

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter will discuss on the introduction of the Malaysian Education System and the private higher education in Malaysia, the objective of the study, its methodology, organization of the study, terms and definition as well as its limitations and problems.

### **1.1 An Overview of Education in Malaysia**

After independence in 1957, Malaysia has achieved much in education. Tremendous changes and development have taken place in education. A national system has evolved from a fragmented and diversified system of schooling. Curriculum reforms and the increasing use of educational technology have also enhanced the quality of education.

The Malaysian Education Policy is founded on the principles of RUKUNEGARA. This philosophy embraces a holistic and integrated approach in imparting knowledge, skills and balanced development of the whole person.

Malaysian education comes under the purview and jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. The task of the Ministry is to ensure the planning and implementation of educational policies, programmes, infrastructure and resources in line with

national aspirations. Other responsibilities include the registering, monitoring and approval of private educational centers and programs.

The national education system conducts education beginning from pre-school to higher education. They are as pre-school education (for 2 to 3 years), primary education (for 5 to 7 years), lower secondary education (for 3 years), upper secondary education (for 2 years), pre-university/post-secondary education or Sixth Form (for 1 to 2 years), higher education – undergraduate studies (for 3 to 5 years) and post-graduate studies (for 1 to 5 years). This education progression pathway can be seen clearly in Chart 1.1 (refer page 12).

Educational Institutions in the national education system encompasses two major components, such as, public (government funded or aided) educational institutions and the second one is private/independent (private funded) educational institutions. Most primary and secondary schools in Malaysia are Government or Government-aided schools. Private schools only play a minimum role.

The higher or tertiary education at certificate, diploma, first degree and higher degree levels are provided by public funded institutions of higher learning and also by private funded higher educational institutions such as private colleges, private universities and foreign university branch campuses.

In Malaysia, public higher education can be in the form of college education (government sponsored colleges, teacher training colleges), polytechnic education and university education. At present, there are 31 teachers training colleges, 9 polytechnics, 9 local public universities, 1 international university and 1 higher institute of learning (refer Table 1.1, page 13-14). Malaysian public universities take in about 80, 000 students each year and yet the demand is ever rising. At this level of education, private funded educational institutions play a significant role in fulfilling the needs of tertiary or higher education for the nation with a growing population base, as well as for the foreign students.<sup>1</sup>

The last decade has witnessed the establishment of several public and private universities as well as the setting up of foreign university branch campuses to cater to the growing demand for tertiary education from both of the Malaysians and the foreigners. To provide greater access to tertiary education, distances learning programmes are being expanded and the establishment of more private higher educational institutions has also been encouraged.

To develop a world class quality education and to meet the demands and requirements of this millennium, the Government has initiated a major educational reform by formulating a new legislation on education. These new reformative legislation covers all levels of education from pre-school to higher education and for both public and private sectors. They are The Education Act

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<sup>1</sup> Currently there are more than 15, 800 foreign students studying in both of the public and private higher institutions of learning.

1996, The Private Higher Educational Institutions Act 1996, National Accreditation Board Act 1996, Universities and University Colleges (Amendment) Act 1996, and National Higher Education Fund Board Act 1997 (for more details, refer Appendix 1.1).

## **1.2 Private Higher Education in Malaysia**

Private education is the education provided to students by private educational institutions. It opens to all races in Malaysia as well as foreign students. Private education institutions complement and supplement the government's efforts in education development. To ensure quality education and to safeguard the interests of the students, all private educational institutions are required to register with the Ministry of Education. The private educational providers can be divided into two categories depending on the levels of education being offered. They are:

- Private Educational Schools/Educational Institutions (PES)
- Private Higher Educational Institutions (PHEI)

Private higher education in Malaysia is directed at generating manpower leading to award of certificate, diploma, degree and professional qualifications. Generally, the courses offered are for students with Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) or Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM) qualification or its equivalent. These private funded colleges and universities are playing a major role in providing tertiary

education to both of the local and overseas students. Therefore, the government encourages the private sector to set up educational institutions to supplement the Government's effort to further generate a larger pool of semi-professional and professional workforce with degree, diploma and certificate qualifications. Further more, with the introduction of the Private Higher Educational Institution Act, 1996, the private sector is allowed to establish degree-granting institutions, and to set up branch campuses by foreign universities.

