

# Dynamics of the internationalisation of higher education: Reconfiguration of training and the making of elites in Singapore and Malaysia

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# A socio-historical approach



- LOOK AT THE HISTORICAL CONTEXTS AND SOCIOLOGICAL IMPACT OF COLONISATION
- RECONSTRUCT AND UNDERSTAND THE GENESIS AND LONG-TERM SOCIAL PROCESSES FROM 1949 TO 2020

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University  
model of  
excellence

Social  
selection of  
talent

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Eastern  
hybrid  
university  
model

Ethnic  
opposition  
between  
Malay and  
non-Malay  
elites

## SINGAPORE AND MALAYSIA

Two attractive higher education centres in Asia

Successful internationalization

Establishment of relocated institutions

- UNDERSTAND THE DYNAMICS INVOLVED IN UNIVERSITY CONFIGURATIONS
- IDENTIFY "ANALOGIES OF RELATIONSHIPS"
- CONSIDER SPECIFIC NATIONAL CONTEXTS

# Research methodology



- **INTERNATIONALIZATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION ARE A CHALLENGING FIELD**
- **A “CONSTANT IMPROVISATION” BALANCING METHODOLOGICAL IMPERATIVES AND THE REALITIES OF THE FIELD**
- **AN INDUCTIVE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH**

