



# International Student Mobility Patterns and Trend: The Case of Malaysia

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# AN OVERVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION EXPANSION IN MALAYSIA

- ◉ Expansion and development of higher education since 1957 and marks her appearance as one of the main exporters of her students.
- ◉ 1985 - Malaysia has become the world's third largest exporter of her students.
- ◉ 1970 - 1995 saw an expansion of higher education through the implementation of the NEP.
- ◉ A greater government expenditure for the expansion of higher education.
- ◉ As of 2010, 6.8% of government expenditure was on higher education, compared to 6.6% in 2009 and 5.3% in 2008.
- ◉ 20 public universities, 18 private universities, 4 foreign universities branch campuses 15 private university colleges, and numerous number of public and private colleges.

- ◉ 2009 - student enrollment in public HEI was 437,420 and private HEI was 484,377 This enrollment include all levels of higher education from matriculation to PhD and professional.
- ◉ However, many still opted to go to overseas for their higher education either on their own funding or on scholarships.
- ◉ Malaysia has also set an ambitious target to attract more foreign students in the coming years.
- ◉ In its National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2020, Malaysia has confirmed a target of 100,000 international students by 2010.
- ◉ As of 2009, about 80,750 international students studied in public and private higher education institutions in Malaysia.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER

- to examine the trends and patterns of ISM in Malaysia.

The focus of our study is on inward and outward international student mobility e.i., in the context of those students who travel from one country to the country of the education provider in order to obtain education in a full duration of a course of study in a higher education institution.

# PATTERNS AND TRENDS OF OUTWARD STUDENT MOBILITY

- ◉ Malaysia has a long history of providing scholarships to its students to study abroad.
- ◉ In 1985, Malaysia has become the third largest exporter of her students.
- ◉ However, the number of Malaysian students sent overseas has been dwindling especially after the economic crises of 1986 and 1997.
- ◉ The government had to cut down the outflow of foreign exchange through reducing the number of students sent overseas.
- ◉ Malaysia had to overhauled its policy of sending students abroad and emphasized the need for students to enroll in local institutions.
- ◉ This explained the significant increase in the number of students enrolled in local higher institutions after the 1986 and 1997 economic crises.



**Table 2: Top ten countries of origin of foreign students, 1975 - 2005**

| 1975      |        | 1985      |        | 1995      |         | 2005     |         |
|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|---------|
| Country   | No.    | Country   | No.    | Country   | No.     | Country  | No.     |
| Iran      | 33,021 | China     | 42,481 | China     | 115,871 | China    | 343,126 |
| US        | 29,414 | Iran      | 41,083 | S.Korea   | 69,736  | India    | 123,559 |
| Greece    | 23,363 | Malaysia  | 40,493 | Japan     | 62,324  | S. Korea | 95,885  |
| Hong Kong | 21,059 | Greece    | 34,086 | Germany   | 45,432  | Japan    | 60,424  |
| China     | 17,201 | Morocco   | 33,094 | Greece    | 43,941  | Germany  | 56,410  |
| UK        | 16,866 | Jordan    | 24,285 | Malaysia  | 41,159  | France   | 53,350  |
| Nigeria   | 16,348 | Hong Kong | 23,657 | India     | 39,626  | Turkey   | 52,048  |
| Malaysia  | 16,162 | S. Korea  | 22,468 | Turkey    | 37,629  | Morocco  | 51,503  |
| India     | 14,805 | Germany   | 22,424 | Italy     | 36,515  | Greece   | 49,631  |
| Canada    | 12,664 | US        | 19,707 | Hong Kong | 35,141  | US       | 41,181  |

Source: [www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/2010/rd20\\_10/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/2010/rd20_10/)

