malaysia, Singapore and United Kingdom, and using English language as a medium of instruction. In 1985, UBD was established as the first national university in the country with the objective of producing highly-qualified teachers in various fields from arts or social sciences to science streams. A year later in January 1986, UTB was set up with the primary objective of catering for a range of interests in technical and commercial education. In those years, both institutions were highly dependent on international academics, knowledgeable experts and professionals in their respective fields of study. While the reliance on experts is growing, there is a revival in the government's increased investment on education and training, and this has changed the way the Bruneian society places value in education at all levels, from a 'nice to have' to a 'must have' component in their lives. In 2007, Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University (UNISSA) was established as the first national Islamic university in the country with the mission of becoming a centre for the spread of Islam in the region. In the same year, Seri Begawan Religious Teachers University College (KUPUSB) was established with the objective to upgrade religious teachers' qualification to higher degree level and become a centre for teaching excellence in Islamic education. Out of these four public higher education institutions, only UBD and UTB are ranked in the QS World Rankings. Although education services contributed only 2.5% to Brunei's national Gross Domestic Product in 2019, university education continues to play a pivotal role in Brunei's socio-economic development. However, there are two main issues facing the country today. Firstly, as the number of graduates increases, finding a job can still take a while which results in increasing number of unemployed graduates. Furthermore, there is a mismatch between the growing graduate population and limited openings in real graduate jobs. Secondly, current job seekers and graduates do not have the required skills, knowledge and relevant industrial experience, and therefore they are not seen as marketable enough. This somewhat implies that internationalisation activities undertaken by higher education institutions in Brunei do not guarantee an automatic entry into employment. If this continues to persist, it will affect the country's vision to achieve a well-educated and highly skilled population as measured by the highest international standard. The next section provides a literature review on the internationalisation of higher education, looking at some dimensions and rationales explaining the internationalisation process and policy, which may offer unique or differing perspectives and opportunities for achieving realistic goals for internationalisation.

3. Literature Review

This section is divided into two parts. The first part reviews the dimensions of internationalisation which uncover some of the key challenges and meaningful insights experienced by higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide. The second part covers the rationales for the internationalisation policy of HEIs which are likely to vary between nations, and the dynamics between institutional practices and policies which is an important feature of the governance perspective.

3.1 Dimensions of Internationalisation in Higher Education

Internationalisation is not an end unto itself but a means to an end. It can be viewed as a process of change, a means to achieve stated goals (Knight, 2014), and as a tool to improve the quality of higher education (Vitenko, Shanaida, Drozdziel & Madlenak, 2017). Knight (2003) defines

internationalisation as a process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education. Clearly other than academic, there are social and cultural dimensions of internationalisation. The social dimension was highlighted within the Bologna Process pertaining to international student mobility (Kooij, 2014), while the cultural dimension was emphasized by Delgado-Marquez, Hurtado-Torres and Bondar (2012) whereby they employed Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions to assess cultural practices at the national level and the internationalisation behavior of higher education institutions in 200 top worldwide universities according to the THE ranking. The results of their study showed that those universities located in countries with lower levels of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and future orientation are, on average, more internationalised, while the cultural practice of institutional collectivism does not have a significant influence on universities' internationalisation behaviors. Although they concluded that most cultural practices exhibit significant influence on the internationalisation of HEIs, such results remain inconclusive. Internationalisation is also understood and acted upon differently in different countries, regions and universities. Hence, what is important in one institution may not be relevant to another, but the one thing that still holds true is that the international education landscape is changing. Student mobility, internationalising the curriculum, technology development, international research and the long-standing dominance of English in the world of international higher education are some of the aspects that have played a significant role in the internationalisation process.

