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Internationalizing Higher Education in Singapore: Government Policies and the NUS Experience

Teofilo C. Daquila¹

Abstract
The internationalization of higher education has become an important policy and research agenda. At the national level, different countries have responded differently with some countries becoming more open than others. At the local level, universities have also reacted differently with some becoming more liberal and innovative than others. Thus, this paper aims, first, to examine the rationale and policies of the Singapore government in internationalizing its higher education, and, second, to determine the corresponding institutional responses of Singapore educational institutions particularly at the university level. The findings show that government policies have been designed, implemented, reviewed, and adjusted to promote student values and attributes, including intercultural awareness and engagement, competitive edge, and global citizenship, through an internationalized curriculum; to meet the country’s manpower and population requirements; and to promote Singapore as an international hub for education. Singapore universities, in particular the National University of Singapore (NUS), have implemented their programs and activities to promote internationalization at home and abroad. Singapore will continue to internationalize its higher education as national borders become more open and as universities become more competitive and innovative.

Keywords
internationalization of higher education, internationalization of the curriculum, Singapore, government policies and rationale, university responses, national university of Singapore

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Introduction

The global economy has become more open and integrated resulting from a significant reduction of barriers to the flow of goods, services, financial capital, technology, information, ideas, and people. In the services sector, higher education has become internationally tradable that has brought about a remarkable increase in the mobility of students, teachers, administrators, programs, and even educational institutions. The internationalization of higher education has thus become an important regular policy issue, not only for universities but also for governments in developed and developing countries (Beerkens, 2004). It has also given rise to new ways of governance that affect both education and economy. According to Knight and De Wit (1995), “internationalisation of higher education is the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of a higher education institution” (p. 17). Edwards, Crosling, Petrovic-Lazarovic, and O’Neill (2003) also point out that “internationalisation, manifested in the increasingly interrelated activities of countries, is a trend that is permeating life at the international, national, and local levels” (p.183). Knight (2008) traces the evolution of the term internationalisation since the 1990s and updates its working definition as follows: “Internationalisation at the national/sector/institutional level” is “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels” (p.21). This paper thus addresses the following questions. First, at the national level, why and how has the Singapore government implemented its policy of internationalizing higher education? Second, at the institutional level, how have universities in Singapore responded to Internationalization of higher education (IHE)?

Higher education in Singapore refers to institutions of higher learning comprising six universities, and five polytechnics and private colleges. The older and more comprehensive universities are the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and the Singapore Management University (SMU). These universities offer full-time degree programs. The more recently established universities are SIM University (UniSIM), the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), and the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD). UniSIM provides opportunities for adults and working professionals to study degree programs that have close linkages with the industry sector. SUTD offers degree programs that integrate design and innovation. SIT offers applied programs that integrate academic requirements with relevant work experiences. These universities, particularly the more established ones, have varying degrees of internationalization policies and experiences at home and abroad. The NUS, being the oldest and most comprehensive among the six universities, is used here as a case study to address the second research question.

Rationale and Government Policies

In Singapore, the internationalization of the higher education is not new. As Daquila (2012a) points out, internationalization has evolved first because of Singapore’s
historical legacy that results in a multiracial society consisting of 5.3 million people with diverse cultures and languages; second, because of Singapore’s adoption of an outward-oriented policy in response to the global forces that has brought about an open economy and business; third, because the education system is constantly changing as it increasingly becomes more creative, innovative, and internationally tradable; and fourth, because of the policy of bilingualism which is an important dimension of Singapore’s internationalization policy. J. Tan, Gopinathan, and Ho (1997) highlight the significance of effective bilingualism (proficiency in the English language and in one’s mother tongue—Chinese, Malay, or Tamil) not only for employment prospects but also to promote and develop a more harmonious and better integrated multicultural Singapore society.

**Internationalizing the Curriculum, Promoting Values, and Graduate Attributes**

Leask (2009) defines internationalization 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 processes and support services of a program of study.” In terms of the intended student outcome, she states that the “internationalisation of the curriculum will purposefully develop the students’ international and intercultural perspectives as global professionals and citizens” (p.209). Several reports prepared by Singapore’s Ministry of Education (MOE; 1966, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2012) and studies (e.g., Gopinathan, 1997; P. T. Ng, 2008a, 2008b; Skolnik, 1976; Wong, 2008) have highlighted the role of the educational system in Singapore including its internationalized curriculum, in promoting the value system and graduate attributes. In Chandran’s (2013) interview with NUS President, Professor Tan Chorn Chuan replied that “I believe that institutions of higher learning have an important role in helping young people develop appropriate social values. This is particularly so in our highly interconnected and globalised world” (p.8).