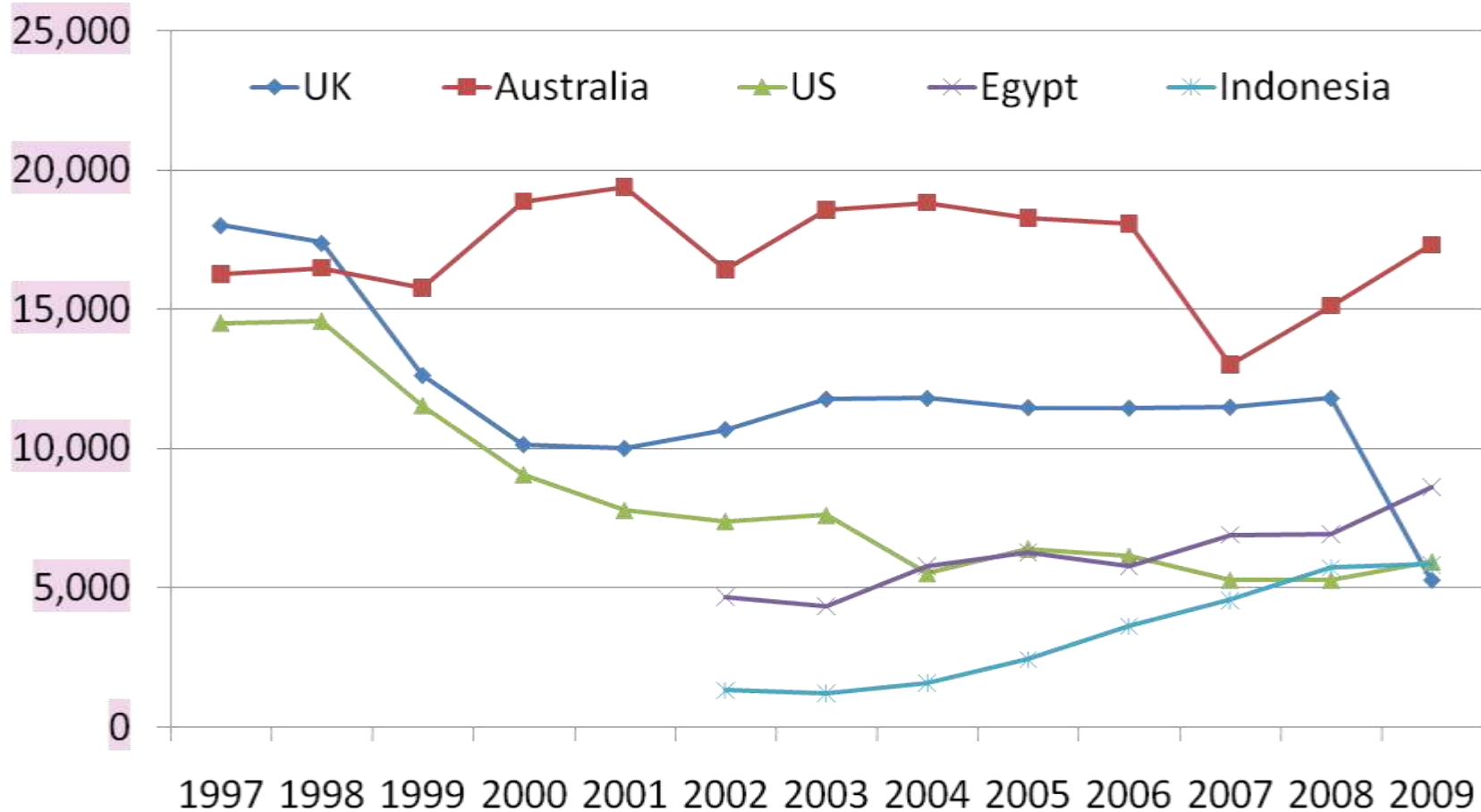
Table 4: Top five countries higher education destination for Malaysian students (1997 - 2009)

| Year | UK     | Australia | US     | Egypt | Indonesia |
|------|--------|-----------|--------|-------|-----------|
| 1997 | 18,015 | 16,257    | 14,527 | NA    | NA        |
| 1998 | 17,380 | 16,485    | 14,597 | NA    | NA        |
| 1999 | 12,632 | 15,767    | 11,557 | NA    | NA        |
| 2000 | 10,140 | 18,868    | 9,074  | NA    | NA        |
| 2001 | 10,005 | 19,385    | 7,795  | NA    | NA        |
| 2002 | 10,680 | 16,431    | 7,395  | 4,664 | 1,337     |
| 2003 | 11,780 | 18,554    | 7,611  | 4,330 | 1,225     |
| 2004 | 11,805 | 18,819    | 5,519  | 5,768 | 1,607     |
| 2005 | 11,475 | 18,262    | 6,411  | 6,256 | 2,444     |
| 2006 | 11,457 | 18,074    | 6,142  | 5,780 | 3,630     |
| 2007 | 11,490 | 13,010    | 5,281  | 6,896 | 4,565     |
| 2008 | 11,810 | 15,124    | 5,281  | 6,912 | 5,735     |
| 2009 | 5,265  | 17,311    | 5,942  | 8,611 | 5,844     |

Source: Verbik, Lasanowski & Lasanowki (2007) and Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia.