3.1.1. Student Mobility

As internationalisation matures in its processes and expands in scope, student mobility growth, either going outbound or coming inbound, raises two sets of issues: affordability, and security risks and threats (Choudaha & de Wit, 2019). The tuition fees and cost of visa applications are simply too high to allow for global student mobility, raising questions about the intent of the institutions and the future of higher education and financial viability. Putting more restrictions on student visas only impedes a country's ability to attract high-quality talent from around the world to pursue their studies. There is also a renewed concern over the growing inequitable opportunities whereby students from middle and upper class families typically have a much better chance to access quality education and learning experiences globally. One cannot deny that student mobility growth can generate a steady revenue stream which making universities more entrepreneurial in order to cope with the increased competition (Kirby, Guerrero & Urbano, 2011). Sperrer, Muller and Soos (2016) who conceptualised the model of the entrepreneurial university also highlighted the importance of fostering an entrepreneurial spirit among students. Studying abroad is indeed a significant investment from students. Thus, universities and nations must become proactive in demonstrating 'value for money' – that is, adding value to the quality of their higher education and research. One way is by ensuring students have a broad and enriching experience that goes beyond the standard offer of the traditional curriculum. Although the interest in student mobility is largely driven by economic benefits, the key aspect of internationalisation that attract the most attention relates to learning.

3.1.2. Internationalising the curriculum

ACE Report, cited in de Wit (2013), indicated that student learning must remain a central core no matter what shape the internationalisation process takes at a given institution. An institution must place it at the centre of their curriculum discourse, reforms and learning outcomes as manifested in teaching, learning and research programmes. Interest in

internationalising the curriculum has increased not merely in terms of improving teaching and learning for all students, but global citizenship in parallel with the employability agenda (Clifford & Haigh, 2018). There are several conceptual frameworks available in literature that account for different aspects of internationalising the curriculum. These are: characteristics of related elements, including global, international and intercultural (Ankomah-Asare, Larkai & Nsowah-Nuamah, 2016); approaches, such as activity, competency, ethos and process (Zha Qiang, 2003); and stages, comprising international awareness, international competence and international expertise (Edwards, Crosling, Petrovic-Lazarovic & O'Neill, 2003). To prepare students for a globalised world, incorporating global disciplinary perspectives into curricula, pedagogies and assessment, and developing students' intercultural competence have become an integral part of higher education to serve the shifting needs of future job markets (Lunn, 2008). Nonetheless, there is a need to rebalance the university's curriculum between global and local contexts to ensure its relevance to the communities it serves. There also needs to be a coordinated strategy to review programmes and assess the extent to which cross-cultural capabilities can be integrated. The availability of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary scholarships and learning, facilitated by the increased opportunities interaction provided by the new technologies, further reinforces interest in internationalising the curriculum.

3.1.3. Technology Development

The processes of internationalisation are generally intertwined and oscillating, and universities often implement their internationalisation activities by doing things or getting people to enrich their learning experiences outside their home countries such as student mobility and academic exchanges. However today, with the help of technology, universities can internationalise even from home, so-

called "internationalisation at home" as coined by Crowther et al. (2001). Such definition however does not provide sufficient support for those with an interest in internationalisating domestic curricula (Beelen & Jones, 2015). While technology continues to shape the internationalisation process, it also has significant impact on HEIs and this boils down to the question of why do institutions internationalise in the first place? One can argue that if institutions put a great emphasis on international and intercultural competencies (Ankomah-Asare et al., 2016; Knight, 2003), internationalisation at home should not be considered as an option but rather an addition to stay abroad. However, not every student can go abroad, and although Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has vastly improved the educational world, it is still not closer to quality education for all because not everyone has equal access to technology. Jones (cited in Matthews, 2019) accentuated that it is people who transform education, not technology. ICT enables global academic cooperation which in turn builds human capacity, connects networks and information beyond their immediate environment (Magzan & Aleksic-Maslac, 2011; Anshari et.al. 2017). It has effectively been used to coordinate internationalisation activities or initiatives in higher education. But behind all of these activities or initiatives lies a wide-range of administrative and executive support related tasks and coordination across borders particularly in relation to international research collaborations.

