Abstract

Internationalization of higher education is becoming an important topic for studies in educational research. For the most part, these studies have been done in the context of economically developed countries that are traditional exporters of higher education. The present study is different. First of all, it was conducted in a public university in Malaysia, a developing country and a net importer of higher education. Secondly, it focused on the attitudes of the host country students towards their international peers, which has been a less explored area in educational research. The findings of this exploratory study revealed that despite an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards the international students expressed by the respondents, social and academic-related interactions between the local and foreign students were almost nonexistent. The study gives some recommendations for institutional policy improvement and highlights some directions for future research.

Key words: higher education, internationalization, Malaysia, peer perceptions.

1. Introduction

Internationalization of higher education, or cross-border education, has been a hot topic among educational researchers in the past decade. Internationalization can be defined as “the growing border-crossing activities between national systems of higher education” (Teichler, 2004, p. 5). Internationalization of higher education,