- ◉ US, UK and Australia had been the popular destination among the Malaysian students.
- ◉ As of 2009, of those Malaysian students studying overseas, 47.6% enrolled in Australian universities, 23.8% in the UK and 16.2% in the U.S.
- ◉ Of the students who studied abroad, 47.6% were in advanced research institutions and most likely in doctoral programs.
- ◉ The remaining 52.4 were in professional programs geared to prepare graduates for direct entry into the labor market.

**Figure 1: Malaysian student enrolment in US, Australia, UK, Egypt and Indonesia higher education institutions (1997 - 2009)**



# INWARD STUDENT MOBILITY: PATTERN AND TRENDS IN MALAYSIA

# INWARD STUDENT MOBILITY: PATTERN AND TRENDS IN MALAYSIA

- ◉ Malaysia has set an ambitious target to attract more foreign students in the coming years.
- ◉ Thus far, Malaysia has been successful in attracting international students from countries in South-east Asia, the Far East, and the Middle East.
- ◉ As of 2006, Malaysia has an approximate 2% share of the international student market, with around 55,000 foreign students enrolled in the country's higher education institutions.

- ◉ The large majority of them have come from the neighbouring Asian countries of Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Singapore and overwhelmingly, China.
- ◉ However, the pattern has changed recently with more students coming in from Middle East countries.

**Table 5: International students' enrollment in public and private higher education institutions in Malaysia 2002 - 2009**

| Year | Public |        | Private |        | Total  |
|------|--------|--------|---------|--------|--------|
|      | N      | (%)    | N       | (%)    |        |
| 2002 | 5,045  | (18.1) | 22,827  | (81.9) | 27,872 |
| 2003 | 5,239  | (17.2) | 25,158  | (82.8) | 30,397 |
| 2004 | 5,735  | (18.1) | 25,939  | (81.0) | 31,674 |
| 2005 | 6,622  | (16.3) | 33,903  | (83.7) | 40,525 |
| 2006 | 7,941  | (17.9) | 36,449  | (82.1) | 44,390 |
| 2007 | 14,324 | (29.9) | 33,604  | (70.1) | 47,928 |
| 2008 | 18,485 | (26.7) | 50,679  | (73.3) | 69,164 |
| 2009 | 22,456 | (27.8) | 58,294  | (72.2) | 80,750 |

Source: Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia.



**Table 6: Top twenty countries of origin (based on 2009) of foreign students in public higher institutions in Malaysia (2002-2009)**

| Country of origin         | 2002 | 2003  | 2004  | 2005  | 2006  | 2007  | 2008  | 2009  |
|---------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Iran                      | 72   | 120   | 225   | 440   | 736   | 2,049 | 2,945 | 4,002 |
| Indonesia                 | 633  | 1,496 | 1,721 | 1,504 | 1,850 | 3,000 | 3,402 | 3,713 |
| China                     | 118  | 119   | 175   | 282   | 373   | 1,160 | 1,525 | 2,099 |
| Yemen                     | 117  | 219   | 308   | 371   | 457   | 837   | 1,353 | 1,549 |
| Libyan Arab<br>Jamahiriya | 202  | 264   | 191   | 260   | 294   | 456   | 635   | 1,190 |
| Iraq                      | 105  | 152   | 151   | 166   | 225   | 678   | 972   | 1,164 |
| Thailand                  | 394  | 475   | 360   | 493   | 464   | 719   | 803   | 809   |
| Somalia                   | 58   | 78    | 77    | 155   | 176   | 249   | 496   | 701   |
| Saudi Arabia              | 15   | 8     | 35    | 42    | 65    | 299   | 516   | 656   |
| Sudan                     | 160  | 284   | 237   | 278   | 257   | 432   | 529   | 576   |
| Nigeria                   | 47   | 51    | 76    | 85    | 117   | 258   | 381   | 571   |
| Jordan                    | 108  | 156   | 190   | 240   | 284   | 478   | 544   | 554   |

**Table 6: Continue**

| Country of origin     | 2002         | 2003         | 2004         | 2005         | 2006         | 2007          | 2008          | 2009          |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Singapore             | 195          | 172          | 198          | 256          | 321          | 401           | 402           | 477           |
| Bangladesh            | 103          | 152          | 175          | 187          | 230          | 309           | 341           | 436           |
| India                 | 267          | 139          | 171          | 211          | 209          | 257           | 274           | 325           |
| Palestinian Territory | 26           | 34           | 66           | 106          | 114          | 140           | 208           | 294           |
| Pakistan              | 64           | 74           | 129          | 130          | 137          | 164           | 189           | 207           |
| Brunei Darussalam     | 73           | 81           | 80           | 85           | 94           | 142           | 148           | 70            |
| Maldives              | 25           | 37           | 55           | 108          | 124          | 181           | 209           | 70            |
| Oman                  | 52           | 27           | 59           | 71           | 89           | 133           | 137           | 158           |
| Other countries       | 2,211        | 1101         | 1,056        | 1,152        | 1,325        | 1,982         | 2,476         | 2,635         |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>5,045</b> | <b>5,239</b> | <b>5,735</b> | <b>6,622</b> | <b>7,941</b> | <b>14,324</b> | <b>18,485</b> | <b>22,456</b> |