3.1.4 International Research

International research is a critical aspect of internationalisation in higher education. Essentially, it has been identified as a key strategy that goes beyond to improve an institution's ranking and bring more research quality and revenue. International research however is not applicable for all institutions, but is there any such thing as a "teaching university" anymore? Today, ranking methodology largely determines whether an

institution is a research-intensive university based on its proportion of research publications and share of international research collaboration, as well as funding and data networking performance. International research can be viewed from two perspectives, which are consistent with Finkelstein, Walker and Chen's (2009) two broad aspects of faculty internationalisation. Firstly, research informs teaching and learning. It is the extent to wanshahich faculty internationalises the content of their work as reflected in the extent to which they integrate international perspectives into their course content, and the extent to which their research is international in scope or focus. Secondly, collaboration on research projects with international colleagues as part of the internationalisation of the academic profession. This is reflected through co-authorship of scholarly publications with foreign colleagues and publication in foreign countries. Chen, Zhang and Fu (2018) indicated that international research collaboration has gone through three phases: emergence (1957-1991); fermentation (1992-2005); and take-off (2006-2015). So what does post-2015 inform us about international research collaboration? It is about transformation and transition towards sustainable higher education, in which research captures the variability and complexity of the transition to practice as the academic profession diversifies and mobilises. Furthermore, the use of English language for research publications does not have to be a barrier to internationalisation (Manakul, 2007).

3.1.5 English Language for Teaching and Research Worldwide

English has been regarded as a lingua franca for teaching and learning in higher education, and a means of cross-cultural communication for many decades. Some institutions even impose English language proficiency level as a requirement for admission and scholarship applications. While institutions switch to English as a medium of instruction (EMI) for some academic programmes (Duong and Chua, 2016; Alas et.al. 2016), there has been an ongoing debate about the way forward for international education. The evolving debate is about using other languages as an alternative to English, and the effect of English language on cultural identity. Studying foreign languages not only increases the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication but develops students' deeper understanding of language and its relationship to culture. The question that keeps arising: what other language would then be best for use globally as an alternative to English? Dastgoshadeh and Jalilzadeh (2011) explained that learning English as an international language not only provides the opportunities for social mobility and modernity but eliminates the probability of losing the national language - the carrier of identity. Despite its positive influence in the development of internationalisation in higher education, Alfarhan (2016) and Ged (2013) argued that second language acquisition may lead to the loss of some aspects or knowledge about the first language, and they showed the globalisation of English has greatly contributed to the loss of cultural identity of the second English language acquirers. The use of English for teaching and research worldwide may have come to an abrupt end in Europe and North America (Altbach & de Wit, 2018; Kerklaan, Moreira & Boersma, 2008), but it is still widely spoken around the world. Overall, internationalisation is a central theme in higher education but the state of affairs is problematic. Hence, it requires policies that promote internationalisation process and have a deep impact on national higher education systems (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011; Teichler, 2009).

3.2. Rationales of Internationalisation Policy for Higher Education

While the conversation on the issues of cross border education generally revolves around balancing cost, quality and access, the need to develop a policy may