The MOE (1966) report titled “Progress in Education in Singapore, 1959-1965” underscores the importance of the education system to achieve economic progress and to promote internationalization in a diverse society. The report states that,

The education policy of the Republic of Singapore even as early as 1959 combines education for progress in the twentieth century world with education for national unity ... fostering national consciousness and national unity from among the people so varied in their cultural, linguistic, racial and religious traditions ... While we strive for unity among our peoples we are in happy position to state that we are building attitudes of internationalism. Singapore by its diverse racial composition is a microcosm of the world and therefore in the making of a good citizen we are also paving the way for a kind of world citizenship, the ideal of peace-loving nations of the world. (p.i)

Since the early 1960s, the Singapore government has already emphasized the dynamism of the country’s educational system and the desired attributes of its students and graduates. In a speech delivered at a school anniversary on October 1, 1966, Mr. Ong Pang Boon, then Minister of Education, spoke strongly about
the need for Singapore’s educational policy to change with the times . . . an educational policy that must lay equal emphasis on moral values, civic consciousness, intellectual development and physical prowess . . . to produce a new generation able to shoulder their heavy responsibilities and only by producing such a generation can we claim to have succeeded in our educational policy (MOE, 1966, p.3).

During the 1960s, the Singapore government had stated its national priorities that included (a) establishing a secular, multilingual, and multicultural “Singaporean Singapore”; (b) the need for people to unite, organize, be disciplined, and work hard; and (c) Singaporeans must contribute toward building the national economy (Skolnik, 1976). Singapore’s educational system has been used as a channel to implement these priorities. For example, Gopinathan (1997) cites that “attention has also been paid to devising syllabi that would explicitly teach the values deemed desirable” (p.41). These include “civics” in the 1950s, “Education for Living” syllabus to define an Asian identity (with values like filial piety, social and individual discipline, concern for family, neighborhood, and nation), “Good Citizen,” and “Being and Becoming” courses at the primary and lower secondary levels, and a range of religious knowledge options, including a much-promoted Confucian Ethics course at the secondary level (as essential value system for Chinese Singaporeans), but was replaced by a civics course for a national ideology at the end of the 1980s as Confucian Ethics was seen as having a specific religious and cultural implication. The fostering of Asian or eastern, instead of Western values, was underscored in a report prepared by Australia’s Department of Employment, Education, and Training (DEET; 1996) which states that,

The Government of Singapore has placed a strong emphasis on social or moral education within the school education system. This stresses the needs and values of society as a whole and discourages the adoption of what are seen as western values (such as permissiveness, student radicalism and the ideology of the welfare state) along with western technology. Instead, “eastern” or “Asian” values such as hard work, thrift, honesty, self discipline, family stability and respect, and courtesy towards elders (p.2).

The Asian value system was once again underscored by former Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Lee Hsien Loong when he referred to the

quality of the people the education system produces—their integrity, character, and intelligence; their attitude towards work, their ability to be team-players, and their sense of responsibility and commitment to society. This is the traditional Asian concept of education, embracing balanced development of the whole personality—moral, cognitive, physical, social and aesthetic (P. T. Ng, 2008a, p.5).

With a visionary leadership, the Singapore government has continued to design and implement its pragmatic and dynamic policies in the context of a competitive global economy in the 21st century bearing in mind the desired attributes of its graduates. In response to globalization and the resulting economic competition, Singapore’s former
PM Goh Chok Tong launched the vision of “Thinking Schools, Learning Nation” in 1997, as a “vision for a total learning environment, including students, teachers, parents, workers, companies, community organisations and the government” (P. T. Ng, 2008a, p.2). PM Goh cited the strong points of the American education system for producing graduates who are highly creative and entrepreneurial, well rounded, and innovative resulting from a diverse and challenging curriculum. In 1998, former Minister for Education Teo Chee Hean highlighted the crucial role of education in the 21st century emphasizing that “countries that are able to educate their people to learn and adapt to change more quickly, will distinguish themselves from the rest” (P. T. Ng, 2008a, p.1).

The dynamism of Singapore’s economy and the requisite graduate attributes were once again the subject of a government policy announcement in 2002 when former DPM Tony Tan declared the creation of an interministry committee chaired by Dr. Ng Eng Hen, Minister of State (Education and Manpower). The committee was tasked “to recommend a long-term structure for Singapore’s university sector that would continue to serve Singapore’s requirements as we transit to a new economic structure (MOE, 2003, p.1). This was based on the recognition that “the university sector plays a crucial role in producing graduate manpower to support the new economy that is more dynamic and more demanding of graduates’ ability to adapt, innovate and add value” (p.6).

