

Leadership in the reform of Malaysian universities: analysing the strategic role of the Malaysian Qualifications Agency

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This paper addresses the contemporary development and reform challenges in tertiary education in Malaysia in both national and global contexts. The critical role exercised by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency in driving strategic change in higher education cultures, both in public and private universities is described and analysed. The paper examines the adoption, generation and institutionalisation of global standards of practice in teaching and learning and in other fundamental dimensions of the provision of quality education. Contending ideas, rationales and models of universities and the contributions this institution makes to educational provisions are examined. The analyses are informed by the development reforms in other sectors of government and society within the integrated framework of the nation's strategic vision of development – Vision 2020.

Keywords: educational development; higher education; higher education reform; Malaysia; Malaysian Qualifications Agency; quality

As Malaysia has developed as a nation, there has been a series of governmental initiatives which evolved to comprise an overarching framework for development. Among the overarching policies were the policies of privatisation and corporatisation (Ahmad Sarji, 1994). In the education sector, early initiatives included fostering privatisation and corporatisation of public universities, and the establishment of a National Higher Education Funding Council and a Quality Assurance Agency to regulate the establishment of private education providers and to introduce a quality assurance regime. Over time, the Malaysian Qualifications Agency has assumed an increasingly significant role in driving strategic change in higher education cultures, both in public and private universities.

The national quality journey in higher education – Malaysian higher education trends: 1995 to 2010

In the mid-1990s there was an initial articulation of the notion of transforming Malaysia into a centre of excellence in higher education. Simultaneous with the introduction of the idea of Malaysia as a centre of educational excellence was the idea of the democratisation of higher education. With increasing demand for places in higher education, governmental and civil service leaders realised that the government alone could not continue to

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