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# Internationalisation of the curriculum in Malaysian Universities' business faculties: Realities, implementation and challenges

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## ABSTRACT

In today's increasingly globalised and integrated economy, the need for the internationalisation of post-secondary education curriculum cannot be over stressed. This is particularly pertinent to nations, such as Malaysia, with a fast growing number of international students and international universities. The experience and perception of academic staff of Malaysian universities' business faculties regarding the internationalisation of the business faculty curriculum is explored in this study. The central thrust of this study was to investigate the perception and experience of business faculties' academic staff on internationalising the business faculty curriculum in Malaysia. The study utilised the phenomenological approach. Data was collected through face-to-face interview with academic staff of business faculties from two universities using semi-structured interview. The responses were sorted into codes (open coding & analytical/axial coding) and analysed through continuous review of the participants' own words/phrases. Among the key findings of the study is that, most academic staff in Malaysian business faculties have the *knowledge* about internationalisation of the curriculum but lack the *knowhow* in the design and implementation. Vital recommendations including the need for regular capacity building trainings to be organised for academic staff to help develop relevant competence in the internationalisation of the curriculum were proposed.

## 1. Introduction

In recent times, global businesses are increasingly recruiting globally while only applicants who have international experience are highly employable. This according to [Brown et al. \(2008\)](#) is because they have demonstrated drive, resilience and inter-cultural sensitivities as well as language skills to succeed in uncertain complex situations. The capacity to *operate globally* has been identified by [Jackson \(2009a\)](#) as one of the key industry-relevant competencies and skills of modern graduates. Employers from the US, UK, and Australia have expressed dissatisfaction about graduates' inadequate development of relevant competencies required to effectively operate and compete globally. There is an increasing need for graduates to be equipped with relevant knowledge, skills, and perspectives to enable them develop, conduct, and manage international business operations effectively. The role of internationalisation in meeting this need cannot be overemphasized. Field (2001) cited by [Jackson \(2009b\)](#) posited that internationalisation will play a crucial role in developing the competences required of graduates in the new global economy. Consequently, universities and business schools are responding to this development by embedding internationalisation into their institutional visions and mission, though without adequate attention to initiatives that will enhance global employability of the graduates ([Minocha et al., 2018](#)).

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Nevertheless, some of them have amended their curricula by highlighting cross-cultural skills and capabilities necessary to prepare graduates to operate and compete effectively in a global business environment (Martin et al., 2011; Randolph, 2011).

The internationalisation of higher education in Malaysia started in the 1980s according to Munusamy and Hashim (2019). However, there is still limited knowledge on the internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) in Malaysian higher education; specifically, on the perception, experience and challenges of internationalisation of the curriculum of specific academic programmes among the academic staff. The significance of this knowledge gap was emphasized by Beelen (2011) cited by Foster and Carver (2018) when he expressed the need for more research into the involvement of academic staff in the specific aspects of internationalisation of the curriculum. Therefore, this study will contribute to filling this knowledge gap by investigating the academic staff's understanding of the concept of IoC, the implementation of IoC in Malaysian universities' business faculties, the roles of academic staff and the challenges of curriculum internationalisation in Malaysia Universities' business faculties.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the academic staffs' understanding, experience and challenge of internationalisation of the curriculum in Malaysian business faculties. This study is significant because, firstly, it contributes to filling a critical knowledge gap on the current practices of internationalisation of the curriculum in Malaysian Universities' business faculties. Secondly, it provides valuable knowledge on IoC required to adequately internationalise the Malaysian business faculties curriculum. The central question guiding this research is; what is the staffs' understanding, experience, and challenge of internationalisation of the curriculum of business faculties in Malaysian higher educational institutions? The specific research questions guiding the study include:

- RQ 1: What does internationalisation of the curriculum mean to academic staff?
- RQ 2: How is internationalisation of the curriculum currently being implemented?
- RQ 3: How and when are the academic staffs engaged in the internationalisation of the curriculum?
- RQ 4: What type of training is available for teaching staff in executing an internationalised curriculum?
- RQ 5: What are the challenges in internationalising the curriculum?

## 2. Literature Review

This section presents the views and findings of different authors in the field of internationalisation, followed by the role of academic staff in internationalising the curriculum. Then the issues related to internationalisation were also reviewed.

### 2.1. Definition of internationalisation

While the concept of Internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) has become increasingly popular, there is currently, no agreed definition of the concept, its implications and how to implement it (Warwick, 2014). This is largely due to its use as an umbrella term for varying activities and ideas. However, as the activities and ideas have matured over the years, their differences have become more and more obvious (David, 2011). As a result of this, the term is now used for different purposes and benefits depending on which stakeholder is using the term. For instance, the concept has been assigned different definitions some of which include adapting ethnocentric teaching methods, recruiting a suitable mix of students, positioning curriculum content in an international context, or integrating international students (Foster & Carver, 2018). Hence, those who focus on teaching may prefer a different definition than those who use the term for marketing or recruitment purposes. Knight (2004a) defined internationalisation as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education.