arise in a variety of ways. Qiang (2003) conceptualised the rationale for the internationalisation policy of a given country into four: political, economic, academic and socio-cultural. Simply put, the political rationale is related to matters such as national sovereignty, identities, security, stability, peace, culture and ideological influence (Jiang, 2010). The economic rationale is closely linked to the status and role of higher education as the platform for the production of skilled workers (Beerkens, 2004). The academic rationale is related to quality education and as one major element in strategic alliances (de Wit, 2011), and the socio-cultural rationale regards the intercultural exchange and understanding as important factors for students achieving international competencies (Wadhwa & Jha, 2014). Each rationale may be weighed differently on a different scale of importance, yet it is still important for a country to consider all the four rationales to further strengthen the internationalisation of HEIs. Technology also plays an important role in facilitating the academic rationale, and along the same lines, it can be viewed as a separate rationale given how technology has changed the dynamics of education not only in terms of education service delivery but relationships among students, academics and other stakeholders. The rationales for internationalisation can be analysed at national and institutional levels. Shaydorova (2014) who studied the rationales for the internationalisation of Russian higher education found that political and economic rationales are regarded as having high priority at national level, while academic is the most preferred rationale at the institutional level. Socio-cultural may not be among the main rationales, but it can become a motive for international cooperation. The shift of policy rationales from the perspective of the government sector allows a university to gain a better sense of where the national higher education sector is in the process of internationalisation, identify certain change in motives, and adopt the right strategies for change management (Salas, 2014). Overall, interest

and involvement in the internationalisation of higher education are unavoidably on the rise across both developed and developing worlds. In both contexts, institutions are increasingly enticed to conform to this emerging trend. Nonetheless, the manner in which internationalisation is realised in developing countries by exploring the rationales for internationalisation, policies, strategies, approaches and the nature of institutional relationships, particularly in the Brunei context, has not yet been thoroughly explored. To address this limitation, the study aims to examine the ways in which UBD internationalises and aligns their strategies with the country's vision 2035. It has three main objectives: (1) to analyse the motivations behind UBD's internationalisation drive; (2) explore the ways in which UBD achieves its internationalisation goals; and (3) provide several recommendations on how internationalisation policy in UBD can be improved to meet the Wawasan 2035.

4. Methodology

This study used qualitative approach and employed two research methods: secondary sources of data and semi-structured interviews. Secondary sources of data include guidelines, rules and regulations, strategic plan and relevant news and articles for document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample size of nine comprising two senior officers from the Ministry of Education, and seven UBD academics who also hold administrative posts in the Global Relation Office, and various Faculties and Institutes. Results from the interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed according to the appropriate dimensions or aspects of internationalisation, and different sets of challenges. The objective of the semi-structured interview was to obtain their insights and perceptions about the motive for UBD's internationalisation, strategies, approaches and challenges including policy of higher education at institutional level. The study used UBD as a case study for two reasons. UBD is

the first premier national university in the country to embark on QS World Rankings, and also due to convenient accessibility and proximity given that both researchers work for the university. UBD has emerged as one of the leading institutions of higher education in Asia. Since 1985, UBD has seen an increase in the number of their graduates, the introduction of new academic programmes and the development of graduate research studies. The University's vision is to become a university of innovation and enterprise, and the mission is to nurture innovation and translate into enterprise. It aims to develop the individual and society as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of intellect, faith and culture, accomplished through the creation of an environment conducive to achieving excellence in teaching, learning and research. In 2009, UBD introduced the GenNEXT programme which is an education framework designed for students to excel according to their individual learning styles. It is a broad-based and trans-disciplinary framework that offers the flexibility and adaptability to ensure students are able to fully explore their potential in a hands-on projects in an accountable manner, while providing thorough and rigorous training across disciplines. In 2011, UBD introduced the Discovery Year as part of the GenNEXT programme, in which all students are required to leave the university for one year to expose them to the real-world experiential and design-centric learning. Students are given the opportunity to gain community-based or international experience outside of the UBD campus. To sum up, the UBD's internationalisation covers a broad range of aspects including student and staff mobility, internationalisation of curriculum, international research collaborations, rankings, quality assurance, accreditation and academic-industry/stakeholder engagement to increase reputation. The University has also developed several indicators to assess their internationalisation mainly pertinent to teaching and research.

5. Results and Discussion

The results of this study are divided into two parts. The first part is with reference to the motivations (rationales) behind the UBD's internationalisation drive, and the second part relates to how UBD achieves its internationalisation goals.