The government continued to implement educational reforms in the context of providing students with a “more quality, less quantity” and a “whole school experience” package. In 2005, the MOE launched the “Teach Less, Learn More” (TLLM) initiative in response to PM Lee Hsien Loong’s 2004 National Day Rally speech in which he said “We have got to teach less to our students so that they will learn more” (P. T. Ng, 2008b, p.61). Former Minister of Education Tharman Shanmugaratnam highlighted the transformative nature of this initiative in terms of “the quality of learning, quality of CCA and community engagements and the quality of the whole school experience that the student goes through” (P. T. Ng, 2008b, p.61).

The government has designed and implemented a curriculum to broaden students’ knowledge and prepare them for local and overseas education. In 2006, the MOE introduced a broader and more flexible preuniversity curriculum in 2-year Junior Colleges (JCs) aimed at enhancing students “capacity to learn independently” and to think “critically and innovatively” in a multidisciplinary context (Wong, 2008). The new curriculum includes a subject called “Knowledge and Inquiry” which is one of the new areas of learning that explicitly focuses on developing higher order skills: conceptual thinking, other knowledge processes, and communication skills. The new JC curriculum is intended to prepare Singaporean students well for university education, either locally or abroad (MOE, 2002).

The crucial role of education in providing the changing sets of skills in the 21st century was highlighted by PM Lee Hsien Loong at the National Day Rally in August 2011. He spoke about the need to further develop and expand the university sector (MOE, 2012). This resulted in the creation of a review committee headed by Mr.
Lawrence Wong, former Minister of State (Defense and Education). The review’s motivation is to “prepare young Singaporeans for a more dynamic and interconnected future where they will need to be highly-skilled, versatile and resilient, to compete on an equal footing with a highly mobile international talent pool” (MOE, 2012, p.4). The committee recommends, among others, the introduction of a new applied degree pathway, with strong nexus with the economy and should have the following features: “strong theoretical foundations, integration of soft-skills such as communication and cross-cultural skills into the curriculum, innovative applied pedagogy, close collaboration with relevant industries, and excellence in teaching and a high-quality undergraduate research” (MOE, 2012, pp.7-8).

To sum up, Singapore’s dynamic curriculum underscores the need to consider the following desirable outcomes of its students and graduates: intercultural awareness and engagement, transformative experiences, collaborative learning (to work with people from different cultures, to solve complex and multidisciplinary problems), and global awareness (a global mind-set for its students, teachers, and school leaders). To achieve these outcomes, the Singapore government has consistently been investing heavily on education and its various programs and activities. The MOE has intensified its internationalization policy at home and overseas. To internationalize its students abroad, the MOE integrates an overseas learning experience for its students targeted at 10% for primary schools; 25% for technical institutes; 33% for secondary schools, JCs, and polytechnics; and 50% for universities (MOE, 2008b). Teachers and school leaders are also provided with opportunities to travel overseas as part of their schools’ twinning and exchange programs, immersions, and homestays. Internationalization at home includes school activities that integrate international and local students, changes in course and program content, offering various languages, diversifying teaching materials, using computer-based technology, and assessment methods, among others.

Education, Migration, Manpower Requirements, and Population

Several local and international studies have investigated the nexus between Singapore’s education, migration, manpower, and population policies (e.g., Cheung, 1994; Daquila, 2010, 2012b; Garrett, 2005; Ho, 2003; Ho & Ma, 2007; International Business Strategies, 2003, 2005, 2006; Sidhu & Matthews, 2005; Skilbeck & Connelly, 2006; Raffin, 2007; J. Tan, 1999). In general, an international student with a valid student pass to study in Singapore can potentially contribute to Singapore’s labor force and become a permanent resident (PR)/citizen thereby contributing to Singapore’s population.

Without natural resources and being a small economy, Singapore has invested heavily on its human resource development. Singapore’s educational policies and programs and manpower training were implemented to support different phases of Singapore’s economic development in the last 30 years (Cheung, 1994). This has certainly continued since then. Singapore’s higher education aims to “provide quality education for students, and prepare them for their careers; meet the strategic manpower needs of our economy; and produce best-in-class institutions” (MOE, 2009).

In meeting the manpower requirements of the economy, Singapore has increasingly relied on its international students taking into account its aging population and
competition from other countries for foreign talent (Daquila, 2010). One of the recommendations by “an international team of eleven prominent academics from prestigious Japanese, US and European universities” in 1997 was to recruit “undergraduate and graduate students from outside Singapore to meet the economy’s demand for university graduates” (J. Tan, 1999). The potential to become PRs and ultimately citizens of Singapore has indeed attracted a large number of international students, mostly from its traditional source countries such as China, Malaysia, India, and Indonesia, and from other parts of the region.