Source: Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia

Note: Of this figure, 37.6% were from the Middle East Countries in 2008 and 38.8% in 2009.

- It is interesting to note that public higher education institutions have attracted more students from the Middle East countries.
- Of the total number of foreign students studying in public higher education institutions 37.6% were from Middle East countries in 2008, and this number had increased to 38.8% in 2009.

**Table 7: Top twenty countries of origin of foreign students in private higher institutions in Malaysia (2007 -2009)**

| Country of origin      | 2002   | 2003   | 2004  | 2005  | 2006  | 2007  | 2008  | 2009  |
|------------------------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| China                  | 10,731 | 10,230 | 9,075 | 9,035 | 6,937 | 5,308 | 6,452 | 7,078 |
| Iran                   | 174    | 254    | 478   | 741   | 1,048 | 1,629 | 3,659 | 6,930 |
| Indonesia              | 4,098  | 4,138  | 4,799 | 5,362 | 5,691 | 5,454 | 5,896 | 6,099 |
| Nigeria                | 141    | 128    | 305   | 537   | 1,696 | 2,626 | 5,043 | 5,398 |
| Yemen                  | 363    | 469    | 687   | 1,073 | 1,095 | 1,179 | 2,929 | 3,382 |
| Libyan Arab Jamahiriya | 144    | 163    | 139   | 202   | 109   | 149   | 1,153 | 2,831 |
| Botswana               | 152    | 160    | 160   | 206   | 517   | 1,489 | 2,348 | 1,938 |
| Sudan                  | 163    | 223    | 271   | 428   | 654   | 710   | 1,778 | 1,867 |
| Saudi Arabia           | 109    | 128    | 206   | 287   | 460   | 749   | 2,236 | 1,675 |
| Bangladesh             | 723    | 1,984  | 1,460 | 5,525 | 6,287 | 2,197 | 1,680 | 1,521 |

## Table 7: Continue

| Country of origin | 2002          | 2003          | 2004          | 2005          | 2006          | 2007          | 2008          | 2009          |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Pakistan          | 549           | 1,084         | 1,297         | 1,819         | 1,819         | 1,164         | 1,325         | 1,473         |
| Maldives          | 542           | 525           | 565           | 645           | 759           | 886           | 1,156         | 1,153         |
| India             | 689           | 791           | 762           | 997           | 1,163         | 1,093         | 1,039         | 1,010         |
| Sri lanka         | 202           | 348           | 409           | 524           | 716           | 807           | 1,014         | 897           |
| Thailand          | 366           | 406           | 475           | 501           | 480           | 429           | 661           | 870           |
| South Korea       | 321           | 369           | 548           | 644           | 555           | 639           | 1,479         | 828           |
| Tanzania          | -             | -             | -             | -             | -             | 353           | 592           | 821           |
| Kenya             | 156           | 204           | 276           | 400           | 568           | 677           | 729           | 679           |
| Somalia           | 65            | 98            | 203           | 382           | 395           | 447           | 894           | 619           |
| Iraq              | 28            | 31            | 33            | 41            | 92            | 233           | 649           | 548           |
| Other countries   | 3,111         | 3,425         | 3,791         | 4,554         | 5,500         | 6,676         | 7,967         | 10,677        |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>22,827</b> | <b>25,158</b> | <b>25,939</b> | <b>33,903</b> | <b>36,449</b> | <b>33,604</b> | <b>50,679</b> | <b>58,294</b> |

