

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

In the previous chapters, we have gone through discussions on the development of private higher education sector, factors contributed to its development and followed by achievements and challenges faced by this sector. Finally, this chapter will attempt an analysis of potentials of Malaysian private higher education (PHE) in Malaysia. 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.

### **5.1 Potentials of Malaysian Private Higher Education (PHE)**

The elitist nature of higher education has been diminished. In 1970s in the United Kingdom for example, only 10% of school-leavers went to college. Today that figure is over 30%. A similar mass increase in degree holders has taken place in Malaysia. The demand for higher education is definitely on the rise. Two major factors associated with this increase are population growth and increase in family income. However, with economic expansion, the cost of establishing a college is likely to rise. Moreover, with stiffer competition, the profit margin is expected to be squeezed. Competition will take place between the small colleges and the well established ones.

Besides that, there may also be a **ranking system** among all education institutions, which will be opposed by the government. Then, there may also be a new requirement that private institutions need to provide a proper education system with setting up a proper campus (with complete academic and non-academic facilities). This will add further to the cost of operating private higher education institutions (PHEIs). In this respect, only the well established PHEIs will be able to afford these facilities and again the small PHEIs will face stiffer competition. Although, the Ministry of Education aware that many are unhappy with the proposal that LAN or National Accreditation Board should rank all private and public institutions, it stressed that ranking will be done in a positive spirit.<sup>1</sup>

However, on the other hand, **more foreign universities** are expected to establish their branch campuses in Malaysia as government policy is liberalized further. The number of foreign students from the Southeast Asian region is also expected to increase as more foreign universities come to operate in Malaysia. The scenario in the next millennium will be the escalation of the internationalization of higher education in Malaysia. In addition, prospects for further internationalization also enhanced by expanding graduate programs.

The last ten years have seen a dramatic increase in educational options for Malaysian students. As of today, the degree holders have been increased. With a

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<sup>1</sup> *Education Quarterly*, "A Summary of the Key Points Made by Education Minister", Issue No. 6, September/October, 1999, p. 44.

wide employment opportunity from the expansion of higher education sector plus the need for highly qualified lecturers to be recruited in higher education institutions, it has led to an increase in demand for post-graduate and also doctoral studies (master's degree and Ph.D). Therefore, the **graduate education** has begin to play a crucial role in imparting knowledge to students in order to produce more knowledge and skilled manpower in the country. All these are considered as a motivation for Malaysia to turn into a center of education excellence.

Besides local public universities, local private colleges and also universities, there are now many quality, affordable alternatives offered either entirely, or mostly, locally. They are foreign twinning programs, foreign external programs, '3+1' programs, branch campuses, credit transfer/advanced standing, professional and vocational courses and local university franchise programs. Today, there is a new addition to the distance-learning scene so called open learning. **Open learning** is definitely a breakthrough in the development of education and training opportunities. Open learning provides access to new skills, new techniques and new technology for those who would otherwise have difficulty securing training under conventional methods. It is cost-effective, enrolment is unlimited, time to qualify is not stringent and quality is not short-changed. The '**Virtual University**' and **University on Air (UoA)** are among the arrangements associated with open learning concept. The prospects for open learning in the higher education arena is to create opportunities for the development of the Smart Schools which aim to prepare students for a knowledge society. As implication, there will be more

independent learners who will later become the knowledge worker that the country needs to leapfrog into the Information Age.

Potentials of private higher education (PHE) sector even clearly can be seen from the **educational reforms** listed by the Ministry of Education, as below. In order to develop a world-class system geared towards a technological society, the Ministry lists the following as the main areas of focus:

- Promoting computer literacy at all levels
- Upgrading vocational schools to technical schools
- Initiating the development of electronic resource centers
- Access to Internet and multimedia capabilities
- Introducing computer-aided learning in the Malay Language, English Language, Mathematics and Science
- Emphasis on Science and Technology courses
- Development of Smart Schools

As a conclusion, the government is intensifying its effort to internationalise education and training. In its 1999 national budget, the education and training sector was given the greatest allocation (RM13.5 billion).<sup>2</sup> The government also appreciated the private higher education sector for their excellence performance and hopes for their best outcomes in order to make Malaysia a Center of Educational Excellence.

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<sup>2</sup> *Education Quarterly*, "A Summary of the Key Points Made by Education Minister", Issue No. 6, September/October, 1999, p. 44.

## **5.2 Summary of Conclusion and Suggestions**

The rapid growth of the private higher education sector has become a cause for concern amongst students, their parents and the public in general. Everybody wants to invest in higher education sector and open new colleges. Many businessmen are going into education. It almost seems as if those who have failed in other businesses end up starting a college. However, those with knowledge of education only will succeed.

In the first until the fourth chapter, we have come across the introduction part of private higher education (PHE) and then some literature review with various opinions on various relevant aspects. Discussions on major factors influencing the development of PHE and also on achievements as well as challenges faced by the sector were in the following subsequent section. Whereas, the potentials of the PHE industry in Malaysia were just discussed in the initial section of this chapter. Now, all those issues discussed in the initial chapters will be summarized in this section as a conclusion. The summaries of conclusion made are as below:

1. The growth, development and progress of a nation is very much dependent on national education attainments. In the 1970s, implementation of government policies in the education sector drastically reduced the chances of a large portion of school leavers from attaining tertiary education. Most students had difficulty getting into public university.

