

The '3+0' remedy

By S. INDRAMALAR

PRIVATE education has seen significant changes this year. It's been nothing short of phenomenal.

The country's economic slowdown and devaluation of the ringgit against the greenback and sterling spoilt the plans of many Malaysians who intended to enrol in foreign universities.

Many of the 50,000 Malaysians studying abroad were caught in a bind as financial support from home shrivelled. Responding to the situation, the Government initiated several bold steps to ease the hardships. In a move to open up foreign education to the locals, the Education Ministry approved what is known as the 3+0 foreign degree programmes.

Here, *Star Education* captures the views and thoughts of various private education officials who say a big *aye!*



Khoo Soo Peng
President, Taylor's College

The liberalisation of the education policy for private higher education institutions has enabled unparalleled development. It has been a most significant phenomenon in education this year.

In fact, students affected by the economic slowdown have more avenues now and a wider range of options.

With the 3+0 programme, they can save at least RM50,000.

The setting up of foreign university branch campuses gives us much confidence. Our students have a comprehensive list of degrees to pursue.

Similarly, franchising of programmes by public universities to private higher education institutions has made available more degrees in the private market.

In line with the liberalisation of education, the government has also put in place mechanisms for quality assurance and quality control with the setting up of the National Accreditation Board (LAN).

We at Taylor's welcome the changes in the education policy. We feel it is beneficial both to the education industry as well as to Malaysian students.

We will remain committed to upholding the highest academic standards and we hope other institutions will do the same.



Tan Yew Sing
President, INTI College

Certainly, this has been an eventful year for tertiary private education, which has been at the forefront of the internationalisation of education in Malaysia.

In the last 15 years, Malaysian private educational institutions have widened

access into overseas higher education for thousands of Malaysian students.

Over the years, private educational institutions have modified and developed innovative, international linkages with reputable foreign universities. We should shift our focus from the existing narrower internationalisation concept of institutional structural revision and redesigning of programmes and provisions. Instead we should look to the wider globalisation strategy that includes the sharing and networking of institutional resources through the virtual university concept.

The emergence of private universities provides a catalyst for private colleges to prepare for university status. Private colleges with the necessary infrastructure, a strong academic force and state-of-the-art learning and teaching facilities should be in place for university status.

On our part, INTI's commitment to education is evidenced by its enormous investment in the establishment of our main campus in Bandar Baru Nilai costing RM100mil.

It is my hope that private colleges should offer a collegiate culture experience to students where they can learn to live, work and play together, and cultivate the habit of life-long education.



Elizabeth F.Y. Lee
Principal, Sunway College

I'd say this has been a tremendous year for education, with the Education Minister being very bold with his action plan for private education.

The invitation to Monash University and Sunway College to set up the very first branch campus of a foreign university in Malaysia demonstrates the Government's commitment to give us a world class education.

It is no more just a case of paying lip service. The competition created in the private education sector has only spurred us to achieve a higher quality.

The introduction of the 3+0 programme provided an instant remedy to the present problems.

As private educationists, we have risen to meet the challenges.

By approving a long list of varied institutions offering a host of full-degree programmes which can be completed locally, the future of many deserving Malaysian students seem secured in these times of uncertainty.

It has also created much vibrancy in the private education industry whilst easing the pressure on public institutions



to cope with increasing demand for places.

Public universities have to increase intakes on budgets which have been reduced by as much as 20%.

Let's face it - we'll have to turn to private education. We will be more receptive and adaptive to meeting the challenges by virtue of being smaller and leaner.

We are also spurred by the basic need to survive during these tough economic times. The Government obviously knows this and has tapped the right source.

The competition will ensure not just the survival of the best but that the best will emerge from these trying times.



Dr B.C. Tan
CEO, Kolej Damansara Utama

This year saw the rise of Malaysia as a choice destination for further studies in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Education Ministry led private colleges in participating in various international education exhibitions.

The joint efforts have certainly helped to attract more foreign students. Colleges that are experienced and knowledgeable in handling international students will be able to play a bigger role in making Malaysia a centre of excellence.

Apart from support services, it is imperative that we are able to offer international students excellent English programmes to prepare them for college level studies.

Malaysia itself has a lot to offer to international students - safe environment, low-cost of living, friendly people and modern infrastructure and amenities. Although many expected the economic downturn to help colleges increase their student intake, this did not happen instantly.

Most Malaysian students did not return from overseas. The turnaround occurred when the ministry approved the 3+0 programme.

KDU welcomes and fully supports the move by the Government to make annual checks on the progress of 3+0 programmes. We can expect quality control of the highest order from neutral bodies like LAN and Britain's Quality Assurance Agency which have highly qualified and experienced personnel.



Dr Siva Ananthan
President of the National Association of Private and Independent Education Institutions (Napiei)

The highlight this year was the approval for the 3+0 degree programme, but I do not think it came as a complete surprise.

To be honest, some private colleges were ready to confer their own degrees about seven or eight years ago and had this been successful, we could have saved a lot on foreign exchange.

The fact that we have been running external programmes for both law and accounting programmes proves that we are capable. Furthermore, there are private colleges which offer programmes that are of equal if not better quality than those offered by local universities.

The Education Minister has definitely set the foundation for making the country the centre of educational excellence but there must be lots of follow-up.

It is pointless having grand visions if there is little achieved. The vision of democratising education and providing education for all must be seen to be done. Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has certainly paved the way. The latest changes in the STPM format is a clear example.

But there is a long way still to go. We need to provide premium educational opportunities to as many Malaysians.

The programmes we offer must be of a high quality. People tend to brush aside private sector academics just because we also seek some profits. This must change.