Source: Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia

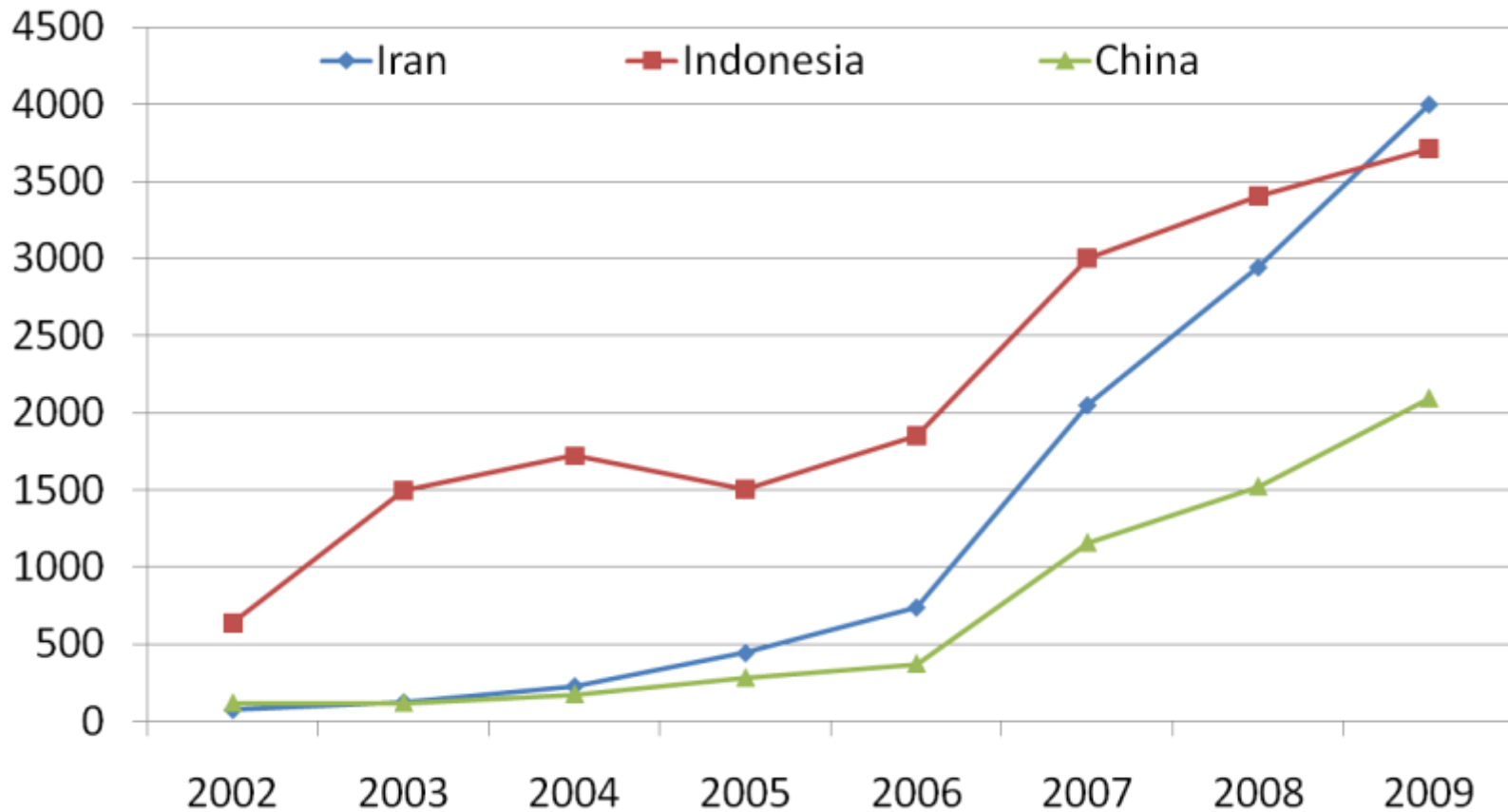
Note: Of this figure, 21.5% were from the Middle East Countries in 2008 and 24.3% in 2009.