Those who could afford to pay the cost studying overseas were more interested to pursue their studies there. Whereas, for the rest of them who have no choice end up with decision to pursue their studies in the limited professional courses in the country. In the early 1980s, there were courses from overseas universities conducted here to prepare local students for designated overseas universities. Today, it turned into '3+0' programs. In early part of 1990s, we had 289 private colleges of different sizes. Today, however, we have more than 600 private higher education institutions, offering more than 1000 courses in Malaysia.

2. There are a number of factors to be considered as a major contributor towards the blossoming of private higher education sector over the last three decades in Malaysia. The government, private sector, foreign universities and colleges have played an important role through their initiatives and co-operation in relevant matters. A rapid economic growth plus with a rapid growth of Information Technology (IT) has also spurred the growth of private higher education. On the other hand, the problems of shortage in manpower for various sectors has caused many parties to involve in private higher education industry in order to meet the changing manpower and industrial demands. At the same time, we can say that the demand and supply for private higher education have blossomed this sector as one of the contributor sector towards the development of the nation.

3. Achievements by certain Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) or to the overall private higher education (PHE) sector can be seen in various aspects. Being a contributor towards the diversity of curriculum deemed relevant for national economic development is considered as a main achievement by this sector. Others are such as the establishment of franchised degree programs, which consist of Foreign University Degree Franchised Programs and Local Public University Degree Franchised Programs. The establishment of private university and foreign university branch campuses in Malaysia, establishment of more professional and vocational courses as well as the establishment of distance learning or open learning are also some of the successful new events which have taken place in recent years. The overall achievement by private higher education sector in Malaysia can be seen from its status today. As of today, PHEIs in Malaysia provides not only local community but also foreigners with plentiful of study options and choice of universities to meet their interest and budget.
4. Although there were so many factors that have blossomed the PHE sector until it did success in various areas, yet the challenges the sector faced were not little. Among the aspects that were challenging for PHEIs in Malaysia are to get the recognition of courses in their institutions, facing higher education policies, maintain their academic standard, excellence students' performance and reputation. They also have to manage their

institutions well with experienced, relevant and high-qualified human capital as well as with sufficient academic and non-academic facilities in their PHEIs. Besides, they have to face a stiffer competition if they are the smaller institutions. Finally, they have to manage the cultural issues according to our country's background.

5. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, private higher education sector has a bright future. It can be seen from various events and also promotion, which have started taking place recently and most of it are expected to take place in future. To establish more foreign universities, expansion on graduate studies, introducing open learning and various educational reforms by Ministry as well as private sector will enhance the capacity, capability and quality of private higher education sector overall. Although the potentials are there, this sector has to be hard working forever and at the same time, they also need continues helping hand from government sector in certain matters.

Turning Malaysia into a center of education excellence is not an easy job. There have to be stringent measures to ensure that the quality of higher education is not compromised by its rapid expansion through various private universities and colleges. The LAN or National Accreditation Board Act was legislated and empowered to monitor, review and oversee the standard and quality of courses of



study in all institutions of higher learning for accreditation of certificates, diplomas and degrees. This move will push all private higher institutions to enhance their excellence in teaching and research, which at last will produce a quality management in their institutions.

With various reforms and changes in the higher education sector in Malaysia, the education opportunities became wide for all levels and groups of Malaysian community. However, financial assistance for certain groups especially the lower income ones need to be considered by private higher education sector in their hurry to develop and gain profit. PHEIs must not ignore the lower income groups, as there are still many deserving students who are being deprived of a tertiary education because of financial constraints. Moreover, with the current economic downturn, many schools-leavers from low income groups with intention to study locally or abroad failed to do so due to their financial constraint. Although the government has tried to overcome this problem through the legislation of the National Higher Education Fund Board Act 1997 with an initial grant of RM100 million to RM200 million, the Board's functions or even its existence have still not reached the society concerned. Its' functions of providing and granting educational loans and financial assistance should be acknowledged to those who are desperately in need of financial aid to further their studies.

As Malaysia already moved towards 21<sup>st</sup> century, education and human resource development have both constituted a big challenge in the Malaysian economy.

There is an urgent need to meet changing manpower demands created by the shift to an information and technology-based economy. Therefore, Malaysia has to move and be active in the Information Technology (IT) industry in order to achieve the vision of becoming an industrialized nation and an IT world player as well as a center of educational excellence.

As a conclusion, Malaysian private higher education (PHE) sector had more chances and opportunities to blossom since the last three decades. Although most of the private higher education institutions (PHEIs) had faced many challenges and still facing it, yet this PHE sector seems to have a better future prospect. Therefore, if those involved have taken the right path and smartly able to utilize those opportunities available in the PHE industry, they could be able to contribute to the community and at the same time they can enjoy their profits.