5.1 Rationale for Internationalisation in Brunei's Higher Education

Five rationales are examined to gain insights into individuals' knowledge and understanding about UBD's policy on internationalisation, and the results are reported along with some discussion.

5.1.1 Political

In view of Brunei's political structure and setting wherein high bureaucracy and top-down management are still heavily practiced, most respondents asserted that political support from top national leaders are fundamental in executing national action plans and activities in the country including internationalisation in higher education. They viewed political rationale (which is referred to a political mandate (or titah) from His Majesty, the Sultan of Brunei, and announcements made by Ministries) has significantly influenced the internationalisation process of UBD particularly in forming collaborations and partnerships with key agencies and institutions through memorandum of understandings (MOUs). One respondent from the Ministry however, argued that it is the Ministry's strategic, rather than the political, directive that has shaped the inter-regional cooperation for UBD's networking. Regardless the agreements are considered to be of strategic interest to UBD and/or generated through political will, two respondents from UBD highlighted the role of university and academic leaders to ensure all the objectives of internationalisation are materialised as they observed that some MOUs or agreements tend to be loose and less effective. Few respondents also raised the issue with sustainable relationship especially when there is

a change of leadership whereby sustaining a mutually beneficial strategic relationship can be challenging. Thus, an institution like UBD has to be very careful in handling their professional relationships to avoid the net effect of rising tensions between institutions or countries (Jiang, 2010). Furthermore, with an increasing number of private HEIs in the country, one respondent interestingly posed a scenario of government's shift of focus to provide more support to private HEIs, from institutional allocations to more individual support. In such cases, the government must deliver a much needed policy to address a range of differing concerns faced by the local HEIs.

5.1.2 Economic

The economic rationale for internationalisation of UBD focuses on economic growth - not on income generation per se, but rather on achieving financial sustainability particularly through acquiring government funding, providing scholarships, and obtaining international research grants. This is regarded by some respondents as the government's investment on the development of human capital, and some viewed as investment in knowledge based capital via research and development. Although UBD, as a public university, has been held responsible for human as well as social development, both human and social aspects and economic growth are intrinsically interconnected, co-evolutionary and mutually reinforcing each other (Beerkens, 2004; Chiappero-Martinetti, von Jacobi & Signorelli, 2015). According to one respondent from the Ministry, UBD has one less thing to worry about. That is in terms of secured funding because the University receives an allocated budget from the Ministry of Education annually. Nonetheless, this annual budget now has to be distributed across three other institutions (UTB, KUPUSB and UNISSA). Not only does UBD receives less than before, the University also has to cut down their spending. Few respondents indicated that there is often academic

pressure to cut the university's spending when the budget gets smaller and the academic force requirements stay the same. UBD must therefore strive to find inventive ways of providing more funding for research and resources, and mobilise funds through innovative education and scholarship programmes. Also, to leverage on international research collaboration to gain the economic benefits or cost savings (Chen et al., 2018).

5.1.3 Socio-cultural

All respondents shared that the essential factor for the soci0-cultural rationale in UBD is related to sustainability in the national cultural identity (that is, Melayu Islam Beraja [MIB]) and intercultural understanding for national and community development. These are important factors for students to achieve international competencies (Wadhwa & Jha, 2014). The respondents suggested the labour market, including the private sector, has to value international competencies achieved by students, and further emphasized that UBD international student mobility (both outbound and inbound) has to be grounded in institutional collaboration with institutions abroad, and must include both education and research to be an integrated part of the strategic work at HEIs. Several respondents indicated the importance of reinforcing national cultural identity to Bruneian students studying and working abroad, in order to sustain, maintain and share Bruneian culture with other citizens. When asked about language as a part of culture, three respondents have suggested to rethink the role of language study in internationalising UBD. There is no doubt the establishment of a bilingual education policy (English and Malay languages) in Brunei has benefited the economy and society (Jones, 2012), but multilingualism is seen as essential for students to thrive in a global job market and enhance their professional and personal development. Few respondents asserted that although many countries have a language policy that

still prioritises the use of national (first or home) language as the language of instruction, it is often not the language children speak at home. One respondent viewed that the English language may be regarded as a threat to national identity and the rights of individuals to use their own language, but this is not always true depending on how a nation perceives it. While keeping international language as the language to develop social function and improve intercultural communication competence (Cots, Llurda & Garrett, 2014; Dastgoshadeh & Jalilzadeh, 2011), UBD must continue to protect its local (Malay) language, values, traditions, cultural heritage and identity of the community.