**Table 8: International students enrollment by types private higher education institutions (2008 – 2009)**

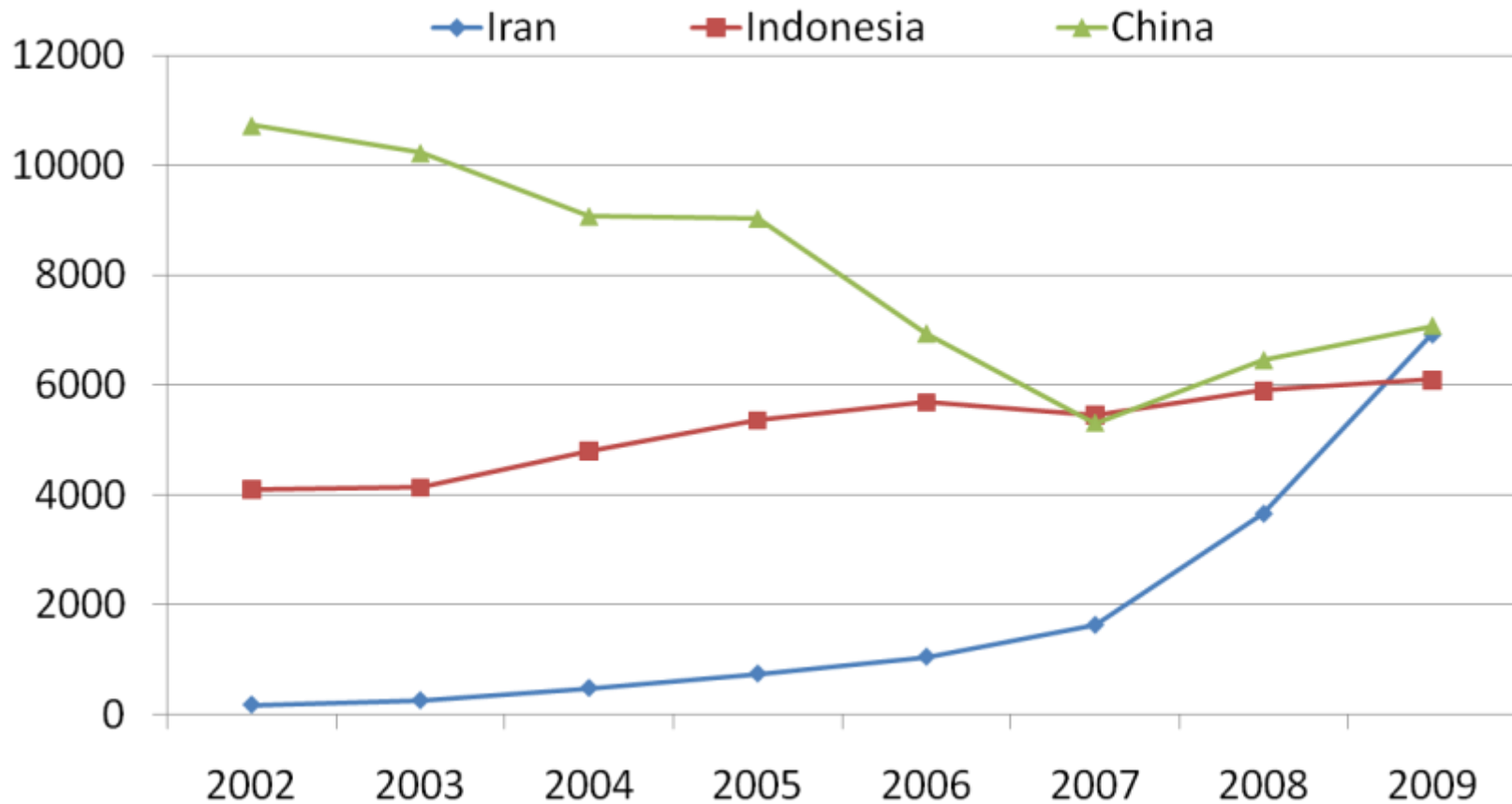
| Types of Private HE institutions       | 2008          | 2009          |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| University                             | 9,564         | 13,816        |
| PHEIs branch campus (university level) | 2,480         | 2,195         |
| Foreign universities branch campus     | 2,937         | 3,721         |
| College universities                   | 13,195        | 14,699        |
| Colleges                               | 22,503        | 23,863        |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>50,679</b> | <b>58,294</b> |

