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## The Impact of Internationalisation towards Student Learning with Regards to Undergraduate Engineering Students

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### Abstract

This paper presents a case study of the impact of internationalisation towards the undergraduate engineering students' learning at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) through close collaboration between UKM with the University Duisburg-Essen (UDE), Germany. Since the year 2003, the double degree program of UKM-UDE especially in the engineering field has been offered to the undergraduate engineering students in UKM. Up until now, as many as 90 UKM engineering students have furthered their studies in various engineering fields offered in UDE. Apart from that, the number of German students (from UDE) interested to participate in academic exchange to UKM has been on the increase. In 2011, 20 German students from UDE enrolled in UKM in the first semester of the academic session 2011/2012. This significant improvement has reflected the fact that UKM is now becoming one of the selected knowledge destinations for international students, including from Europe. This paper also discusses the positive development of student learning in UKM, affected by the presence of German students on UKM engineering campus.

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*Keywords:* Internationalisation; Learning; German Engineering Students; Double Degree Programme; Exchange Student Programme

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### 1. Introduction

The internationalisation of universities is a process involving the policy of practice under the system of education, institution and the individual to ensure that the institutions of a country are able to compete at the global level (Altbach & Knight 2007). The internationalisation process also plays an important role especially in positioning of local higher education into the global higher education (Kishun 2007). The implementation of several strategies such as exchange programme to another country, internship, staff exchange and foreign language education can improve the internationalisation process in higher education (Jamilah et al. 2011). The collaboration between the local and foreign universities serves as an agenda recognised to have the potential in acknowledging

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Malaysia as a hub of excellence for further studies, especially at the international level. In this context, UKM, since the year 2003 has sealed close collaboration with UDE through the sealing of the MOA (Memorandum of Agreement) and MOU (Memorandum of Understanding), respectively in 2001 and 2002. Since then, the cooperation between UKM and UDE has been solidified with the implementation of the double degree and student mobility programmes in the engineering field starting from the year 2003. Such a programme advocates the internationalisation agenda of an institute of further studies (Knight 2008).

Through the collaboration between UKM and UDE, UKM undergraduate students have gained much exposure from the outside world, especially from European countries. New surroundings especially for UKM undergraduate students are one factor that can well influence the student's traits (Mastor et al. 2011). The student mobility programme also opens up the opportunity to the students and academicians to further their studies and conduct research in affiliation with foreign universities (Doring et al. 2009).

## **2. Double Degree and Student Mobility Programmes between UKM and UDE, German**

Starting from 2003, the close relationship merging between UKM and UDE has been sealed with the implementation of the double degree and student mobility programmes, especially those involving undergraduate students especially from the engineering field. At the early stage, this programme was financed by the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Services). It encapsulates three main fields of engineering namely electrical, electronic and system engineering, civil and structural engineering as well as mechanical and materials engineering. Up until today, as many as 90 UKM undergraduate students have furthered their studies in UDE under this double degree programme. 63 students have successfully completed their studies in UKM and UDE and have graduated in the engineering field. The remaining is still in UDE to resume their studies. Table 1 highlights the number of UKM undergraduate students that have furthered their studies in UDE throughout the 8 years that this programme has been carried out. The total number of students who has successfully furthered their studies clearly demonstrates good progress, in the effort to honour the agenda of internationalising the universities.

Other than that, students from UDE, Germany are also offered to further their studies in UKM. Nevertheless, UDE Engineering students are more inclined to follow the student exchange programme to UKM whereby they only need to register in UKM for 1 semester, in comparison with students who further their studies under the double degree programme (Muchtar et al. 2009). Table 2 shows UDE student statistics enrolling in UKM through this student mobility programme. Up until now, 37 students from UDE have participated in the mobility programme and have continued studying in UKM. To date, 20 students from UDE have registered in UKM for the first semester of the 2011/2012 academic session (Figure 1). Such a drastic improvement on the number of UDE students learning in UKM clearly demonstrates that UKM is currently the selected destination of knowledge, including for European scholars.

## **3. The impact of the internationalisation agenda towards UKM engineering undergraduate students**

### *3.1. The impact of internationalisation to UKM undergraduate students in UDE*

A comprehensive approach in consolidation of the internationalisation agenda is necessary in order to stand competitively with the world's best education systems. In this scenario, the close collaboration between UKM and UDE has shown very positive performance throughout the decade-long relationship. Other than that, the internationalisation process also influences the student development in UKM who have furthered their studies at UDE under the double degree programme. The increase in the number of students from UKM to UDE shows that this program is attracting more and more attention among UKM engineering students.

In UDE, UKM students have been subjected to a lot of exposure, especially in the new environment in a four-season country. Therefore, UKM students have undergone an adaptation process with the environment in Germany in order to pursue their lives in the new country (Lee et al. 2011). Simultaneously, UKM students will get to learn a variety of aspects like getting to know more about the culture of the European community, especially the German community and are able to learn foreign languages, specifically the Deutsch. Understanding different cultures will help the students to adjust with the new environment especially when they meet, study and live with people from different culture (Jamilah et al. 2011).

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