Another definition is that of IDP Education Australia (1995) cited in Leask (1999) which defined internationalisation as curricula with an international dimension in content, targeted at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context, and intended for domestic students as well as foreign students. A more appropriate description is that of Leask (2009a, 2009b) which defines internationalisation of the curriculum as the incorporation of an international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum as well as the teaching and learning arrangements and support services of a programme of study.

### 2.2. Internationalisation of Malaysian higher education

Malaysia, as a nation, had set out to pursue the internationalisation of its higher education since the introduction of its National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2007-2020. However, several scholars have questioned the rationale and approach adopted by Malaysia towards the internationalisation of higher education in the country (Knight & Morshidi, 2011; Mohd Ismail, Ho, Lee, Maspüteriah, & Doria, 2011; Mohd Ismail and Doria, 2014). According to a study by Tham (2013), the internationalisation of higher education in Malaysia has focused mainly on increasing export revenue through increased inbound students. This was confirmed by Munusamy and Hashim (2019) in their study on the rationale for the internationalisation of higher education in Malaysia where they found that the internationalisation of higher education in Malaysia was mainly motivated by economic rationale i.e. revenue generation from international students (Knight, 2008), and the view of higher education as a platform for producing skilled workforce for the economy (Beerrens, 2004). While the grounds of revenue generation is clear, the view of higher education as a platform for producing skilled workforce for the economy is not; it raises a question of whether this is referring to the *local economy* or the *global economy*.

The academic rationale which is one of the four rationales driving internationalisation (De Wit, 2013b; Knight, 1997, 2004a), has been reported by Munusamy and Hashim (2019) not to be the main driver of internationalisation in Malaysia. Perhaps, the focus on

economic priorities in the internationalisation efforts in Malaysia could be a result of a limited understanding of the concept of internationalisation; one where internationalisation is still viewed only in terms of the *number of international students in its higher institutions*. However, the conceptualisation of internationalisation has shifted in recent years according to Foster and Carver (2018) beyond student recruitment (i.e. where students come from), to encompass curriculum issues such as – curriculum content, pedagogy, how students interact, and the values promoted by the programmes offered. Internationalisation of the curriculum, if well developed and executed, could significantly enhance the learning environment for all students, help students develop a global focus and competencies as well as prepare them for the global economy (Warwick, 2014).

The Malaysian higher education sector started with the establishment of its very first university – named University of Malaya in 1959, located in Kuala Lumpur. Since then, Malaysia has witnessed several waves of transformation and growth in its higher educational sector. According to Morshidi (2010), factors such as domestic needs and societal development prompted the initial growth and development of the sector, while globalisation, trade in higher education and internationalisation have been largely responsible for the recent transformations in the sector. Following these transformations, the sector has attracted a pool of international students from different parts of the world, mostly from China, Africa and other Asian and Middle-East countries. According to Sharma (2020), there are about 131,514 international students enrolled in Malaysia's higher education as at September 2019. With over 467 private higher education institutions and 10 international branch campuses, Malaysia continues to attract international students. Due to tuition fee deferential between domestic and international students, international students have become a huge source of revenue for Malaysia with estimated revenue from international students projected to grow to RM15.6 billion by 2020 (Malay Mail, 2019). Upon graduation these international students are usually faced with the option to either return to their home country, or move to other countries that offer employment opportunities for international graduates as Malaysia currently hardly offer such opportunities to international students/graduates.

### 2.3. Theoretical framework

Leask (2009a, 2009b) framework for internationalisation of the curriculum is multi-dimensional incorporating not only curriculum design, content, pedagogy, learning activities and assessment but also how these are affected by much broader issues such as institutional, national and global conditions.

Fig. 1 indicates that each conceptual layer of the framework interacts and affects the others directly and indirectly. This creates a dynamic set of conditions under which academic staff construct the curriculum and students experience it. Therefore, the conceptualisations and enactments of internationalisation of the curriculum vary between disciplines in one institution, and in the same discipline in other institutions. For example, some disciplines are less open to recognising the cultural construction of knowledge than others and the international perspectives required of a nurse or a pharmacist will most likely focus more on socio-cultural understanding than those of an engineer. Some will be more influenced by the requirements of local employers or national professional