## **MIXED METHODS**

### **QUALITATIVE DATA**

**59 semi-structured interviews with political elites**

**30 narrative interviews with international students**

**Archives and observations of events related to the internationalization of higher education**

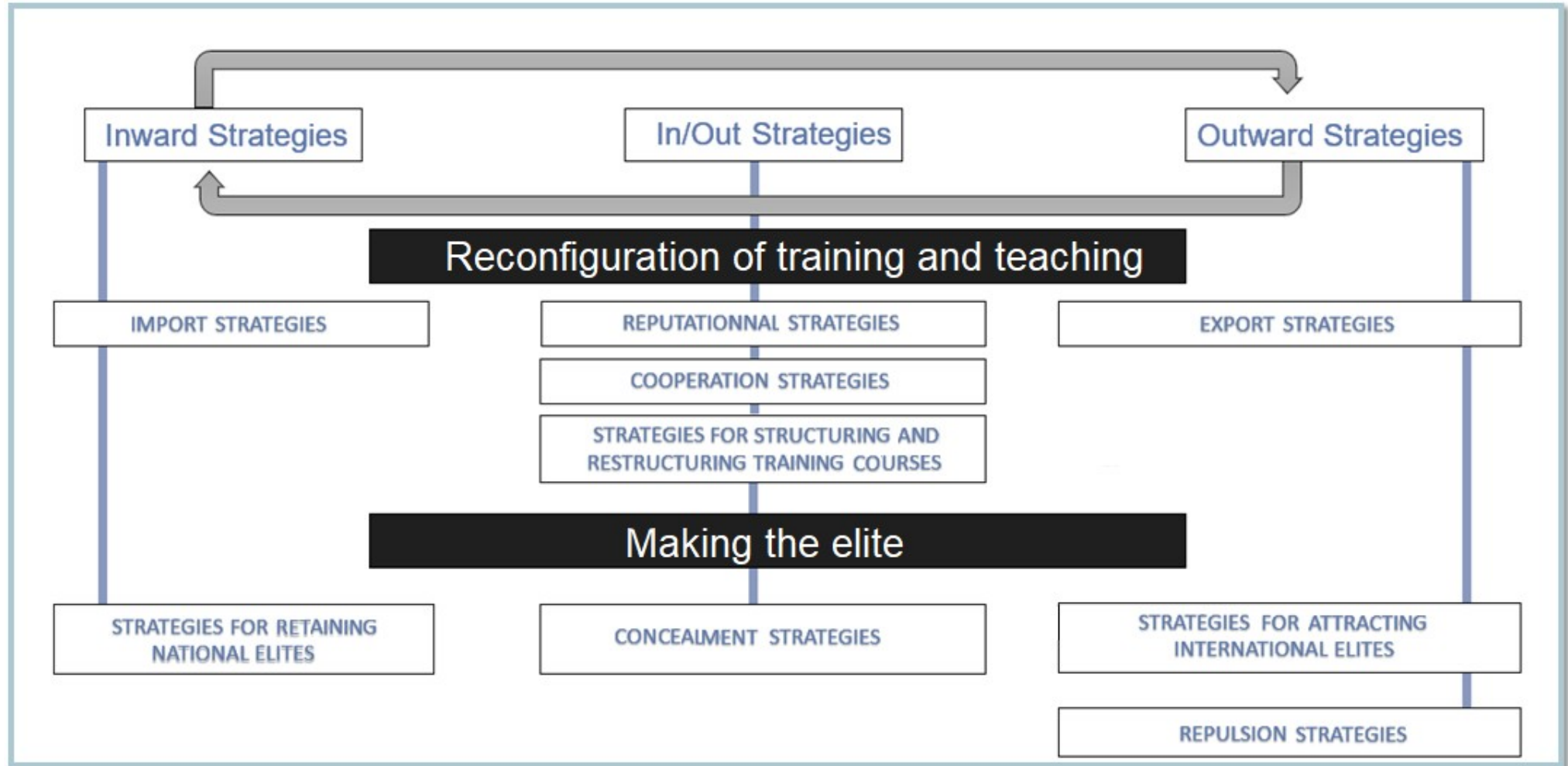
### **QUANTITATIVE DATA**

**Secondary data analysis of incoming and outgoing student mobility flows**

**A questionnaire survey of 250 internationally mobile students in Singapore**

**A relational approach using graph theory**

# An exploratory grid of internationalisation processes in higher education





# SINGAPORE

## a segmented elitist model at the crossroads of the Western and Eastern "worlds"

- THE TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES INTO WORLD-CLASS UNIVERSITIES
- THE HIERARCHISATION OF PRIVATE EDUCATION PROVISION
- THE PRINCIPLE OF EXCELLENCE AND ELITISM (1979 Goh Keng Swee REPORT)
- STRONG STATE REGULATION POLICIES OF EXCLUSION, INCLUSION, COMPETITION, RETENTION AND REPULSION

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2 leading national public universities: NUS and NTU  
Training the state's elite

4 major universities (SMU, SIT, SUTD, SUSS)  
"niches of excellence" for other national elites

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"First-class" international offshore institutions  
Training the international elite

