

**STRATEGIES IN DEVELOPING A BALANCED MUTUAL RECOGNITION AGREEMENT:  
INTERNATIONALIZATION AND OUTCOMES**



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## 5.2 Enhanced Executive Summary

The Malaysian international education sector has developed enormously throughout the past decade and Malaysia is becoming a centre of quality educational in the region. The country currently has more than 50,000 international students from more than 100 countries (MOHE, 2011). Malaysia offers quality international education at an affordable cost. Besides the fairly low cost of education, many choose to study here because they recognize Malaysia as an ideal opportunity to expand their Asian network and relationships (MOHE, 2011).

The onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century along with increasing globalization has inevitably altered the social, political, and economic landscapes of countries in the world (Raja Suzana, 2010). The rapid advancement of information system technologies such as the internet and telecommunication tools has permanently changed the very foundation of education and acquisition of knowledge (Raja Suzana, 2010). In such a scenario the resourceful handling of knowledge has appeared as a cornerstone of competitive edge. It has been frequently underscored that the efficient management of knowledge is more treasured and more influential compared to other factors and means of economic production (Stewart, 1997).

A logical consequence of the changing situation is the implications on educational institutions notably at the tertiary level (Raja Suzana, 2010). Confronted with the stark realities of the changing role of education and the acquisition of knowledge, the education systems in many countries have realigned their education systems to face the new challenges of the new knowledge economy (Raja Suzana, 2010). The situation in Malaysia is no different. Indeed, the Ninth Malaysia Plan exemplifies one of the most noteworthy government blueprints in its effort of shaping a continuous economic progress and improved socioeconomic conditions for the people (Raja Suzana, 2010).

It is quite evident that knowledge has become more crucial among public and private organizations including the institutions of higher learning (IHLs) (Morshidi Sirat, 2009). It has also been pointed out that technological developments also hold the prospect to drastically alter the nature of provision, delivery and trade in higher education (Radin Umar, 2008). The situation of higher education since the 1990s can be best characterized as ever changing with internationalization and globalization (Morshidi Sirat, 2009). Numerous worldwide

influences may have an impact on higher education in both developed and developing countries (Morshidi Sirat, 2009).

In parallel with the internationalization, the government focused on the issue of Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA). MRA is bilateral agreements between qualifying bodies which recognize that the professional qualifications of one partner are substantially equivalent to the corresponding professional qualifications of the other partner (Raja Suzana, 2010). The agreements also recognize that the assessment processes for the award of professional qualifications are substantially equivalent. The agreements provide exemptions from all or part of the assessment process for the professional qualifications, although these are exercised at the discretion of each partner (Raja Suzana, 2010).

Raja Suzana (2010) further argues that HEI needs to make their objectives and practices of internationalization consistent with HEIs vision and policy. One of the best effort is to ensure their strategic resources issues be managed aggressively and proactively. In view of this, HEI must enhance their goals. Recently, there was an increasing demand from ASEAN counterparts, China, Middle East countries and South Africans citizen pursuing their studies in Malaysia (Raja Suzana, 2009). According to Raja Suzana 2009 and 2010, this scenario has grown a serious warning to education sectors in Malaysia that they not only had to improve the quality of their programs and services, but also to enhance their competitiveness. In this involvement and changing environment, the HEI's flexibility in executing relevant elements of mutual agreement appears to be one of the academic's success factors. This flexibility, through the mutual agreement of degrees both academic and professional, nevertheless appears to receive little attention from the past of the academic management (Raja Suzana 2009, 2010).

### **5.3 Brief Literature Review**

Mutual Recognition Agreement is defined as the agreement by two or more institutional bodies to validate each other's degrees, programmes, or institutions and/or affirmation by two or more quality assurance or accrediting agencies that the methodology of the agencies are sound and that the procedures are functioning accordingly. (Vlăsceanu, 2004). Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRA) also considered by Union Internationale des Architectes