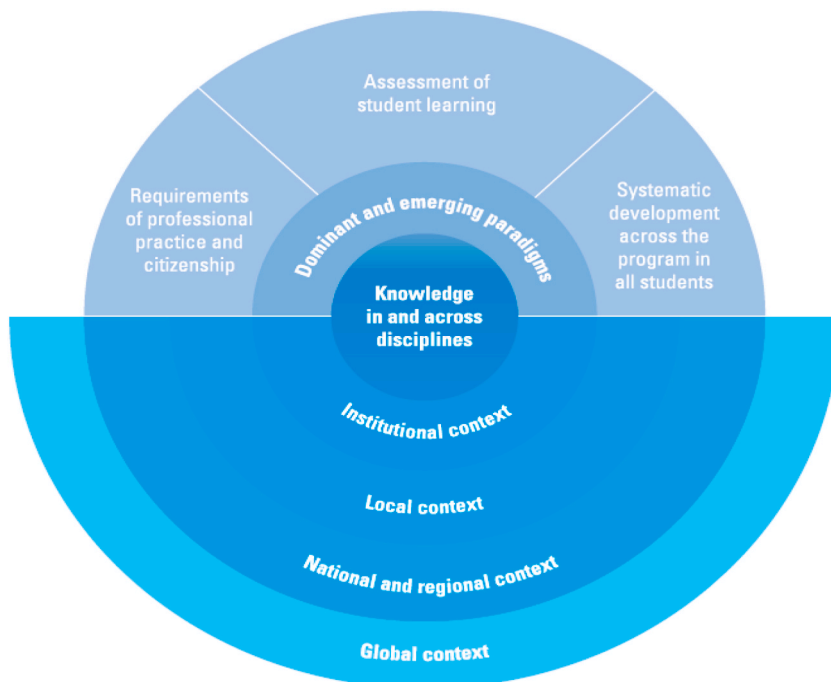


Fig. 1. Framework for internationalisation of the curriculum.

Source: Leask (2009a, 2009b)

associations than others. Leask (2009a, 2009b) framework helps explain the broad definition of curriculum internationalisation as well as the role of the disciplines and academic staff in it. It defined some of the key issues that need to be considered when participating in a specific academic programme in the process of internationalisation of the curriculum.

#### 2.4. The role of academic staff in internationalising the curriculum

The role of academic staff in internationalising the curriculum cannot be over-emphasized. Foster and Carver (2018) argued that while the management set the policy for the internationalisation, the academic staff should lead the internationalisation of the curriculum effort. This is why academic staff development is one of the most significant elements in realising the goals of internationalisation (Leask, 1999). Teaching is a core activity of a university (Athiyaman, 2001) and is central to a student's university experience (Hill et al., 2003). A teacher's competence influences the extent to which students benefit from instruction (Newmann, 1993). Assessment, learning and teaching are at the heart of internationalisation of the formal curriculum. Academic teams and their teaching teams control the formal curriculum; they define it and manage it. Therefore, it is critical for them to be engaged in the process of internationalisation of the curriculum (Leask, 2009a, 2009b).

Previous studies revealed that the effectiveness of the teacher positively influences teachers' engagement in professional learning activities and consequently enriches the quality of the instruction (Geijsel et al., 2009; Goddard et al., 2000; Wheatley, 2002). Another study revealed that lecturers with skills and ability to inspire students can create an "involvement stimulating college" that encourages the best environment for student learning (Vermeulen & Schmidt, 2008). Faculty internationalisation is a requirement for curriculum internationalisation because without faculty interest and knowledge about international business, an international curriculum is unlikely to result (Kwok et al., 1995). Institutions need to focus more on mobilising, training and providing support to faculty members and staff to build up internationalisation knowledge and its readiness if they are to reach their internationalisation goals (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2010).

### 3. Methodology

The study utilised the phenomenological approach. This approach was chosen because it describes the meaning for several individuals' lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (in this case, internationalisation of the curriculum). Moreover, it also describes what participants have in common and is concerned with 'what' individuals experienced and 'how' they experienced it. Since this study was targeted at a particular group of people (academic staff), purposeful sampling was used to select the participants as it selects the most productive sample to answer the research questions. Six (6) participants were selected for this study. Purposive sampling was attempted to ensure balanced gender representation, however, the female lecturers approached were not willing to participate, hence the uneven ratio in the gender of participants. Therefore, the sample consisted of five males and one female; the ratio of gender represented is not reflective of business schools in Malaysia. Table 1 shows the demography of the participants. The ethnicity of the participants was not revealed to protect their identities.

#### 3.1. Data collection procedure

Six semi-structured interview questions were used to collect data from the participants about their perception and experience in internationalising the curriculum. The definition and importance of curriculum internationalisation was first asked to determine participants' understanding of the phenomenon. Consent was obtained in writing prior to the face-to-face interview. The project description and assurance of anonymity was also provided in writing prior to the interview. All but one of the interviews were recorded with permission of the participants. One participant declined to be recorded due to personal reasons. He, however, gave his consent for the notes taken during the interview to be used. The instrument used in recording the interviews was Samsung Note 9.