Currently, there are four types of PHEIs having their status under the Private Higher Educational Act 1996, by the Ministry of Education (refer Chart 1.2, page 15). They are:

1. Private Colleges (which either award their qualifications at certificate or diploma level or award degrees through a university)
2. Private University or University College (have the power to award their own degrees at all levels)
3. Foreign University Branch Campus (awarding identical degree programs as the host university)
4. Distance Learning Centre (providing mode of study by way of distance learning)

Today, there are more than 600 approved Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (refer Appendix 1.2/1-1.2/6).

These PHEIs are offering a wide range of courses ranging from Engineering, IT, Medicine, Management, Accounting, Science, Arts, Hospitality to other technical and soft skilled related courses.

There are two most exciting events for Malaysian private higher education, which have taken place in 1998. Firstly, the setting up of the foreign university branch campus by Monash University (Australia) and secondly, the approval by the Ministry of Education to allow some established private colleges to conduct the entire foreign university degree programs in the country. In year 1999 and also 2000, a lot more events took place, which have witnessed the establishment of new trends and market mechanisms in private higher education in Malaysia.

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

Given such situation above, there is a need to study certain important areas related to private higher education including the possible ways to make the country into an Educational Center of Excellence. Therefore the purpose of this study overall is to:

1. To overview the development of private higher education in Malaysia generally over the last three decades.
2. To incorporate major issues as well as basic fundamentals of economics into the study to determine which factors contributing to the growth of

Malaysian private higher education (PHE) that can be identified as possible mechanism in formulating appropriate policies to make Malaysia as a global center of educational excellence.

3. To highlight those successes and achievements by Malaysian private higher education sector in educational arena globally over the last three decades.
4. To indicate and examine major challenges faced by PHE through emphasizing on the weaknesses and obstacles faced by Malaysian private higher educational industry today.
5. To overview the potentials for Malaysian private higher education sector.
6. To formulate possible ways to sustain the quality of private higher education through government, private and public sector role-play.

#### **1.4 Methodology of Content**

Several methods were used in this study to obtain the required information. These include:

1. Research on past studies as well as on government's reports on the education systems in Malaysia over the last three decades and also the role of private higher educational institutions (PHEIs) in the latest education system in our country.

2. Research on past studies on the private higher education sector globally in order to understand the evolution of this sector over the last three decades.
3. Research on past writings e.g. books, thesis and journals on the Malaysian private higher education sector as well as reports and research papers by the Research and Planning Division, Ministry of Education.
4. Interviews with the respective officers from Education Departments, Ministry of Education to obtain opinions on the possibility of making the Malaysian educational system to be more reliable and quality in order to create more skilled and talented manpower in the nation.

### **1.5 Organisation of the Study**

This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter as discussed above will focus on the introduction of this study and the other necessary sections. The second chapter will reveal all literature review or survey carried out relevant to this study.

Whereas the third chapter will then discuss the major factors, which have contributed to the growth of private higher education in Malaysia in detail. The discussion would be more on economic analysis perspective.



The fourth chapter will highlight major achievements that we can find from the development of private higher education over the last three decades. The chapter will also focus on the challenges faced by private higher education sector in Malaysia. It will include a discussion on existing policies and conclusion of factors to be considered in policy implementations.

The final chapter will attempt an analysis of potentials of Malaysian private higher education (PHE) in Malaysia on two main aspects. They are future events and promotions. This chapter will conclude on how the findings in above aspects can be as a mechanism to increase the quality of PHE in Malaysia as well as suggestion of policy implementations.

## **1.6 Terms and Definition**

Throughout the study, several terms will be frequently used to represent certain definitions. The term *private education* refers to the education provided to students by private educational institutions (non-Government aided institutions). Private education in Malaysia is owned, managed and financed by the private sector. All private education institutions must register themselves with the Malaysian Ministry of Education before they can register with the Registrar of Business or the Registrar of Companies.

Whereas the term *Private Higher Educational Institutions (PHIEs)* is referred to institutions, which offer higher education to students leading to the award of certificate, diploma and degree as well as other professional qualifications. Occasionally, the term *center of educational excellence* may also be used. This term can be definite better by referring to some of its features, as follows:

- Refers to achievements by education institutions (public or private) in Malaysia as a world best performance from students at local examination level or international examinations regularly
- Existence of wide and affordable learning opportunities in Malaysia, which linked directly to the level of relevant and quality education.