"Second-class" international offshore institutions

## LIMITES

### THE ELITISM OF STUDENT RECRUITMENT

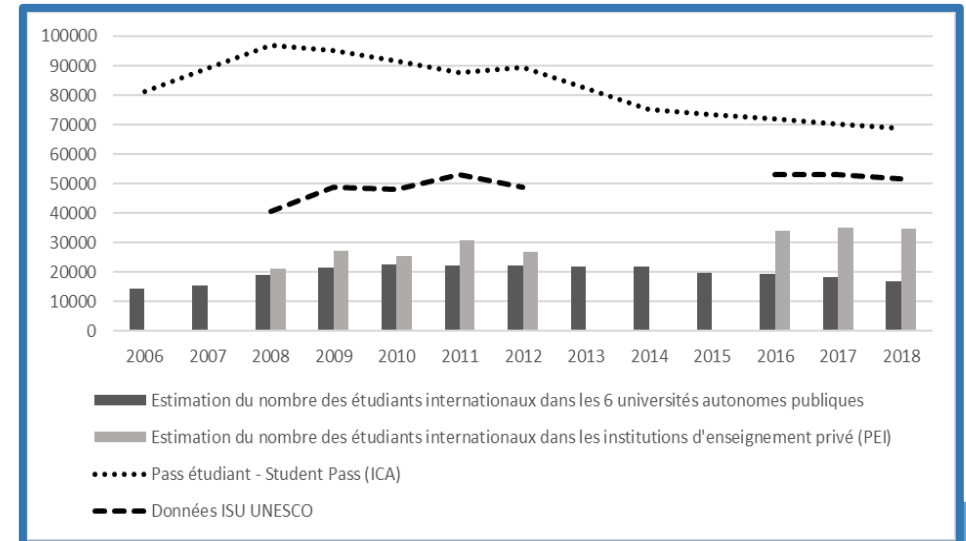
Unequal system

Very strong social reproduction

### THE IDEOLOGY OF ANTI DEMOCRATIC

Singapore's position in the global HE arena called into question

Estimates of incoming student mobility to Singapore between 2006 and 2018



# Malaysia

a hybrid model between internationalisation and islamisation



- DUALISM BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS
- PARTIAL OR "FACADE" MERITOCRACY
- THE DETERMINING WEIGHT OF ETHNICITY AND RACE
- A GRADUAL CONVERGENCE BETWEEN INTERNATIONALISATION AND ISLAMISATION

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Major national universities  
Training the Malay bumiputera elite

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Local and delocalised 'semi-elite' establishments  
Training for non-bumiputera (non-Malay) and international students

## International students from the South with different profiles :

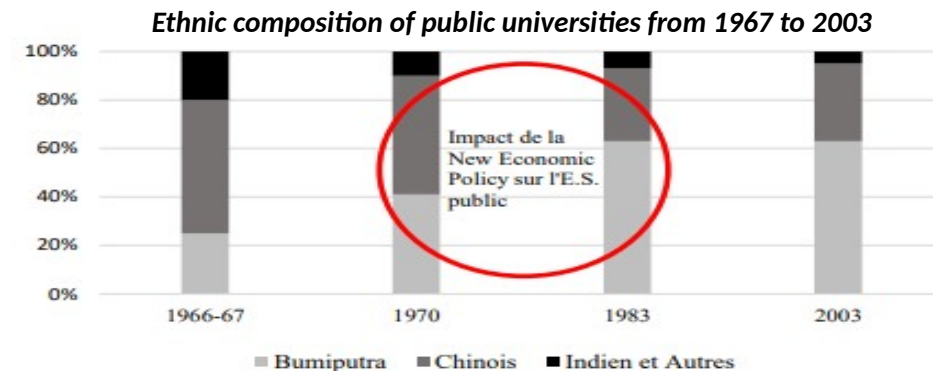
- From the Islamic world: future Muslim elites
- From countries at war, in armed conflict, from the bottom billion: future state investment
- From the West: elite travellers

## LIMITES ETHNIC SEGREGATION

De-skilling privately trained minorities

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICIES

For the "majority" in the public sector



Source : Sato, M. (2007). *Dilemmas of Public University Reform in Malaysia*. Monash University Press.

# The reconfiguration of training courses



## Common dynamics

- Strategies based on importing foreign models and establishments predominate
- Marginal export strategies

Structuring strategies that segment or stratify training courses :

- between the public and private sectors
- between undergraduate and postgraduate levels

Similar cooperation strategies

- Partnerships between HE institutions
- Elite networks

## Dynamics specific to each country

Distinct reputational strategies:  
certifications, labels, rankings, systems, etc.

**SINGAPORE**

Qualitative and meritocratic strategy  
(NUS and NTU)

**MALAYSIA**

Quantitative and ethno-racial strategy  
(all public and private establishments)



# The making of elite

## Common dynamics

- Strategies for the reproduction of national elites in 'top-ranking' public universities
  - Strategies for retaining these elites
- Incentives to return through grants (outgoing mobility)

Strategies for attracting and repelling international elites

Encouraging or limiting incoming mobility flows (quotas, immigration policies)

Strategies for concealing information and data  
Aims to hide reproductive functions and social, ethnic, religious and educational inequalities

## Dynamics specific to each country

### SINGAPORE

Producing 'talent' according to an ultra-meritocratic logic  
Attracting the international academic and economic elite

### MALAYSIA

Creating Malaysian elites according to a differentialist, ethnic-racial and religious logic  
Attractiveness of international Muslim elites



# Conclusion



**Similar imperatives (New public management, privatisation, corporatisation, etc.)**



**Common and specific internationalisation and regulation strategies**



**Asian model of regulation of Internationalisation and HE?**



**URMIS**  
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***Thank you for your attention!***

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