#### 3.2. Data analysis procedure

The transcribed data was first emailed to the participants for authentication before the analysis was done. This was done in order to ensure the validity of the data. Responses were then sorted into codes (open coding & analytical/axial coding). Code names were developed to closely reflect the particular wording used by participants and were based on the most frequently mentioned words/

**Table 1**  
Summary of Participants Demography.  
Total sample size, n = 6.

ID Number	Gender
Participant 1	Male
Participant 2	Male
Participant 3	Male
Participant 4	Male
Participant 5	Female
Participant 6	Male

phrases. Codes were then grouped into themes. Theme labels were derived from participants' language (e.g., most frequently mentioned word/phase within cluster of codes). The analysis was supported by continuous review of the participant's own words/phrases.

#### 4. Results

The analysis suggested six distinct themes amongst the verbal responses provided by participants. The results are discussed for each question separately. Participant comments are in quotation marks with the participant ID number in brackets.

##### 4.1. Different perceptions of curriculum internationalisation

Participants were asked their definition of internationalisation and the five definitions included curricular with cross cultural content, global content, diversified content, exposure & experience beyond the parameters of local business as well as curricular that relates to the international world (Fig. 2).

Cross-cultural content and global content were the most common themes mentioned by the participants. In the words of a participant, "when you talk about internationalisation of the curriculum, you are talking about a curriculum that has a lot of cross cultural factors in it" (P1). Another participant said an internationalised curriculum is "one that deliver subjects, deliver courses from the different view of people from different countries. It's not only studying about Malaysia, it's more of other countries legal, political, economic issues" (P3). Yet another participant defined internationalisation as "a frame of reference which includes diversity, cultural sensitivity, cultural understanding, exposure and experience beyond the parameters of local business" (P2). What is interesting however is that all these perceptions have one thing in common and that is; a curriculum that equips students' to adapt and function in a global world.

##### 4.2. Importance of internationalisation

In response to the question of the importance of internationalisation of the curriculum, three distinct themes stood out. These were the most frequently mentioned words as given by the participants' and they include being global citizens, knowledge and skills, and workforce diversity. These are explained in details.

###### 4.2.1. Global citizens

One of the importance of internationalisation is the need for graduates to be global citizens. Due to globalisation and integration, especially as businesses presently are international in nature, there is the need for graduates to strive to be global citizens, so they can

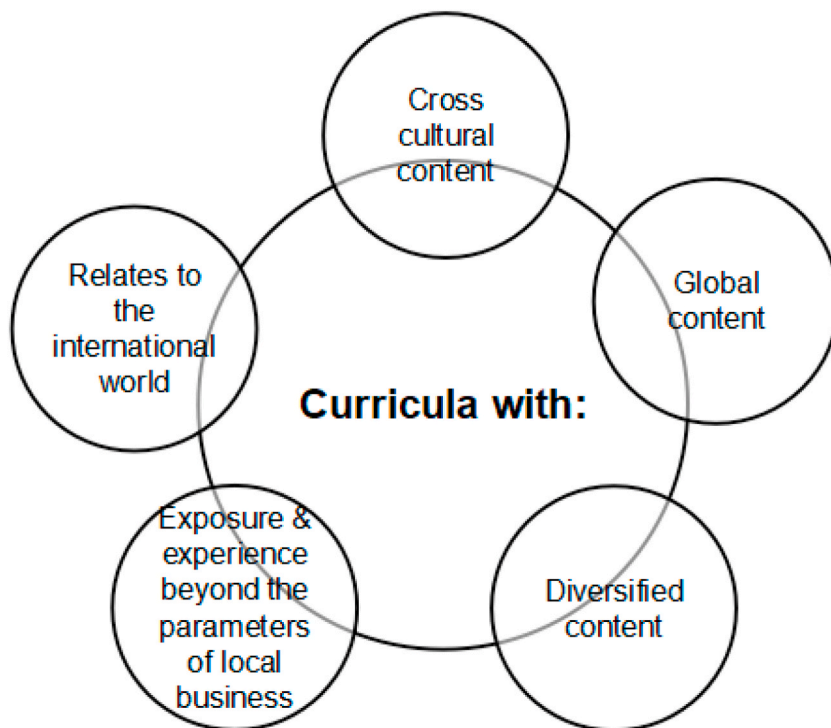


Fig. 2. Academic staff perceptions of internationalisation.

hold their own, no matter where they find themselves. One of the participants said *“with the whole talk about globalisation, with the need for students to be global citizens for them to be able to work beyond their own borders, we cannot underestimate the importance of internationalisation”* (P2). Likewise, another participant supported this when he said *“due to globalisation, all graduates need to have the intensive knowledge about other countries and other regions especially as business nowadays is international business”* (P4).

#### 4.2.2. Knowledge and skills

Another importance of internationalisation of the curriculum is knowledge and skills. This includes the ability to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary for them to excel. Academic staff achieve this by training the students' in preparation for the future, broadening their perspective and increasing their knowledge about other countries. Since the content of the curriculum would be the instrument to train the students', it is important to internationalise it. One participant said that internationalising the curriculum is *“a way of exposing students to uncertainty about the whole world”* (P1). Yet another participant believes that *“internationalisation is very important in terms of broadening the students' perspective of what's happening”* (P5).