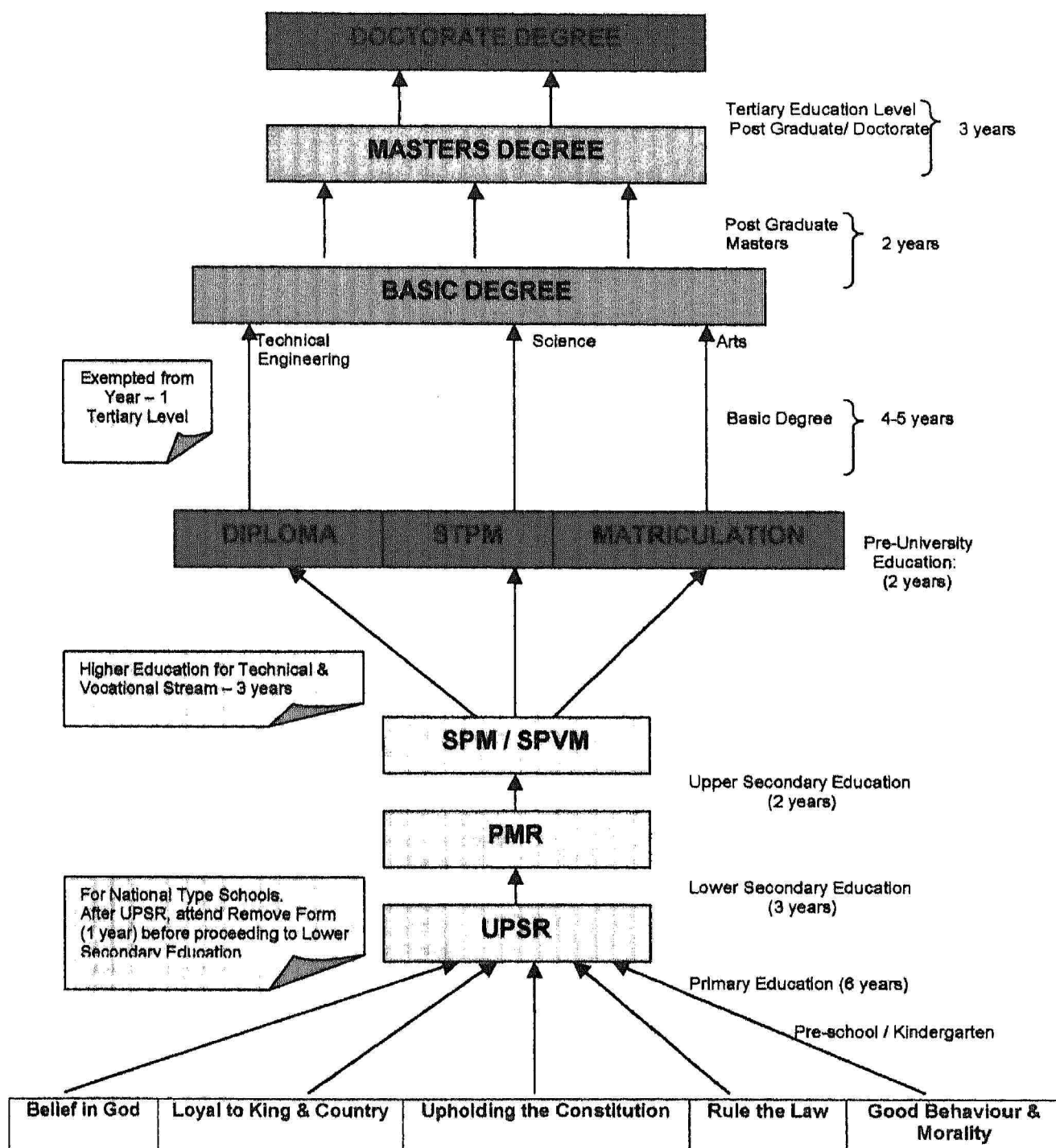
## **1.7 Limitations and Problems**

Throughout the study, several limitations and problems have hindered in-depth research to be carried out on the private higher education. To gather all the necessary information in the form of data or quantitative from the relevant secondary data was very difficult. First of all, the information gathered differs from one source to another. Moreover, there was much qualitative information on private higher education compared to the quantitative ones. It was other way around in the case of public higher education where most of the information in both qualitative and quantitative form was available. Finally, it brought to the

situation to face the relevant authority for further information. Here, a lot of difficulties and procedures as well as the problem of time constraint had to be faced. Among the areas that were needed quantitative information are; the number of approved Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs), the number of Malaysian students studying abroad and the number of foreigners studying in Malaysia.