5.1.4 Academic

All respondents concurred that the academic rationale drives UBD internationalisation. Education and research have been identified as major areas to develop an internationally recognised curriculum and effective research collaboration, publication and outputs. To engage in curriculum internationalisation, the respondents highlighted that while global narratives set the broad framework of a strategy, configuration within local contexts is still relevant and important. Although most respondents showed their support for UBD to have more flexible academic recognition such as through dual and joint degree programmes, and further stated that laws and regulations like student visa grant, work permit, and financing opportunities should not be a hindrance. In reality, there is a disconnect between education strategies and practices (Ankomah-Asare et al., 2016; Edwards et al., 2003). Few respondents highlighted that as UBD internationalises its curricula and amplifies the value of students' international experiences for working life, regulations for studies abroad and the national regulations for the use of funding also have to be improved. They argued that the internationalisation of research is only meaningful on scientific technology projects. But this is not always true

because internationalisation of research is influenced by factors affecting international research collaboration (Chen et al., 2018); as well as by the complex intersection of factors relating to the individual faculty member, to their discipline, to their institution, and to a range of external factors, such as funding (Woldegiyorgis, Proctor & de Wit, 2018). While mobility within the exchange programme encompasses universities all over the world without any geographical separation, it also creates a borderless world in which academic or economic decisions can be made without reference to national or regional boundaries. Two respondents presented that UBD, as a member of ASEAN University Network (AUN), can work together with other institutions without formal agreements unless there are financial implications or a commitment to share resources. They stated that internationalisation is highly emphasized in UBD because the university wants their academics to deliver quality education and produce high quality research work. Overall, this internationalisation process has been successful in making UBD visible in the world.

5.1.5 Technology

Several respondents agreed that technology should not merely be viewed as an enabling mechanism to achieve academic and research goals, as similarly argued by Magzan and Aleksic-Maslac (2009), but a rationale for internationalisation. Two respondents explained that although UBD is now listed in the ranking system, the University cannot stay contented particularly in the era of digital transformation age, where teaching and learning pedagogies and research platforms have become more advanced, innovative and mobilised. All respondents suggested that UBD keep up with rapid changes in technology, change and adapt; and to move with the times and offer better opportunities. UBD may start late in implementing blended or online teaching and learning approach in their lifelong learning programmes, but they are not too late to be

responsive to meet the expectations of millennials and unanticipated situations such as the spread of pandemic COVID19 which affecting the global education systems. Higher education technology adoption driven by the use of ICT in blended learning designs and collaborative and deeper learning approaches (e.g. project-based, challenge-based and inquiry-based learning), can as well advance the culture of innovation. Relating to an over-emphasis on technology affecting education, three respondents believed that there are some other things that the University must preserve in the area of basic values and attitudes. They highlighted that investment in technology needs to go into internationalisation at home which is not an option but an addition to student mobility and intercultural competencies (Ankomah-Asare et al., 2016; Crowther et al., 2001; Anshari et al., 2016), and emphasized that technology capabilities is not the only measure for internationalisation and assessing teaching and learning quality in higher education.

