

University-college status is the private colleges are on the verge of getting it while several others are working towards it, reports **GAVIN GOMEZ**

New policy sees birth more university-colle

After years of waiting, private colleges are finally coming into their own – the Education Ministry is upgrading some of them to university-colleges. This is no small victory for the private sector which has matured in the last two decades and provides the much needed places and courses for school leavers.

No longer a second choice among students, private colleges welcome this recognition from the government. Though Kolej Universiti Teknologi dan Pengurusan Malaysia (KUTPM), an offshoot of Pusat Teknologi & Pengurusan Lanjutan or PTPL College was the first private institution to be offered university-college status two years ago, there had been none since. Until recently.

Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities (Mapcu) secretary-general Datuk Teo Chiang Liang says it is a natural progression for colleges to seek university-college status, especially for long-time players that have been in the industry for over 10 years now.

The colleges expected to be upgraded soon are Ikram College of Technology, Sedaya International College and L&G Twintech Institute of Technology.

Sunway College, Inti College Malaysia, Help Institute, KDU College and Aplus (Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology), on the other hand, have passed the initial stages of application.

New policy

In the past, colleges were hesitant to seek a status upgrade as they would have to give up their staple of franchised degree programmes and offer their own degrees instead. However, it is learnt, a recent change in policy which allows a university-college to offer franchised programmes in addition to the institutions own degrees became the catalyst for many to seek a higher status for their colleges.

"Previously, once a college obtained university-college status, they had to give up their twinning programmes and only offer their own courses. Last year, there was a policy change that not many knew about. Those that did and were ready, submitted their applications for university-college status," says a source.

Those that did not know about it failed to join the bandwagon, for now anyway.

To college operators, not being able to offer foreign degree programmes means a big blow to their income as foreign students come to Malaysia to obtain Australian, British, Canadian, American and New Zealand degrees – not Malaysian.

Many places, few takers

Deputy director-general of Education (private education) Datuk Hassan Hashim says the ministry is monitoring the supply and demand of places for tertiary education in the



PETER NG: The process of obtaining university-college status is thorough and detailed.

private sector.

He says more universities can only be set up if there is indication that more places are needed and the number of Malaysians opting to further their studies locally instead of abroad (about 105,000 currently) increases.

"The general guideline adhered to internationally is to have one university per half million people. That applies to developing countries, so for us it would mean one university for more than half a million people," he adds.

Supporting Malaysia's current population of more than 24 million are 16 public and 21 private universities (including foreign university branch campuses) in the country.

"If we look at things literally, it would mean we need 48 universities. But that is not the case. At present, I would say we need under 10 more universities."

He adds that new universities like the MCA's Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Utar) and Universiti Kuala Lumpur still have under 1,000 students, so the ministry would have to see if enrolment in the existing universities increase before upgrading more colleges.

The second private college after KUTPM to be upgraded recently is the Limkokwing

University-College of Creative Technology (LUCCT). After 22 years in 3,000 students, including from 45 countries.

"There are still thousand local private universities," opening more universities ing more universities. The there. There is no point in verities," Hassan adds.

Prior to KUTPM and LU lege managed to secure u the International Medical upgraded to the Internatik University (IMU) back in 1

It now offers its own m programme that can be comj Malaysia in addition to m collaboration with its 24 g from seven countries.

Lengthy process

For the eight private co ered by the ministry now ing university-college stal never-ending one.

"The process is thorough there are just so many an into," Sedaya's chief execu president Peter Ng says.

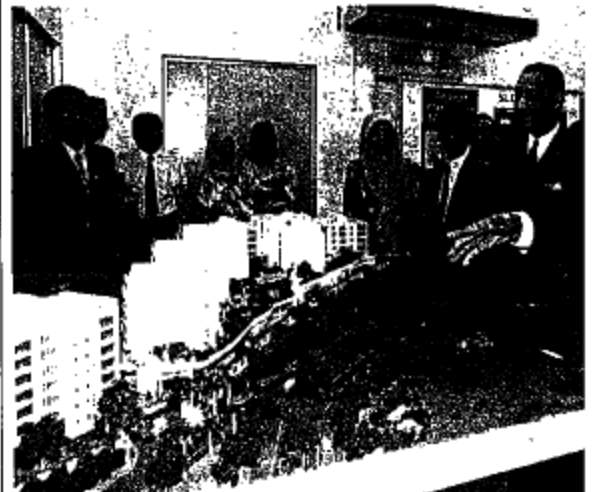
"And until all the criter not even consider an appi Ikram's director Tan Swer

All the operators interv Education shared that the ministry were high and n meeting the standards w

"We want to be known International University. t we want 'international' ir istry wants us to have at l demic staff to be PhD qua assume then the others d that criterion," shares Ng.

He adds that Sedaya ha demics with post-gradua since it opened its doors 1 and that at present close ers are PhD holders.

Having highly qualified however, only part of the stipulated by the ministy having a purpose built ca plans for one), details on



SPRAWLING CAMPUS: L&G Twintech showcasing its 100-acre campus to Entrep Minister Datuk Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz during his visit to the campus 1