

# Phenomenal growth of private education

PRIVATE education in Malaysia has existed since the 1930s, providing a form of trade skills and a second chance for school dropouts to acquire some form of basic certificates.

The first private college in the country, Goon Institute, opened its doors to students in 1936 and is now part of a multi-million dollar industry providing tertiary education.

In the 1970s "tuition" programmes to prepare students for professional examinations such as engineering or the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) and the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants (ACCA) became popular and laid the foundation for development of private higher education institutions (IPTS). One college which was set up for this aim was Stamford College.

With the implementation of the national language policy that saw Bahasa Malaysia replacing English as the medium of instruction in secondary schools and the implementation of the quota system, "unmet demands" in tertiary education consequently led to the development of pre-university courses in private institutions. Taylor's College is one example.

With the intensifying demand for higher education in the 80s, links with foreign universities were strengthened, allowing for the offering of Bachelor degrees. The establishment of Kolej Dāmansara Utama, now known as Kolej KDU, in 1983-1984 marked the emergence of private education offering bachelor's degree level courses in Malaysia. This was followed by credit transfer programmes with foreign universities.

The global recession in the mid-80s and the imposition of full fee policies on overseas students in the United Kingdom led to the exploration of twinning programmes with foreign institutions of higher education, particularly Australia. Metropolitan College, set up in 1986, became the first to offer a



EXPLORING OTHER AVENUES ... Bumiputra students are now increasingly enrolling in the IPTS. — Star filepic

twinning degree. Now, the colleges are also offering postgraduate courses, pioneered by HELP institute, Inti College and KDU College in the mid-1990s. Nevertheless, the ties between the ministry and the private sector remain in many ways aggravated.

"We sometimes feel like a stepchild despite our enormous investments in the business and success in exporting home-grown content abroad," says one head from an IPTS.

Often, the private institutions are at

the mercy of the ministry's lax pace and its changes of regulations without notice. "The nature of the ministry's approach is more prescriptive than consultative," adds the college head.

The Education Ministry, on the other hand, wants to ensure that private institutions abide by the standards of quality outlined by the ministry.

However, the Eighth Malaysia Plan and Third Outline Prospective Plan emphasises the need for the private sector to share certain responsibili-

ties with the public sector.

They include the increasing science and technology manpower, promoting life-long learning, improving the quality and accessibility of education and promoting Malaysia as a regional centre of educational excellence.

But these aspirations can only be achieved with greater co-operation from both sides and a more structured model for national higher education, covering funding and other forms of support from the Government.