#### 4.2.3. Workforce diversity

Finally, workforce diversity is another importance of internationalising the curriculum. These days, a lot of multinational companies hire from different background and different cultures, so they need people who will be able to function in a multicultural environment. According to one participant, *“people are working in companies that are multinational and these companies need people from different culture, different background, and different experience”* (P1).

### 4.3. Implementation of internationalisation in the curriculum

Participants' comments describing how internationalisation is implemented in the curriculum were grouped into four areas namely: teaching & learning, integration of students/activities, industry exposure and through staff experience and students' experience.

#### 4.3.1. Teaching & learning

Most participants identified teaching and learning which included textbooks, blackboard and online modules [Table 2](#). The faculties make use of these to improve the knowledge of the students. The blackboard is an online platform where staff upload interactive materials for the students. So students' get to access the materials they need and when they need it, thereby promoting self-learning. A participant offered *“we get textbooks from the UK, US, and when students read these books, they will see examples of what is happening in other countries”* (P1). Students' analysis of international case studies relating to the subject is one way of exposing them to what is happening in the world. Students analyse as well as present these case studies in class.

Other ways of internationalising the curriculum include through cross-cultural discussion, videos, study abroad programme and student exchange programme. One participant said *“in most of these subjects, or in most of the modules within the faculty of business, we make it mandatory for them (lecturers) to have a Harvard business case study. So in assignments, there should be evidence to demonstrate that lecturers have got an international case study or any kind that is as reputable as Harvard business case study”* (P2). The faculty also has the student study abroad programme where students go out to other associate campuses to study for one semester and then return back to their institution to continue their studies. Within that semester abroad, students' get to learn about the culture of people different from theirs, interact, form friendships and most especially explore the world. One participant said *“that one semester does enrich the students' life; it does widen the students' scope. They have seen how students from other countries are learning. So this is a very good exposure for them but unfortunately, the number of students going out to join this programme are limited”* (P6).

**Table 2**  
Implementation of internationalisation in the curriculum in summary.

Teaching & Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● International case studies</li> <li>● Cross-cultural discussion</li> <li>● Textbooks</li> <li>● Blackboard</li> <li>● Online modules</li> <li>● Videos</li> <li>● Presentations</li> <li>● Study abroad programme</li> <li>● Student exchange programme</li> </ul>
Integration of Students/Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Composition of the students</li> <li>● Group work/Intercultural groups</li> <li>● Extracurricular Activities</li> </ul>
Industry exposure Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Business Leadership Series</li> <li>● Staff Experience</li> <li>● Students' Experience</li> <li>● International staff</li> </ul>

#### 4.3.2. Integration of students/activities

Internationalising the curriculum is achieved by the integration of the students through activities. The composition of the students working in groups is another form of internationalisation. There are both local and international students in the faculties and they could learn from each other. One participant captured this perfectly, *“we do have a lot of international students in our programme. This is a very good way of students mingling with students from other culture. When they mingle, when they work in groups, when they meet socially, they do have an exposure from people from different culture”* (P1). Also by having cross cultural discussion between students from different campuses in Mexico, Bangkok, China and sometimes among all campuses in Malaysia, internationalisation is embedded in the curriculum.

#### 4.3.3. Industry exposure

The universities have the business leadership series where Heads of businesses are invited to address the students. This is known as industry exposure and it's a way of bringing the industry to the classroom. One participant said *“these people come in to give talks to students and when they speak about their experiences, this is another way of internationalising our programme”* (P5).

#### 4.3.4. Experience

Finally, internationalisation is implemented through the sharing of staff and students' experiences. When staff and students share their experiences in class, it becomes more interesting and the students really gain from each other. According to one participant, *“the students do bring out a lot of things happening in their countries, so the classroom becomes wider in a sense because when I teach the students, it is more from my perspective, so when students share their experiences, they are not only sharing to me but to all the other thirty students in the class. So the class will become livelier”* (P1). Another participant submitted, *“the lecturers own experience studying abroad; the lecturers own exposure in terms of doing research and presenting researches overseas; the lecturers individual experience, that also enhances the students' horizon and expands the students' frame of reference”* (P2).

#### 4.4. Staff engagement in internationalising the curriculum

Staff are engaged from the beginning i.e. from the designing of the curriculum and all through the implementation process. There is a process universities would have to go through before developing a curriculum. Fig. 3 explains this better.

Firstly, the university gets feedback from companies. This type of feedback helps the university to know what employers expect from graduates. The companies invited by the universities are actually multinational companies whose staff come from different backgrounds so whatever feedback gotten from them will help in strengthening the curriculum. Staff from these companies make up the industry advisory group which has a panel. They give their views or comments regarding the design of the curriculum, then the faculty make changes where necessary. According to a participant, *this is one way of getting feedback because they are already in the industry, so giving feedback of their current expectation of graduates who they want to work for them will in a way help us to design the curriculum”* (P1).