The government has pursued an aggressive strategy of foreign investments promotion and an immigration policy based on attracting skilled professionals, managers, and entrepreneurs (Ho & Ma, 2007). At the height of the Asian financial crisis, the government promoted a policy of attracting “foreign talent”—skilled personnel to Singapore (Ho, 2003). Ho and Ma (citing Raffin, 2007) further highlight the role of the state in coordinating the development of higher education as an economic strategy. However, they argue that

this state-centered push is in contrast to the experience of other countries, where much of the initiative resides with individual universities where the push to recruit international students is tied to a business strategy to improve university’s finances. The state-centered strategy of attracting student migrants for institutions of higher learning is therefore more coordinated, and is tied to other policy initiatives such as the need to get sufficient manpower to feed high tech, research and development initiatives.

In terms of the contribution to Singapore population, within a space of 20 years, the percentage of nonresident population in Singapore increased from 5.5% in 1980 to 18.8% in 2000. They consist of foreign workers with work permits, skilled pass, employment pass, and their dependents; foreign students; and foreign domestic workers. From its website, the Department of Statistics reports that nonresident population as at June 2012 rose to 28% (or 1.5 million) of its total population of about 5.3 million. Singapore’s resident population was estimated at 3.8 million in June 2012 (comprising 3.3 million citizens and 0.5 million PRs), with 74.2 % Chinese, 13.3% Malays, 9.2% Indians, and 3.3% from other ethnic groups.

In the recent years, however, “the surge of foreign migrants” has become “one of the biggest sources of contemporary challenges/unhappiness among Singaporeans” (Mahbubani, 2013). With the tightening of Singapore’s immigration policies in late 2009, the number of new PRs fell from an average of 58,000 from 2004 to 2008, to 28,500 per year from 2010 (Phua & Toh, 2012). The National Population and Talent Division attributes the significant drop in the number of PRs to a number of factors including (a) the tightened immigration policy aimed at raising the quality of immigrants in terms of higher educational levels, (b) death, (c) people losing their PR status, and (d) PRs being absent from Singapore for more than 12 months (Hong, 2011). M. Ng (2012) also reports that it would be “harder now for foreign investors to get PR” with the tightening of the criteria for the Global Investor Program targeting entrepreneurial investors abroad, and with the announced scrapping of the Foreign Investor Scheme targeting wealthy foreigners—both schemes provide a fast track to permanent residency in Singapore.
Other policy measures that have affected the number of foreign workers in Singapore are (a) an increase in the salary threshold for midtier foreign workers who are on Skilled Pass from (Singapore) S$1,800 to S$2,000 and (b) an increase in the foreign worker levy rates (Kok, 2011). The Singapore International Chamber of Commerce has “called on the government to review the policies” and “suggests that the measures which apply to all sectors in a standard form, be fine-tuned and tailored for specific industries” (Yahya, 2011, p.A4). For their part, the small and medium Enterprises (SMEs) association, which represent some 6500 SMEs, has urged the government to reconsider its tightened immigration policy particularly that which applies to lower skilled foreign workers as some SMEs may not be able to function optimally, and will be forced to downsize or shut down (Low, 2013). To make up for the dip in foreign workers, the government has been upgrading the skills of the Singaporean workforce (Kor, 2010). Singapore will continue to rely on foreign talent to help meet the deficit arising from Singapore’s low fertility and to gain “from the brain power and cultural diversity which the highly educated and talented migrants” (Koh, 2012).

Promoting Singapore as Education Hubs

Several studies have examined the increasing role of Singapore as an education hub in the Asian region (e.g., Chan & Ng, 2008; Daquilla, 2012b; Garrett, 2005; Gopinathan & Lee, 2011; International Business Strategies, 2003, 2005, 2006; Pak & Tan, 2010; Skilbeck & Connelly, 2006; E. C. Tan, 2008; Waring, 2013).

The policy by several Asian countries to promote themselves as education hubs has two major prongs: first, to arrest the export of their own students; and second, to attract foreign students (Skilbeck & Connelly, 2006). As an importer of foreign education (or equivalently, exporting their own students), Singapore has proved to be a major source of students for foreign universities, given its emphasis on education and human resource development. The International Business Strategies (2003), emphasizing Singapore’s focus on its people as the only economic resource, state the following:

Although Singapore may not offer a huge market for US schools, it offers impressive quality. Universities have found Singaporean students to be serious, disciplined learners who helped to advance the quality of academic and campus life. In addition, Singaporeans experience no language or cultural difficulties on American campuses as they come from a cosmopolitan city where English is both the lingua franca and the medium of instruction in local schools. There are ample opportunities for US universities and colleges to attract more students from Singapore into their undergraduate and graduate programs, particularly business administration, marketing, economics, information technology, science and engineering.

