

Facing the New Challenges in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Parallel with global changes, Malaysia higher education segment has shifted and sprouted notably. As of the effort, since then, the government has taken some initiatives to stimulate the enrolment of international students in Malaysia. However, Covid 19 outbreak has disrupted not only the public health, but also has a significant impact on the education segment. With regards to the pandemic, mere rankings is insufficient to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning activities effectiveness. In other words, the pandemics requires new approaches in the way teaching and learning activities is conducted. The successful of teaching and learning activities amid Covid 19 has exerted new challenges to all parties involved.

Keywords: Education, VUCA, Learning activities.

1. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has obliged higher education all over the world an immerse paradigm change [1]. Higher education faces several challenges such as the rising cost of education, enticement and retainment of excellent students and manpower, latest approaches in training requirement, utilization of the most up-to-date teaching and learning techniques, and the growing demands from stakeholders [2][3]. Obviously, the new challenges also require higher education to provide a high-quality education in a very safe and supportive environment [4]. This is one of the reasons why most of the higher institutions, whether small or large, take recognition and rankings very seriously. [4] added, even some institutions have created special positions with the job specifications to work out on how to fulfil the rankings criteria. In this trying time, mere ranking is insufficient to ensure the continuity of effective teaching and learning activities.

In Malaysia context, the international education sector has grown positively since 1990s. Malaysian higher education institutions provide comparatively high-quality education standard at an affordable cost [5]. Parallel with the development in higher education segment, Malaysian Government announced the decision to make the country as a centre of higher education excellence [6]. Since then, the Ministry has introduced some changes and initiatives to encourage

the entry of international students to pursue their higher education in Malaysia. As of March 2019, approximately 127,500 international students have enrolled and the Government is targeting 200,000 international students' enrolment by 2020 [7]. Apparently, the rising enrolment of international students indicates a significant characteristic in the internationalization process of this sector [8].

The unexpected Covid-19 outbreak has not only has impacted the public health but it has shaken global economy severely. Numerous employees have lost their job, and most manufacturing and service sectors are prone to massive disruption. Unemployment has risen tremendously in all economic segment all over the world and in Malaysia, unemployment rate is now at 3.9% (or more than 600,000 unemployed), with employees see their livelihood severely affected amid the pandemic [9]. Nevertheless, the pandemic also has created an unruly to the enrolment, teaching and learning processes in higher education not only in Malaysia but all over the globe as well [10]. The suspension of all teaching and learning activities are to ensure the wellbeing of students and employees which is institutions' paramount concern. With regard to the ruling, all teaching and learning activities have been totally utilizing online and remote learning approaches. Obviously, effective implementation of the new approach is a huge challenge to all parties involved:

higher education institutions, academic staff and students itself.

2. METHOD

The word “accreditation” is a 17th Century derivative of the French word *accréditor*, from the phrase *mettre à credit*, to put to [11]. It refers to the process of recognition, authorization, or sanctioning in current usage.

Accreditation from well-known organizations, such as AACSB and AMBA, are all considered to be voluntary forms of accreditation. As independent quality assurance bodies, these organizations have established themselves and institutions are free to join or leave as they wish. In this case, when a business school joins these associations, it provides indicator to the top business education market about their quality [12].

For example, AACSB International accreditation is one of the largest and most recognized specialized accreditations worldwide. Around 850 institutions in 56 countries have earned AACSB International accreditation [12]. The accreditation process requires schools to demonstrate that their curriculum is current and relevant, and that both contemporary and emerging technology is infused throughout the business curriculum as appropriate. Business school and institutions need to demonstrate excellence in teaching through measured student learning outcomes and that highly qualified faculty are engaged in scholarship and thought leadership to positively impact the theory and practice of business [12] [13]. The involvement by the business schools in accreditation process indirectly contributes to a better society.

Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) was involved in the AACSB accreditation process and was well aware of the standards of the AACSB [13]. They are mission-based and designed to assure stakeholders that accredited business schools could manage resources to achieve a vibrant and relevant mission, provide quality in term of faculty, current curriculum and produce graduates who have achieved specified learning goals.

Besides that, UUM, specifically College of Business (COB), are well established to demonstrate diversity in variety of areas including the curriculum, the faculty members and the student-body. With regard to the curriculum, most of the courses in the business programs are designed in a global and digital perspective [13]. The curriculum largely includes international business aspects, cross-cultural dimensions as well as current issues and trends on a global context.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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4. CONCLUSION

Several issues such as globalization, technological development, integrity and economics uncertainties have always impacted the quest for a sustainable higher education system worldwide. In order to encounter these challenges, Malaysia’s Higher Education Ministry has introduced several initiatives to enhance education system and at the same time boost the enrolment of international students in this country. However, the worsen pandemic situation has made it more

challenging as it has shaken the world economic and battered the education system of the world. As a result, higher education institutions all over the world are vigorously utilizing online/remote learning, remote work, and other activities to help contain the spreading of Covid 19. The new norms have dragged the higher education sector towards the maximum use of technology. UUM for instance, has been aggressively employing all sorts of teaching aids and tools to help the lecturers and students to cope with this new normal in teaching and learning activities.

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