5.2. UBD towards Achieving its Internationalisation Goals

Internationalisation agenda is one of the strategic priorities in UBD's strategic plan 2016-2020. Several initiatives have been identified to increase the university's internationalisation efforts and activities. One respondent asserted that it is not only the international student mobility, both outbound and inbound, must be expanded significantly, internalising the internationalisation ethos must also be well implemented to demonstrate to the nation that it is a serious agenda for the university to continue and grow professionally and establish strong reputation at national, regional and international levels. Although it has been nearly 10 years since UBD introduced Discovery Year in the GenNEXT programme, the University even at ministerial level does not have a written and separate policy documentation specifically on internationalisation. Calls for internationalisation are

largely translated in the form of rules and regulations, procedures and guidelines. Political support and buy-in from national and university leaders in institutionalising the whole of nation approach play a central role in the internationalisation of Brunei's higher education, as highlighted by many respondents. UBD continuously receives strong support from His Majesty, the Sultan of Brunei (who is also the UBD's Chancellor) and the Ministry of Education as there is great need for mobilising national support to secure sufficient and long-term funding for education infrastructure services. There are also economic, political, technology, academic and social benefits associated with it. Few respondents argued that having encouraged higher education institutions like UBD to internationalise and to simply stating this in the Ministry's strategic plan is not sufficient to safeguard both the national and university's current and future interests. Since UBD is still largely dependent on government funding, having no clear policy direction for internationalisation at the national level can limit the scope and weaken the effectiveness of internationalisation strategies at the institutional level (Craciun, 2018). Internationalisation and leadership are the crucial components resulting in increased or positive university's performance. Several respondents asserted that UBD has been able to achieve its internationalisation goals because of clear strategic directive, indicators and targets from its leaders. Nonetheless, this would also not have been possible without the support from everyone at all levels. Few respondents noted that performance indicators are best interpreted as investigative or suggestive rather than as objective and absolute facts. Therefore, it is critically useful to have non-measurable indicators in assessing progress towards institutional internationalisation goals and objectives. Key performance indicators are not necessarily stated in terms of measurable outcomes and that they can be addressed in other terms (e.g. verbal and written feedback from students, peers and industry

stakeholders). UBD's internationalisation is also reflected on the initiatives taken at faculty/institute/centre (FIC) level. To date, there are already several faculties that have been working very hard to obtain accreditation and UBD itself continuously works together with faculty staff to increase the university's reputation in QS and THE rankings but without forgetting the real values and mission of the university. That is, providing quality education focusing on the country's needs and the needs of individuals who have a strong desire to learn (lifelong learners), to be competent (efficient and productive), competitive and responsive to global trends. UBD's international collaboration is reflected on the hundreds of MOUs that UBD signed with other universities and industry stakeholders which have benefited all parties and institutions, and has helped UBD increase its reputation in teaching, learning and research services. Funding is a key to internationalisation process. Although large percentage of UBD's funding or budget comes from the government, the University manages to gradually diversity its source of external funding. However, the concern is sustainability. Firstly, UBD has significantly made a huge investment to be involved and become part of the ranking exercise, and this of course must be maintained. Secondly, UBD will still be receiving budgets from the government but may suffer budget cuts because now the government has to also allocate the budgets for other HEIs as well. Hence, UBD must set realistic goals for internationalisation but stretching the university beyond its current capacity, involves making effective use of resources. Few respondents observed that what else lacking in UBD is effective administrative system associated specifically with fiscal, information and human resources, which can make all the difference. They also highlighted the importance of supporting infrastructure and technology to effectively provide essential international education services. As highlighted by Jones cited in Matthews (2019), it is people who transform education, not technology. Therefore,

UBD must keep in mind that an administration process that has not been managed effectively and efficiently will lead to increased staff turnover, high job dissatisfaction and low quality service for the stakeholders including students, academics and industry partners.