To develop Singapore into a regional education hub, the International Business Strategies (2005) states that the Government of Singapore is investing heavily to create an education hub in Asia, and that “Singapore’s strength in building its brand as a premier education hub in Asia is that it offers diversity and a distinctive mix of education services in a safe and comfortable environment.” Moreover, the strategic location
of Singapore encourages students from around the region to study in Singapore particularly those from China, Korea, Japan, Malaysia, and India. Another strategy that Singapore has recently introduced is the offering of the new Singapore International Graduate Award for international students for their PhD degrees in Singapore in which 240 awards will be given out each year to top students (Peh, 2007).

As a provider of its own brand of education, the number of foreign students who come to Singapore has been increasing because it has become an important destination for international students as part of its long-term goal of becoming a regional education hub attracting students from within and beyond the region. The number of international students in Singapore rose from 71,000 in 2005 to 96,000 in 2008 and fell to 91,500 in 2010 (Davie, 2013b). However, as at July 2012, there were only 84,000 international students comprising 33,000 students in private and 51,000 students in government-run schools and institutions (Davie, 2012a) Thus, the target of 150,000 by 2015 that the government set about a decade ago has “to be put on hold” citing factors such as “a cap on the number of foreign students being admitted into public schools and institutions, and stricter regulations for private schools that have led to half of them shutting down” (Davie, 2012a). Table 1 highlights the increasing importance of Singapore as a destination for international students and it obtained a market share of 2% in 2007 in the same league as “emerging contenders” as New Zealand, Malaysia, and Korea (The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, 2009).

Skilbeck and Connelly (2006) identify two sets of key policy strategies toward becoming international education hubs. First, curriculum change within the national school systems such as (a) improving English language teaching for domestic students

### Table 1. International Student Mobility—Major Destination Countries.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>514,723</td>
<td>582,996</td>
<td>572,509</td>
<td>564,776</td>
<td>582,984</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>224,660</td>
<td>242,755</td>
<td>300,055</td>
<td>330,080</td>
<td>351,470</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>138,381</td>
<td>193,137</td>
<td>235,131</td>
<td>279,989</td>
<td>325,935</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>175,065</td>
<td>206,141</td>
<td>246,136</td>
<td>248,357</td>
<td>246,369</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>160,533</td>
<td>196,748</td>
<td>244,335</td>
<td>265,710</td>
<td>263,094</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>52,150</td>
<td>85,829</td>
<td>110,844</td>
<td>162,695</td>
<td>195,503</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>64,011</td>
<td>95,550</td>
<td>117,302</td>
<td>117,927</td>
<td>118,498</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>62,260</td>
<td>87,445</td>
<td>102,557</td>
<td>108,688</td>
<td>113,996</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>16,586</td>
<td>40,825</td>
<td>50,442</td>
<td>42,652</td>
<td>39,942</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>86,000</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>28,872</td>
<td>31,674</td>
<td>44,390</td>
<td>66,000</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>49,270</td>
<td>49,270</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aMarket share of world’s international students (per 100 students)—total of the shares indicated here is 85% of the total market. Source: The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education report on “International Student Mobility: Status Report 2009” (pp. 45-46).
(e.g., hiring more native English speaking teachers as in Korea), beginning teaching
English as a foreign language at a young age (as in Year 3 in Korea), teaching more
subjects in English (e.g., maths and science at secondary level are now taught in
English in Malaysia); (b) switching toward more flexible teaching styles, and problem
solving; and (c) maintaining and/or strengthening competitive performance in interna-
tional tests of student achievement, ranking of institutions, and others. Second,
schemes have to be introduced to develop and improve facilities for international stu-
dents. These include (a) allowing more domestic international schools such as in
Singapore, Malaysia, Korea, Thailand—offering Asian students lower educational
costs than Australia, including tuition fees, travel expenses, and cost of living; (b)
allowing domestic students to enroll in international schools (e.g., in Singapore, Korea,
and Thailand—in some schools up to 50%); (c) developing a quality assurance frame-
work for international students (Singapore, based on Australian models); and (d) pro-
viding national support for promotion and recruitment drives (Singapore, whole of
government approach; the Economic Development Board is the lead agency, with the
support of Tourism Singapore).