Moreover the faculty gets feedback from the lecturers on a continuous basis as well as feedback from students. What this shows is that the curriculum is not static; it can be changed from semester to semester depending on the needs and when it is required. Therefore, academic staff are engaged through four ways namely, feedback, designing the modules, updating the course structures and lecturing. While some are selected for designing the modules, all the academic staff update the course structures of the modules they are teaching as well as carry out the lecture. In designing the marketing modules for example, one faculty has a team of marketing lecturers who are involved in designing the modules even though one lecturer will be in charge of teaching that particular module. Other ways the academic staff are also engaged is by updating the course structures; *“The course structure is routinely updated by us. We update the learning outcomes and the textbooks from time to time”* (P3). So how does the faculty make sure there is no overlapping in designing the modules? A participant has the answer to that. He says *“we do have to compare with the other modules because we have to ensure that there is no overlapping. Even the textbooks we use, we do not want the lower level to use the same textbook as the higher level for example. That is how we come up with the module”* (P6).

#### 4.5. Types of training available in executing an internationalised curriculum

The question on what type of training is available to academic staff yielded some results as shown in Fig. 4. Some of the participants mentioned that they do have internal training or short courses to make the learning experience more interactive. For academic staff, especially those who are involved in designing courses, the faculty organises short courses for them. One participant said; *“they actually organise short courses for us to understand how to better use blackboard. Our first experience of blackboard usually is how we upload materials. The next is how to design and use different features in blackboard to make the learning experience more interactive”* (P3).

Another type of training is that from partner universities, where a staff from partner universities organise workshops for the



Fig. 3. Ways of engaging academic staff in internationalising the curriculum.

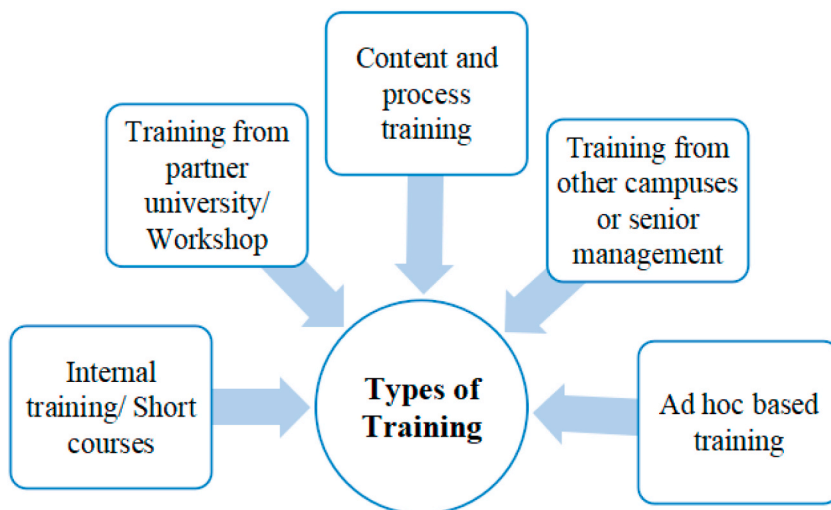


Fig. 4. Types of training available in executing an internationalised curriculum.

lecturers. For example workshops on supervising final year students’ writing their thesis, about the ethics, form and other issues the faculty faces. A participant said; “they request from us the areas of training that we require and then they came up with the programme” (P1). Some lecturers need content and process training. For instance how well can they search for case studies and what kind of case study is an international one; how to make their courses more internationalised. However, the faculty is focused more on process training than on the content part of training. Like one participant puts it; “what we have done is we have started to train lecturers on process. With the assumption, the word is assumption that they are content experts. They should know accounting can be internationalised; maybe that’s the gap. That’s the gap probably we should start to address now. While we are doing a good job in the process part of the training, we should also start paying more attention in identifying needs of the content part” (P2).

Likewise, one faculty also invites some staff from other campuses or even some senior management to have one or two hour lectures on teaching and learning. Worth mentioning is that these training are on Ad hoc bases. The faculty conducts these training only when there is a need for it. One participant gushed “actually training is on ad hoc bases. We don’t say this semester we are having one. When we find there is a need, then of course we conduct meetings like that” (P1). However, some participants are of the opinion, that even though training is done from time to time, there is no formal training on how to internationalise the curriculum. Hear a participant, “formal training on internationalisation? I think it has been left to the lecturers to see how they can incorporate this issue into their teaching” (P5). Yet another participant said “there is no training on internationalisation. I can say this is based on experiences. You know when we attend workshops, seminars, conferences, we get feedback and suggestions from colleagues from other universities. We don’t really have a specific unit or department that focuses on this internationalisation of the curriculum” (P4).

4.6. Challenges in internationalising the curriculum

This study uncovered some challenges faced by students, faculty/staff, and business schools in internationalising the curriculum in Malaysia. These include teaching and learning challenge, resource challenge, learner/origin of students and resistance to change (Table 3).