**Chart 1.1:**

**An Overview: The National Education System and Philosophy**



Source: Illustrated from various sources on Malaysian education system, especially from *The Malaysian Private Education Reference Guide, NAPIEI, 1997.*

**Table 1.1:**

**Public Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia, 2000.**

Public Higher Education can be in the form of: College Education Polytechnic Education University Education
<p><b><u>College Education</u></b></p> <p><i>Teacher Training Colleges (Maktab Perguruan)</i> in Malaysia (31 in number) conduct training programs at diploma level for non-graduate trainee teachers for both of the primary and secondary schools. It is a pre-service and in-service training program, which requires the candidates to be a teacher or first be successfully accepted as a teacher by the Ministry of Education. It is a 3 years programs leading to the award of Diploma Perguruan Malaysia.</p> <p>The Teacher Education Division of Ministry of Education also conducts twinning programmes with local universities and foreign source universities to increase the number of graduate teachers. Trained teachers from primary and secondary schools follow these programmes to obtain either a basic or post-graduate degree. The teaching university, namely, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) is specially set up by the Government to produce more teachers with a bachelor degree qualification. Teachers Training Colleges in Malaysia:</p> <p>Institut Bahasa , Kuala Lumpur  Institut Perguruan Darul Aman, Kedah  Maktab Perguruan Batu Lintang, Kuching, Sarawak  Maktab Perguruan Batu Pahat, Johor  Maktab Perguruan Gaya, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah  Maktab Perguruan Ilmu Khas, Kuala Lumpur  Maktab perguruan Ipoh, Perak  Maktab Perguruan Islam, Selangor  Maktab Perguruan Keningau, Sabah  Maktab Perguruan Kent, Tuaran, Sabah  Maktab Perguruan Kinta, Perak  Maktab Perguruan Kota Bahru, Kelantan  Maktab Perguruan Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu  Maktab Perguruan Mohd. Khalid, Johor  Maktab Perguruan Pasir Panjang, Terengganu  Maktab Perguruan Perempuan Melayu, Melaka  Maktab Perguruan Persekutuan, Pulau Pinang  Maktab Perguruan Raja Melewar, Negeri Sembilan  Maktab Perguruan Rajang, Bintangor, Sarawak  Maktab Perguruan Sandakan, Sandakan, Sabah  Maktab Perguruan Sarawak, Miri, Sarawak  Maktab Perguruan Seri Kota, Kuala Lumpur  Maktab Perguruan Sri Pinang, Pulau Pinang  Maktab Perguruan Sultan Abd. Halim, Kedah  Maktab Perguruan Teknik, Kuala Lumpur  Maktab Perguruan Temenggong Ibrahim, Johor  Maktab Perguruan Tengku Ampuan Afzan, Pahang  Maktab Perguruan Teruntum, Pahang  Maktab perguruan Tuanku Bainun, Pulau Pinang  Maktab Perguruan Sains Bintulu, Sarawak</p>

Source: *Education Guide Malaysia, Challenger Concept, Kuala Lumpur, 1994;*  
*Education Quarterly, Emigen Sdn Bhd Publisher, Issue No. 2 – 6, 1998-1999.*

**Table 1.1(cont.)**

**Polytechnic Education**

Upper secondary school leavers can also choose to enter Polytechnics to become either skilled technical assistants and technicians in the various engineering fields, or junior and middle level executives required by the commercial and service sectors. Polytechnics also promote research and development projects in collaboration with businesses and industries. At present there are nine polytechnics in Malaysia providing training in engineering and commerce at the technician and junior executive levels. They offer a full time three-year diploma programs and a two-year certificate programs. They are:

Politeknik Batu Pahat, Johor  
Politeknik Kota Bharu, Kelantan  
Politeknik Kuching, Sarawak  
Politeknik Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan  
Politeknik Seberang Prai, Pulau Pinang  
Politeknik Shah Alam, Selangor  
Politeknik Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, Kedah  
Politeknik Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah, Pahang  
Politeknik Ungku Omar, Perak

**University Education**

In Malaysia, there are nine local public universities, one international university and one higher institute of learning in Malaysia providing undergraduate (first bachelor degree) and post graduate studies (master degree and Ph.D). The general entry requirement for the undergraduate studies is STPM qualification or pre-university programs or its equivalent. The following is a list of public universities:

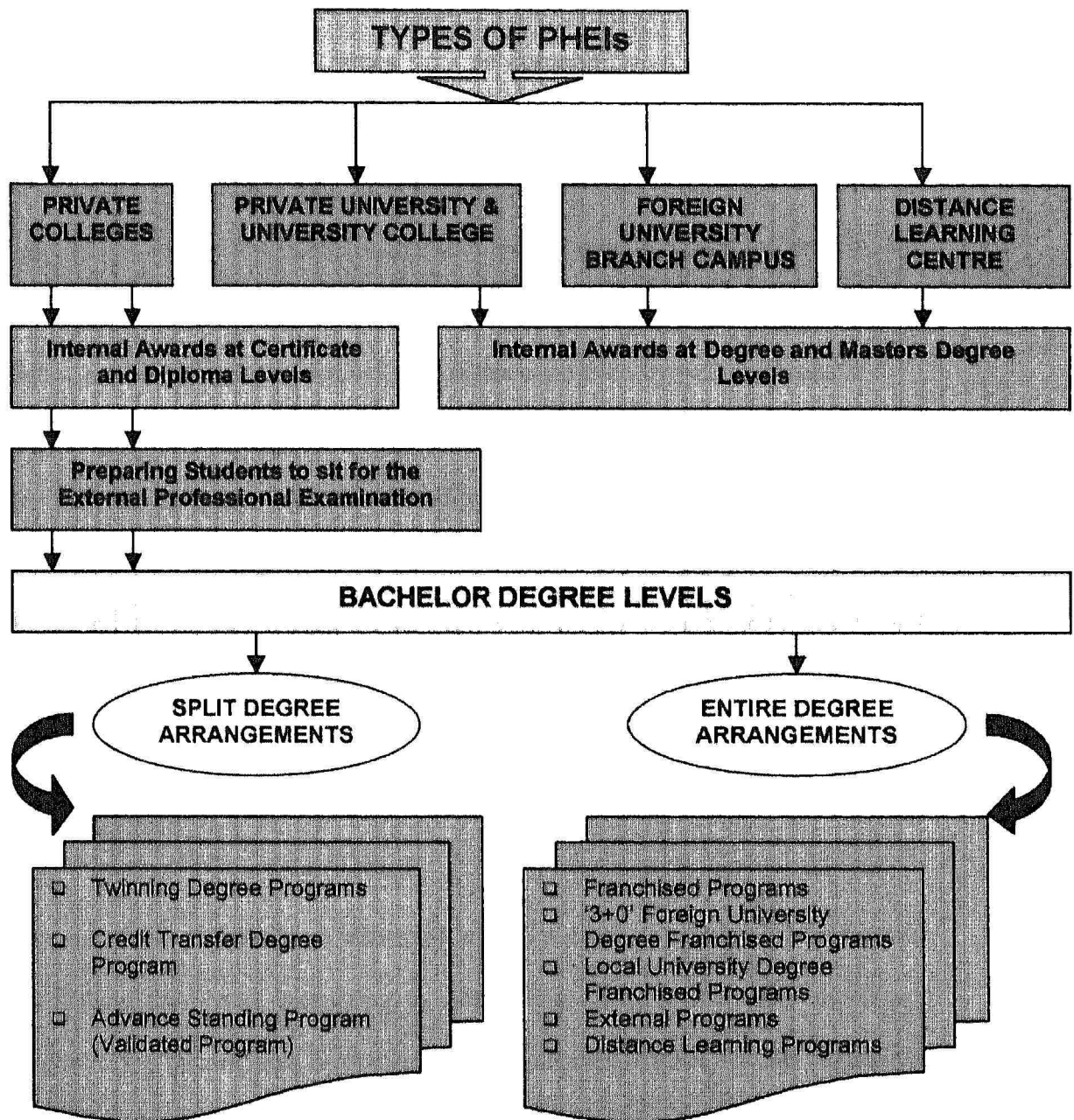
- Universiti Malaya (UM)
- Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
- Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)
- Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)
- Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)
- Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)
- Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)
- Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS)
- Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)
- International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)
- Institut Teknologi Tun Hussein Onn (ITTHO)

The most acceptable university entrance qualification for undergraduate studies (first bachelor degree) are the Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (equivalent to GCE 'A' level, UK) or pre-university matriculation programme or its equivalent. The first nine public universities on the list as well as ITTHO are local universities fully funded by the Government. There is an international university, namely IIUM which was established in 1983. Although it was set up by the Malaysian government, this university operates as a company under the ownership of a board representing the university's sponsoring governments and organizations, which include Malaysia (host nation), the Maldives, Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Source: *Education Guide Malaysia, Challenger Concept, Kuala Lumpur, 1994;*  
*Education Quarterly, Emigen Sdn Bhd Publisher, Issue No. 2 – 6, 1998-1999.*

**Chart 1.2:**

**An Overview: Types of Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) in Malaysia.**



*Source: Illustrated from various sources on private higher education, especially from Education Quarterly, Emigen Sdn Bhd Publisher, Issue No. 2 – 6, 1998-1999.*