In 2002, the Economic Development Board developed its Global Schoolhouse
(GS) initiative, underscoring education as a potential growth sector, with an expected
contribution of 3% to 5% of the economy and driven by the international sector
(Skilbeck & Connelly, 2006). Singapore’s consistent efforts toward establishing itself
as an international education hub was highlighted in a July 2005 Update titled
“Australia’s competitors in international education” published by the Australian
Education International. The GS scheme aims to build up the Singapore education
brand name. It is consistent with the government’s diversification policy. The increas-
ing reliance on foreign students is part of its long-term goal of transforming Singapore
into an educational hub in the region. As International Business Strategies (May 2006)
reports, with Singapore becoming an educational hub and GS for the region, an
increasing number of foreign students come to Singapore as it acts as a launching pad
into the region and because it has been at the forefront of information technology.

The GS initiative includes “global partnerships with leading universities and educa-
tional institutions overseas such as the Eindhoven University of Technology, Georgia
Institute of Technology, JFK School of Government, Cornell University, Duke University,
University of Adelaide, Washington State University, MIT, Stanford, and UC Berkeley.”
There are also private universities that have campuses in Singapore such as INSEAD,
Chicago GSB, SP Jain, University of Nevada, Las Vegas Singapore, ESSEC, Digipen
Institute of Technology, and New York Tisch School of the Arts Asia (see Case Study 1).

Case Study 1 Tisch School of the Arts in Singapore
In her article titled “Tisch Asia Plans Undergrad Classes,” Davie (2011b) reported that
the school intends to offer 3-year undergraduate courses in 2012. Because it commenced
in 2007, the school has offered 80 places annually out of 300 applicants to its master’s
level programs in film, animation, producing, and dramatic writing; with half the
applicants from Asia and the other half mostly from the United States and Europe.
Students drawn from 23 countries pay US$44,000 (S$56,000) annually. There are 45
full-time faculty members. However as Teng (2013) reported, the school will close in
2015 due to financial problems and underenrollment.
Overall, the GS initiatives have been successful. Recent initiatives have been formed including (a) the offering of a double master’s degree arising from a partnership among NUS’ Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and the Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris and (b) the launching of a joint dual-educational doctoral degree between Singapore’s National Institute of Education and UK’s University of London (Pak & Tan, 2010). Other initiatives include (a) the creation of the SIT in 2009 to partner with reputable overseas universities including U.K.’s Newcastle University and U.S.’s University of Nevada, to enable Singaporean polytechnic graduates to earn degrees through this scheme; (b) the establishment of the SUTD in 2012, the fourth university in Singapore which is based on a strategic partnership with MIT in the United States and Zhejiang University in China; (c) the collaboration between Singapore’s NTU and UK’s Imperial College to establish a medical college; and (d) the partnership between the NUS and Yale University to set up a liberal arts college in Singapore called Yale–NUS College (Gopinathan & Lee, 2011) which is scheduled to commence in August 2013 (see next section).

However, there have been some bumps along the way which include (a) U.K.’s Warwick University turning down the invitation to open a Singapore campus (Waring, 2013); (b) the University of New South Wales’ campus in Singapore (UNSW Asia) decision to close and pull out from Singapore 2 months after commencing its first intake of students in March 2007 but after 2 months into its operation due to lower than anticipated enrollment: with only 148 students, half of its projected target in the first semester (Pak & Tan, 2010); (c) Tisch Asia’s announcement in November 2012 to close its school in 2015, after commencing its first intake in the 2007/2008 academic year due to various factors including financial woes and underenrollment (Teng, 2013); (d) the University of Nevada’s (Las Vegas) announcement in January 2013 that it is ending its partnership with Singapore’s fifth autonomous university, SIT, to offer its popular hotel administration degree course in Singapore, following a disagreement on tuition fee increase (Davie, 2013c); and (e) the announcement in May 2013 on the closure of the NYU@NUS dual-law graduate degree program, which commenced in 2007 with an inaugural batch of 39 students from around the world. It will have its last batch of 21 students this year as it failed to become self-financing (Channelnewsasia.com, 2013).

Some private educational institutions (PEIs) that attract international students were also affected. Some PEIs were closed in 2010 including the School of Applied Studies in Park Mall, and Brookes Business School which was investigated for peddling fake degrees from Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (Davie, 2010). Consequently, the Council for Private Education (CPE) has set stringent standards and new operating requirements in 2010. These include “attaining recognition for their courses and ensuring their teachers are properly qualified,” and

schools seeking to enroll foreigners must earn the EduTrust mark, which even sets out higher standards: they must have independent academic and examination boards, disclose their finances and information on their facilities and teachers, and ensure that the foreign institutions they link up with are up to far (Davie, 2010, p.B6).
As of March 2013, there were 340 registered private schools, out of which 48 have the 4-year EduTrust mark that enables them to admit international students including the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM). The SIM Global Education, the leading private education provider in Singapore, offers high-quality overseas academic programs in partnerships with well-known universities and institutions from Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland. From its website and as cited by Davie (2013b), it has a total enrollment of 23,000 by December 2012 out of which 2,500 are foreigners. Other private schools with 4-year mark are the East Asia Institute of Management and James Cook University (see Case Study 2), which has increased its presence in Singapore.

