

31.7.2024

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**Title**

Higher education, learning regions and the Malaysian transformation policies / Norzaini Azman, Morshidi Sirat and Abdul Razak Ahmad

**Publication year**

2014

**Source/Footnote**

In: Higher education policy. - 27 (2014) 3, S. 301 - 321

**Inventory number**

36750

**Keywords**

Ausland : Malaysia : Hochschulwesen allgemein ; Hochschule und Region

**Abstract**

The process of globalisation has undoubtedly impacted countries, bringing about different challenges for each country, region and locality. Many countries have responded positively to the demands and challenges through a societal transformation process with an emphasis on developing tertiary education, research and innovative capacities. Drawing upon our experience with two cases of newly developed learning regions, Kuala Lumpur city-region and Iskandar Malaysia region, we examine Malaysia's effort at transforming its higher education system in the context of learning region objectives. Key government policies, namely, the Tenth Malaysia Plan, the National Higher Education Strategic Plan 2007-2020, the Economic Transformation Programme as well as documents of the learning regions' master plans were included in the document analysis. Although it remains to be seen how the learning regions will emerge, the experience in transforming higher education based on the learning region concept is highly relevant to developing countries that are attempting to shift their traditional economy to a more knowledge-intensive economy. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)