

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**CHALLENGES FACED BY INTERNATIONAL
POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AT AN INSTITUTION
OF HIGHER LEARNING: A CASE STUDY**

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Education (TESL)

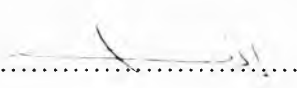
Faculty of Education

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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the regulations of University Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the result of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This dissertation has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any other degree or qualification.

In the event that my dissertation be found to violate the condition mentioned above, I voluntarily waive the right of conferment of my degree and agree to be subjected to the disciplinary rules and regulations of University Teknologi MARA.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the challenges faced by international postgraduate students in institutions of high learning. The international students were studying at Universiti Teknologi Mara in Shah Alam, Malaysia. This thesis investigated the reasons why international postgraduate students chose UiTM as an institution of high learning to pursue their studies. In addition, the study investigated the challenges faced by these international postgraduate students and the causes of those challenges as well as their coping strategies. Data was collected through participant observation, and interview sessions. The participants of the study were fifteen international postgraduate students and five Malay students who were their classmates. In addition, two lecturers were purposefully selected for interview sessions. It was found that the two main reasons for international students to choose UiTM, are UiTM being a public university and also because it is an Islamic university. Three challenges faced international students in studying here include academic, social, and emotional challenges. Lack of preparation appeared to be the main cause for those challenges. However, international postgraduate students generally used appropriate coping strategies since the majority of them used focused-problem solving strategies where they attempted to make the necessary changes and faced those challenges. In conclusion, the findings reveal that international students still need a lot of support from this institution in helping them to complete their studies. Further research might look into the benefits which international students obtain in studying abroad. In addition to that, further research on this topic includes in depth details on other variables such as gender, age, nationality, and how stands in contrast to another.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Studying abroad is not an easy task and that is truth in the case of international students. That is clearly stated or investigated by a number of researchers (H. Yu, Chick, Morais, and Lin 2008, Bang 2009) around the world. International students face a lot of challenges when they decide to further their studies outside their own countries. Some of them are very successful in adjusting to their new environment or new society. They have managed to fit in easily. In contrast, there are many who have come back without anything in their hands. That is due to different challenges which they have had to go through during their studies abroad. The challenges come in many forms-cultural, languages, values and many others, and these can be different from those of their own countries (culture differences, language as second or foreign and etc).

Most of the universities around the world have already started setting new initiatives for attracting more international students to study in their universities. That can be for several reasons for instance, academic reasons, economic reasons and etc (Shekarchizadeh and Rasli, 2011)

Academic reasons relate to benefits which international students bring with them as they enter their universities. These can be in terms of the university ranking among other universities and new experiences or skills which international students already have. As stated by Salmi (2007) "Preoccupations about university rankings reflect the general recognition that economic growth and global competitiveness are increasingly driven by