Table 2. Profile of International Students at NUS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>2007/08</th>
<th>2008/09</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total international students</td>
<td>8,964</td>
<td>9,880</td>
<td>10,511</td>
<td>11,088</td>
<td>11,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>4,577</td>
<td>5,070</td>
<td>5,198</td>
<td>5,173</td>
<td>5,129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Share, %)</td>
<td>(51.1)</td>
<td>(51.3)</td>
<td>(49.3)</td>
<td>(46.7)</td>
<td>(45.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>3,462</td>
<td>3,696</td>
<td>4,024</td>
<td>4,491</td>
<td>4,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Share, %)</td>
<td>(38.6)</td>
<td>(37.4)</td>
<td>(38.3)</td>
<td>(40.5)</td>
<td>(42.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>1,114</td>
<td>1,289</td>
<td>1,424</td>
<td>1,401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Share, %)</td>
<td>(10.3)</td>
<td>(11.3)</td>
<td>(12.2)</td>
<td>(12.8)</td>
<td>(12.4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The NUS: Case Study

With a vision of becoming “a leading global university centered in Asia, influencing the future,” the globalization of NUS has two dimensions: “internationalization at home” and “internationalization abroad.” The “internationalization at home” dimension is reflected, among other indicators, in the number of international students studying at NUS. From the various State of the University Reports for the years 2008, 2009, and 2010, Table 2 shows that there were 8,964 international students in 2005/2006 and this increased to 11,328 in 2009/2010.

From his presentation at the First China-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Education Cooperation Week titled “International Student Mobility: The NUS Perspective,” NUS Deputy President (Academic Affairs) and Provost, Professor Tan
Eng Chye (2008) observes that China, South and Southeast Asian regions have been the main sources of international graduate students. The numbers of students from the South and Southeast Asian regions have also increased particularly during the post-1995 period. Various initiatives, strategies, and innovative programs of study have attracted a large number of international students to NUS. These include, among others, the offering of disciplinary, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary programs of study and curriculum structures that incorporate the international dimensions of teaching and research. There are also student exchange programs (SEPs) signed between NUS and foreign universities. Provost Tan Eng Chye (2008) cites that NUS has more than 180 active partners across 27 countries.

In terms of the internationalization abroad dimension, NUS has designed and implemented various strategies taken up by its students. According to the International Relations Office (IRO), NUS has designed various international programs including SEP, NUS Overseas Colleges (NOC) internship programs, joint,double degree programs, summer programs, internships, fieldtrips, study visits, research, enrichment, language immersion programs, clinical attachments, conferences/moot/fora, and community projects.

NUS President, Professor Tan Chorn Chuan (2009) highlights the “strong global orientation of our programmes” as “about 50 per cent of our undergraduates have an overseas educational exposure, with 20 per cent spending a semester or more abroad.” To simultaneously promote internationalization at home and abroad, NUS has been actively involved in international alliances of universities including the International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU), Asia-Pacific Research Universities, Universitas21, and others. Lianhe Zaobao (2009) reports that as the second Chair of IARU for a term of 2 years, NUS President Tan Chorn Chuan said that “The alliance enables exciting innovations in global education, facilitates cross-institutional learning and fosters coordinated action in key areas such as environmental sustainability (p.9).”

The “NUS Global Experience” provides its students with a “world of opportunities” that “empowers them to be the change they want to see in their lives and to make a positive difference to the community” (The Straits Times, 2011, p.A45). NUS is a leading global university, with a ranking of 27th among the world’s 100 universities, with more than 36,000 students from 100 countries, 51 bachelor’s degree programs, 70 double degree programs, 31 joint degree programs, 15 concurrent degree programs, 29 double major programs, 300 overseas partner universities with SEPs, and 7 NOC at major entrepreneurial hubs. Four specific categories of benefits have been cited by four students in their feedback (see Table 3): these are competitive edge, positive difference, international career, and global citizenship.