Source: Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia

**Figure 2: Top three contributors of foreign students to public higher education institutions in Malaysia (2002-2009)**

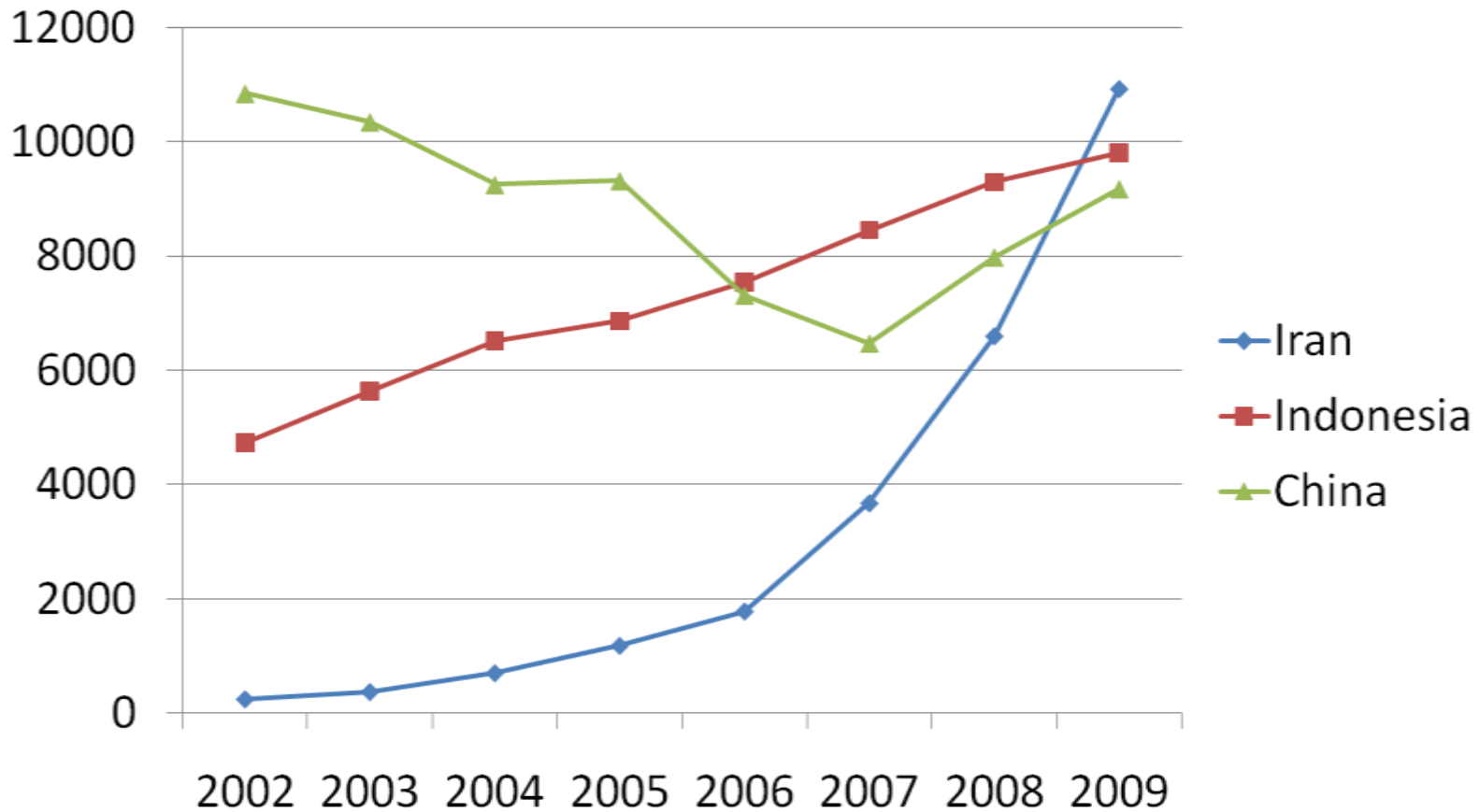


**Figure 3: Top three contributors of foreign students to private higher education institutions in Malaysia (2002-2009)**





**Figure 4: Top three contributors of foreign students to Malaysia's public and private higher education institutions (2002 - 2009)**



- ◉ When combined the total number of international students in public and private higher education institutions, as shown in Figure 4, Iran has appeared as top provider of international students for Malaysia in 2009 with 13.5% of the total.
- ◉ This is followed by students from Indonesia (12.2%) and China (11.4%). It is interesting to note that the number of Iran students has increased at an astounding rate, numbering from only 246 in 2002 to 10,932 in 2009.
- ◉ The number of Indonesian students also increases gradually every year from 4,731 in 2002 to 9,812 in 2009.
- ◉ China on the other hand, shows a significant reduction in student enrollment in Malaysia's higher education institutions from 10,849 in 2002 to 9,177 in 2009.

# CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

- ◉ Malaysia is looking strategically at the Middle East and the Arab Gulf region markets to meet the 100,000 foreign students by 2010 and presently, they form the majority of the international students in Malaysia.
- ◉ However, Malaysia must not forget that the Arabian Gulf countries are also spending a hefty sum of money to upgrade infrastructure and increase capacity and capability.
- ◉ They are also inviting reputable universities from the USA to provide USA-style education in the Arabian Gulf region.
- ◉ Currently, the United Arab Emirates is already hosting 40 international branch campuses, a quarter of all such ventures in the world. Two-thirds of these foreign campuses are located in Dubai International Academic City.

