

DETERMINANTS OF DECISION MAKING PROCESS FOR IRAQI
STUDENTS STUDYING IN MALAYSIAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

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This dissertation is dedicated to my family for their endless support and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

Internationalization of education has become a big phenomenon in recent decades especially with the entry of many Asian countries like Malaysia, that have surpassed many developed countries such as United States, England, Europe etc. Lot of studies has been conducted on student's choice to study abroad in developed countries, but very few have been done in the context of developing countries like Malaysia. Malaysia being a developing country has started attracting a lot of international students mainly because of quality of education as well as low tuition and living costs. The studies regarding international students in Malaysian context have focused on the undergraduate level and not on the perspectives of adult learners. The present study is an attempt to investigate the factors that help the international students especially Iraqi students in making decisions to pursue their tertiary education at post graduate level in Malaysian university specifically in Malaysian research universities. The study utilizes case study approach with Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) as a study context. The theoretical underpinning of the study relies on the theory of adult learning and self-determination theory for model building. The sample consisted of postgraduate Iraqi students pursuing their masters or PhD in various faculties of UTM. Secondly, focus group discussion was also carried out with international post graduate students of various nationalities for triangulation of results. Semi structured interviews were conducted from the respondents chosen using theoretical sampling technique. The results indicate that the decision making process of Iraqi students is influenced more by external factors as compared to internal factors. The study provides useful insights into the phenomenon of study abroad. The findings of the study have several implications for both higher education institutions and policy makers.

ABSTRAK

Pengantarabangsaan pendidikan telah menjadi satu fenomena besar dalam beberapa dekad kebelakangan ini, terutama dengan kemasukan kebanyakan negara Asia seperti Malaysia, yang telah mengatasi kebanyakan negara-negara maju seperti Amerika Syarikat, England, Eropah dan lain-lain. Banyak kajian telah dijalankan ke atas pilihan pelajar untuk melanjutkan pengajian di luar negara khususnya negara-negara maju, tetapi amat sedikit kajian dilakukan dalam konteks negara-negara membangun seperti Malaysia. Malaysia sebuah negara yang sedang membangun telah mula menarik minat banyak pelajar antarabangsa terutamanya kerana kualiti pendidikan, yuran pengajian yang rendah dan kos sara hidup yang rendah. Kajian tentang pelajar antarabangsa dalam konteks Malaysia telah memberi tumpuan kepada peringkat ijazah pertama dan tidak pada perspektif pelajar dewasa. Kajian ini adalah suatu percubaan untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor yang membantu pelajar antarabangsa terutamanya pelajar Iraq dalam membuat keputusan untuk melanjutkan pelajaran ke peringkat lepasan ijazah di universiti Malaysia, khususnya di universiti penyelidikan. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kajian kes dengan Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) sebagai konteks kajian. Teori yang mendasari kajian ini adalah teori pembelajaran dewasa dan teori penentuan sendiri untuk pembinaan model kajian. Sampel kajian terdiri daripada pelajar-pelajar Iraq yang mengikuti pengajian pascaijazah sarjana atau PhD di pelbagai fakulti di UTM. Keduanya, triangulasi dapatan juga diperolehi menerusi perbincangan kumpulan fokus terhadap pelajar-pelajar pascasiswazah antarabangsa dari pelbagai negara. Temu bual separa berstruktur telah dijalankan terhadap responden dengan menggunakan teknik persampelan teori. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pembuatan keputusan pelajar Iraq lebih dipengaruhi oleh faktor-faktor luar berbanding faktor dalaman. Kajian itu memberikan pandangan yang berguna terhadap fenomena belajar di luar negara. Hasil kajian ini mempunyai beberapa implikasi untuk kedua-dua institusi pengajian tinggi dan pembuat dasar.