As mentioned in the previous section, one of the recent internationalization at home initiatives that NUS has established in the context of the GS that involves world class universities is the setting up of a liberal arts college with Yale University. Known as the Yale–NUS College, it aims to deliver a “broad-based education, with smaller classes and an intense residential experience to nurture graduates who can think deeply and across different disciplines” (Davie, 2013c). However, “the tie-up has been dogged by a debate on the extent to which Singapore allows academic freedom, and criticism from Yale faculty” (Sharma, 2012). With a vote of 100 to 69, Yale faculty passed a resolution concerning civil and political rights in Singapore (Waring, 2013). In response,
Table 3. Student Feedback on Overseas Exposure Programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Class Year</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genevieve-Laine Chang</td>
<td>Competitive edge</td>
<td>Business School and USP, Yr 4</td>
<td>These [overseas experiences] strengthened my confidence, maturity, communication skills and knowledge, all of which helped me secure the very competitive investment banking summer internship at a top U.K. bank. I am now being considered for a permanent position there. At NUS, there is such a vast array of opportunities that give us an edge over students from other institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Choo</td>
<td>International career</td>
<td>NUS-NYU Class of ‘09</td>
<td>Upon reflection, the overseas programme offered me more than a lifestyle away from Singapore. It gave me a rare opportunity to achieve a headstart in my law career, where I handle cross-border transactions for multinational clients in a large international law firm. The NUS-NYU programme offered a first class global education and equipped me with invaluable experiences which I have brought back to my career in Singapore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veerapan Swaminathan</td>
<td>Positive difference</td>
<td>Engineering and USP, Yr 4</td>
<td>Taken together, these overseas experiences have taught me that while the world appears unbelievably diverse, we all share similar hopes, dreams and even tell the same stories in multiple languages. I’m now committed to making a positive difference to struggling communities around the world and much credit is due to NUS for enabling me to do just that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zuraidah Abdul Hamid</td>
<td>Global citizen</td>
<td>Design and Environment, Yr 3</td>
<td>“My 18-day YEP (Youth Expedition Project to the Philippines) and subsequent semester-long student exchange to Korea through NUS’ global opportunities have enriched my life and expanded my horizon. They have strengthened my independent learning and intercultural communication skills. I am ready to position myself as a citizen of the world and look forward to my next global experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Professor Lily Kong, NUS Vice-President (University and Global Relations) and then Acting Executive Vice-President of Yale–NUS College, told University World News: “For a pioneering cross-cultural initiative such as the Yale–NUS College, diverse views and debate are natural and to be expected.” She further remarked that “The issues of academic freedom and non-discrimination had been extensively discussed with Yale previously, and agreement reached to the satisfaction of both Yale and NUS. The College is committed to uphold the principles of academic freedom and open inquiry” (Sharma, 2012). The new college is set to commence in August 2013 with an initial intake of 157 students out of 11,400 applicants: 97 students are Singaporeans, while the rest come from 25 countries as reported by Davie (2013d). Students will be taught by an inaugural team of 50 leading educators and researchers from around the world (Yale–NUS College, 2013). The college has also hired 12 recent graduates out of more than 100 applicants from five continents including those who graduated from Yale, NUS, and other liberal arts colleges, and other overseas-educated Singaporeans—with mentoring new students as their main responsibility (Lim, 2013).

Overall, NUS has consistently designed/redesigned and implemented various ways and means of internationalizing higher education at home and abroad.
Concluding Remarks

The global economy has experienced a significant decrease in the barriers to the flow of goods, services, financial capital, technology, information, ideas, and people. National governments have, however, responded differently with some being more open than others. Institutions of higher learning including universities have also behaved differently: some universities have introduced more innovative and creative programs to internationalize their students at home and overseas.

This article highlights the fact that the internationalization of higher education has resulted in a rapid increase in international student mobilities in different parts of the world with some countries and universities being more successful in attracting foreign students than others. The case of Singapore and the NUS experience of internationalization were examined. As an open economy, Singapore has consistently designed and implemented policies, programs, and activities to internationalize its higher education due to a number of reasons: first, to contribute toward achieving the goals of its educational policy such as fostering the country’s value system and graduate attributes including national unity, intercultural awareness, interpersonal and communication skills, and global citizenship; second, to train its students including international students to meet its manpower requirements and contribute to its labor force and population; and third, to promote Singapore as an educational hub in the region and in the world. While the GS project has been relatively successful, there have been some bumps along the way that include some institutional partnerships to discontinue and some private colleges to close following the strengthening of government regulations on their operations. While the internationalization of higher education in Singapore will continue, some public concerns regarding the policy of attracting foreign labor and international students may result in the rethinking of the GS program.

At the institutional level, the case of the NUS was analyzed and it reflects the consistent trends, patterns, and policies at the national level. NUS has been supportive of the government’s policy of globalizing the university and its students through a variety of programs and activities of internationalization at home and abroad. NUS will continue to do so as it further integrates with global and regional institutions of higher learning and as it aspires to become “a leading global university centered in Asia influencing the future.”

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