- Like Malaysia, Singapore is also aggressively working towards becoming an education service provider in the region.
- It also aims to increase the number of foreign students studying in Singapore to 150,000 by 2015.
- By 2006, Singapore already hosted over 80,000 international students, and as of 2009 the international student numbers were recorded at 97,000.
- The majority of these students come from mainland China, India, Malaysia and Indonesia.

- The emphasis on turning Singapore into an education hub in the region has become a threat not only to her neighboring countries such as Malaysia (which has a similar mission), but also to Anglophone countries which have been the leaders in international students market.
- Singapore also provides subsidies, scholarships, school fees, loans to reduce the study costs to local and foreign students.
- fairly liberal immigration requirements

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Malaysia is positioned as the “emerging contenders” together with Singapore and Korea in the ISM attracting more than 5% of the world’s international students primarily from the Asia countries.
- Malaysia stand to benefit by marketing the value of their education to an increasingly wide audience” due to their multilingual and multiethnic environments.
- Malaysia is aiming to expand its ISM services by “actively implementing strategic policy designed to transform itself into regional educational leader beyond the region.





# THANK YOU

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**Table 1: Top five source countries for top players in educating foreign students (2005 & 2006)**

| No. | U.S.               | Britain           | Australia           | Germany            | France            | Japan             | Canada             | New Zealand       |
|-----|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1.  | India<br>76,503    | China<br>50,755   | China<br>65,543     | China<br>27,390    | Morocco<br>25,782 | China<br>74,292   | S. Korea<br>12,505 | China<br>26,546   |
| 2.  | China<br>62,582    | India<br>19,205   | India<br>36,078     | Turkey<br>22,419   | Algeria<br>21,552 | S.Korea<br>15,974 | China<br>6,880     | U.S.<br>2,480     |
| 3.  | S. Korea<br>58,847 | Greece<br>17,675  | Malaysia<br>18,074  | Poland<br>15,183   | China<br>15,963   | Taiwan<br>4,211   | Japan<br>4,786     | S. Korea<br>2,094 |
| 4.  | Japan<br>38,712    | Ireland<br>16,790 | Hong Kong<br>16,558 | Bulgaria<br>12,794 | Tunisia<br>9,593  | Malaysia<br>2,156 | U.S.<br>3,782      | Japan<br>2,040    |
| 5.  | Canada<br>28,202   | U.S.<br>14,755    | Indonesia<br>13,025 | Russia<br>11,953   | Senegal<br>9,019  | Vietnam<br>2,119  | France<br>3,560    | India<br>1,886    |

Source: [www.britishcouncil.org/eumd\\_-\\_vision2020.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.org/eumd_-_vision2020.pdf)

**Table 3: Number of Malaysian students studying overseas (2002 - 2009)**

| Country            | 2002          | 2003          | 2004          | 2005          | 2006          | 2007          | 2008          | 2009          |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Australia          | 15,700        | 15,448        | 15,434        | 15,909        | 14,918        | 13,010        | 15,124        | 17,311        |
| UK & Ireland       | 11,970        | 11,860        | 11,041        | 15,189        | 12,569        | 11,490        | 11,810        | 5,265         |
| US                 | 7,395         | 7,611         | 5,519         | 6,411         | 6,142         | 5,281         | 5,281         | 5,942         |
| Egypt              | 4,664         | 4,330         | 5,768         | 6,256         | 5,780         | 6,896         | 6,912         | 8,611         |
| Indonesia          | 1,337         | 1,225         | 1,607         | 2,444         | 3,630         | 4,565         | 5,735         | 5,844         |
| New Zealand        | 995           | 918           | 1,011         | 1,338         | 1,297         | 1,574         | 1,706         | 1,672         |
| Jordan             | 361           | 361           | 310           | 444           | 490           | 655           | 655           | 1,149         |
| Canada             | 231           | 231           | 196           | 230           | 238           | 312           | 543           | 582           |
| Saudi Arabia       | 127           | 125           | 125           | 132           | 138           | 125           | 84            | 84            |
| China              | NA            | NA            | NA            | NA            | NA            | NA            | 1,743         | 2,114         |
| Russian Federation | NA            | NA            | NA            | NA            | NA            | NA            | 2,621         | 2,261         |
| India              | NA            | NA            | NA            | NA            | NA            | NA            | 1,197         | 2,175         |
| Other countries    | NA            | NA            | 2,268         | 8,256         | 8,722         | 11,007        | 5,696         | 5,927         |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>42,780</b> | <b>42,109</b> | <b>43,279</b> | <b>56,609</b> | <b>53,924</b> | <b>54,915</b> | <b>59,107</b> | <b>58,937</b> |

Source: Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia

Notes: NA – Not Available