**Table 3**  
Summary of the challenges in internationalising the curriculum.

Teaching & Learning challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecturers’ lack of exposure</li> <li>• Foreign Lecturers’ Accent</li> <li>• Time</li> </ul>
Resource challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students’ limited knowledge</li> <li>• Costly textbooks</li> <li>• Cost of semester study abroad programmes</li> </ul>
Learner/origin of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visa</li> <li>• Uncertain about students’ experiences</li> <li>• Independent students</li> </ul>
Resistance to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecturers resistance to change</li> <li>• Readiness of students to accept change</li> </ul>



#### 4.6.1. Teaching and learning challenge

The first challenge in internationalising the curriculum is that of teaching and learning. This includes lecturers' lack of exposure, foreign lecturers' accent and time. Whether universities are able to project a fully internationalised curriculum must be dependent on the individual lecturer. Here, one participant said *"we believe that globalisation is here to stay. We believe that the students need to have different perspectives, we believe that they need to broaden their mind but the challenge is that some of the lecturers may not have the experience and know-how to incorporate internationalisation into their teaching"* (P1). Another participant said *"some of the lecturers may not have the exposure to broaden their horizons. So how much can you expect from them to impact that into their teaching?"* (P2).

Besides, the accent of foreign staff pose a challenge as students complain that they can't understand the lecturer the first two semesters after they are hired. Likewise, time in executing an internationalised curriculum is another challenge. One participant summed it up thus *"for lecturers, their time is generally spent in a couple of areas, for example in the area of teaching and research. In the area of teaching, they have to design courses, they have to execute classes as well as grade students, either from a coursework or exam. Consequently a lecturer's life and his workload and the number of students and how much time he has to design courses play a part"* (P6).

#### 4.6.2. Resource challenge

Another challenge associated with curriculum internationalisation is resource challenge. This includes the high cost of good textbooks, the cost of semester study abroad programmes and that of visa procurement for both students and staff. In the semester abroad programme, although students pay their own local tuition fee, thereafter they go to any western country for the experience, they still spend a lot in costs. In countries like France, the United Kingdom and Germany for example, the students have to pay a lot for lodging, food, daily expenses and flight ticket. Therefore not every student can afford to go to Germany or France; this means that only a small number of students can enjoy that and not the whole population of the students. A participant said *"Only a small percentage of students can afford to go to Germany and other countries. I've talked to students, they spend something like RM20 to RM30,000 to go and study for just one semester"*. (P1).

#### 4.6.3. Learner/origin of students

Learner/origin of students is yet another challenge to internationalisation. When international students share certain things about their culture in class, lecturers will not be aware or know how right or wrong that information is. This is a challenge because even when the lecturers accept that information in good faith, at the end of the day, they still have to find out how true that information is. Also, there are students who are very independent in class. While some students will want the lecturer to go into details and lecture them exactly from the book, some students are totally different and would read certain things themselves rather than the lecturer telling them. One participant said *"In my class, if there are ten of such independent students and another twenty students want to be spoon-fed, it's quite difficult to balance both"*. (P1).

#### 4.6.4. Resistance to change

Finally, resistance poses a challenge to internationalisation. In any change process, there is always resistance. People will not want to do it until they are convinced that this is what they should do. One participant said *"lecturers are by and large in their comfort zones. Some say they have been teaching this way for the last ten or fifteen years and its working, so why should they change or try something different"* (P4). So the challenge is how to inculcate the trend and the culture or even the practice of embracing internationalisation concept into their teaching and learning. Likewise, some students do not like cross-cultural discussion with other campuses. This is because of the kind of response the faculty gets. Few students turn up when they are informed of cross-cultural discussion with other campuses. Also when a guest speaker is invited from overseas, not many are excited about listening to a different point of view. One participant said *"internationalisation is quite challenging not only from the perspective of making lecturers to embrace it, it's also challenging in terms of making students to appreciate the content of internationalisation in their curriculum"*. (P2).

## 5. Discussion

This study was set out to investigate the experience, perception, and challenges of internationalisation of the curriculum among academic staff of Malaysian Universities' business faculties. The study was motivated by the growing trend in global recruitment among multinational companies in addition to the need to prepare students who are the would-be applicants of these multinationals for the global labour market. Malaysia has the third largest number of international students in Asia and is ranked 12th among the top 20 countries for international students according to UNESCO Institute for Statistics ([The Guardian, 2014](#)). Beside the growing number of international students studying in Malaysia, a good number of Malaysian students are increasingly seeking employment overseas or with multinational companies as well. Hence, the internationalisation of the curriculum is essential to cater to the learning needs of this growing, culturally diverse group of students in Malaysian Universities, particularly those in business faculties. This is because, the business students of today are being prepared for a global business environment that is getting increasingly dynamic and diverse.