5. Recommendations

The benefits of internationalisation are many and diverse, so are potential risks and unintended consequences (Knight, 2014). This study provides several recommendations revolving around themes in policy and governance. Firstly, preparing a comprehensive policy on internationalisation which entails various aspects concerning students, academics, programmes, research, teaching and services, and all these must be viewed from both operational and strategic levels. Currently, UBD only has standard operating procedures (SOPs) and guiding principles as a reference point for managing internationalisation activities and initiatives comprising the discovery year programmes, research and scholarship rules and regulations for all graduate scholars including internationals. Yet, all these are very operational. Secondly, improving UBD's approaches or strategies in dealing internationalisation agenda. This includes internationalisation in the curriculum and pedagogical tools, international academic and research programmes, and capturing the market of international lifelong learners. Many are still managed on ad-hoc basis, largely informal, such as receiving written or verbal advice from the Office of Assistant Vice Chancellors. For example, it can be challenging to go through some procedures when there is lack of prior knowledge and history on how the MOU was first started. Also, when there are matters arising, newly appointed Deans or Directors of FIC will take some time to resolve them because they are new to the collaborative arrangement and perhaps unfamiliar with UBD's SOPs. With SOPs, some matters can be dealt immediately and quickly

decided, but some take time. This study suggests there must be a clear policy that help guide the FIC to deal with MOUs that have not been active for years. Certainly there are implications on UBD if the faculties decided not to renew, and therefore, internationalisation matters must be addressed consistently. Thirdly, enhancing UBD's transparency through effective coordination and direct cascading information from top to bottom. That is, university-wide effort to directly cascade the strategic goals for internationalisation not merely at FIC level, but to all employees across various departments or functional areas and cut the multiple layers of authority. Although in reality, it can be difficult to get buy-in from academics who too fixated with their own perceptions and not believing in university's vision and mission. Finally, redesigning or improving the University's process by adopting lean management. This is pertinent to Internationalisation effort or initiative that involves international research collaboration such as inviting visiting academic to UBD for collaborative teaching, research and workshops. Since UBD is a public university, it is understandable that regulations such as Financial Regulations and General Order established by the government under public service cannot be amended or adjusted. Also, because UBD is using government money, accountability is high on the University to ensure that we conform to regulations. But the line of reporting and submission to seek an approval from the University internally through several committees and meetings can somewhat impede the internationalisation process. Although the international research profile is less crucial to small universities, with fewer financial resources compared to accomplished universities, UBD may well see this as an opportunity to leverage research outcomes and create new opportunities for their academics and administrators to grow professionally.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, to understand why universities tend to seek internationalisation, it is necessary to study the justification of internationalisation and its aspects. UBD'S internationalisation policy largely focuses on academic and socio-cultural rationales and these are supported by the political, economic and technology rationales. At institutional level, UBD is no different from that of other universities in terms of how it has achieved its internationalisation goals. However, internationalisation agenda at the national level is oriented towards addressing social and economic challenges in response to Brunei Vision 2035. The Vision is driven by 'aspiration' to produce a highly educated population and grow the country's economy. As UBD embraces the process of internationalisation to produce and prepare quality graduates, it is equally important for the higher education system to promote national values - to foster national integration by exposing local and international students to national values and focus on reality and real improvements. This study is not without limitations. It only focuses on the rationale of internationalisation policy with a specific reference to UBD. To understand the international landscape of higher education sector in Brunei, other institutions like UTB, UNISSA and KUPUSB can be considered for use as case studies for future research as policy not only affects the needs of institutions, society and individuals but also the ideological and organisational processes in the higher education system. Results of the study may be unique and relevant to UBD, but not necessarily applicable to other local higher education institutions due to historical, structural and governance differences. Finally, internationalisation of higher education is a large-scale phenomenon, comprising various aspects of life within the university. It can be viewed at form and substance levels. The form refers to an international strategic cooperation and integrated system of partnership, while the substance refers to the development of intercultural educational

programmes, construction of new educational technologies, joint research and teaching practices (Vitenko et al., 2017). All these require coordination of increased mobility that relies heavily on ICT, an effective and efficient administrative system, and reliable and sustainable funding.

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