The participants' (academic staff) in this study, demonstrated a passable understanding of the phenomenon under review which is *the internationalisation of the curriculum* which were consistent with the conceptualisation put forward by scholars in the literatures reviewed. This showed that a good number of the academic staff are familiar with the concept of internationalisation of the curriculum. However to have the *knowledge* about a phenomenon does not necessarily mean that one has the *knowhow*; this was one of the interesting findings of this study. According to the findings from this study, the academic staff who are the main actors in the curriculum design and implementation lack the proficiency required to internationalise their courses even though they *know* what internationalisation of the curriculum means. Though the participants indicated that they had gone through some trainings, the author

discovered after probing further, that the trainings were mostly on general teaching and not deliberately designed to build staff capacity on internationalisation of the curriculum. For instance, some of the participants hinted that they still find it difficult to adapt their curriculum to accommodate diverse business contexts necessary to equip the students for a global business environment.

Meanwhile, some of the IoC strategies adopted towards internationalisation of the curriculum in Malaysia business faculties include – use of text books by American and UK authors, use of international case studies, from sources such as Harvard business case studies, teaching and learning activities, group classroom activities, study abroad programmes, and student exchange programmes. These IoC strategies are akin to the findings of Foster and Carver (2018) in a similar study conducted in selected Management and Business schools in Scotland. However, in Malaysia, the study abroad and student exchange programmes which offer the best opportunity for students to experience other national cultures and broaden their horizons is not very popular among the students due to the high financial cost implications. Also, while the use of international case studies can help incorporate international and intercultural dimension into the content of the curriculum, the lack of pedagogical competences required to implement the curriculum by the staff undermines the realisation of learning outcomes of an internationalised curriculum such as – expanding the students' frame of reference, and develop students' international and intercultural perspectives among others. This is one of the important challenges in internationalisation of the curriculum in Malaysian business faculties – the academic staffs lack the proficiency required to design and implement an internationalised curriculum. As Newmann (1993) rightly pointed out, teachers' competence influences the extent to which students benefit from instruction, and this is precisely why Leask (1999) maintained that staff development is one of the most significant elements in internationalisation. Internationalisation of the curriculum cannot be complete without adequately trained teachers to implement it.

Therefore, given the crucial role played by academic staff in curriculum design and implementation such as designing of modules, updating the course structures and lecturing among others, it is pertinent for them to be well trained and directly engaged in the process of internationalisation of the curriculum. Foster and Carver (2018) rightly contended that while the management set the policy for the internationalisation, the academic staff should lead the internationalisation of the curriculum effort. For this to be realised in Malaysia business faculties, there is need for deliberate trainings focused on building the academic staffs' capacity in the internationalisation of the curriculum. With well trained and proficient academic staff in internationalisation of the curriculum, the students will be well equipped for an increasing culturally diverse workplace and a dynamic global business environment. This is crucial because, as more multinational companies adopt and promote the ideals of workforce diversity – with workforce being drawn from different cultures, background and nationalities, the ability to function effectively in a multicultural environment will become more relevant in global recruitment. Hence, curriculum internationalisation is essential for preparing Malaysian business faculty students for this new and dynamic work environment of the 21st century.

## 6. Recommendations and Conclusion

One of the recommendations for curriculum internationalisation would be the provision of regular formal training on internationalisation for all academic staff. The training has to be objective-driven and take the international context of the curriculum into account. These trainings should be fixed in order to guarantee the needed competencies of academic staff as well as to promote consistency. Additionally, the university should provide opportunities for lecturers to be more exposed to internationalisation. This could be in form of allowing lecturers to teach in other faculties or in other countries. This could be a great way of exposing them and not restricting them to one particular area. When lecturers are restricted to one area, they tend to think that they are restricted to that area and therefore their experiences are also restricted to that area. By making lecturers more internationalised by sending them abroad or sending them to teach in another faculty, they will be exposed and their horizons broadened. Also universities need to boost staff collaboration with other universities. Although online interaction is been done, it should be taken a step further by encouraging face-to-face interaction whereby staff needs to travel to meet staff from other countries and vice-versa.

Finally, with regards to study abroad programmes, this study discovered that only a small percentage of students can afford to go to Germany and other countries for semester abroad programmes because of the cost associated with it. Therefore, instead of looking into western countries, maybe the university can send the students to China, Thailand or any of the neighbouring countries where the cost will be more affordable. This way, more students can experience the different culture in the different countries. Universities should encourage their students to study abroad because international experience plays a significant role in educating future generations of professionals about other cultures for better interaction in today's increasingly global age. One of the participants believed that internationalisation of the curriculum is not well defined, stays as a philosophy and not grounded for practicality yet. By taking steps to strengthen and internationalise their curriculum, universities will be in a better position to develop graduates who are globally aware and interculturally competent.

### Author statement

Uchechi Cynthia Ohajionu: Abstract, Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusion. Writing- Reviewing and Editing.

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