

Chapter 4: Courses/Programmes Offered by the Private Higher Institution

This chapter will study on what are the courses and the programmes offered by the private higher institution. Later this chapter will analyse whether the courses offered are useful for Malaysia's economic development especially in meeting the objective of producing an adequate number of skilled and quality workforce to meet the man power requirements of the country in the Seventh Malaysia plan. Furthermore, it will discuss about the costs involved, compared them in every programmes and the pro and contra of selecting certain programme.

The courses offered by the private higher education are usually for the secondary school leavers i.e. students who have taken their SPM/SPMV and STPM examinations. There are two types of education: post secondary education and higher education. Those that choose to study the post secondary education will study their pre-U, 'A' level or matriculation and later further their studies and obtain degree by overseas university or obtain professional status such as accountant, lawyer, engineering and more.

As for those that choose higher education, usually for the STPM leavers that did not manage to secure a place in public universities. They do not need to study the pre-U or matriculation because STPM is sufficient for them to go straight away to obtain a degree and are free to choose whichever programme they desire as long as they fulfill the requirements. They need to study three to four years to obtain the degree. After that, the students will be awarded advance diploma or degree. There are four types of private higher education institution, which is registered under the Ministry of Education.

Under the Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEI) Act 1996²⁵,

Box 4.1: Under the Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEI) Act 1996²⁵, part V of the Act, The new legislation provides that the approval for the establishment of a private college and its registration are separate matters. Private college may be allowed to operate after approval is granted. However the institution is required to get registration within five year.

They are private higher educational institutions, private university and university colleges, branch campus of foreign university and distance learning center. These institutions depend on the Private Higher Educational Institute Act 1996 to determine their categories. The private higher educational institute without the university or university college status is known as private college. Other wise, it is known as private university status under condition it was granted the private university status under the PHEI Act 1996. They are allowed to confer the qualification of Bachelor degree.

Some of the private colleges even adopt inter-institutional arrangements and offer degree programs leading to post-graduate or master degree through joint programs with foreign universities. Both the foreign university and the local private college set the curriculum of the programs. Anyway, the local private colleges can offer any particular academic subject to the foreign universities. Therefore, students who registered with the local private college at the same time registered as the student of foreign university. By the end of the course, students will obtain degrees that are conferred by the foreign university. Even though so, under some circumstances, students need to study abroad to fulfill the residential requirements.

²⁵ Educational Act 1996.

The courses offered in private colleges are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Private Colleges Programmes

Internal Qualification degree at certificate and diploma level	Bachelor's first degree (By local or foreign)	External professional examinations (local or overseas)
<p>In areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountancy • Advertising • Marketing • Business studies • Computer studies • Engineering studies • Fashion and Design • Hotel and Hospitality • Health services • Journalism • Public relations • Performing arts • Secretarial Science • Administration • Travel Tourism Information 	<p>By way of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twinning degree • Credit transfer • Advance Standing Program • Distance learning • Branch Campuses <p>In areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountancy • Aviation • Business management • Commerce • Engineering • Education • Economics • Technical • Technology and etc 	<p>By the following Examination bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLP • IBBM/TEM • MLVK • MACPA • MII <p>Overseas examination bodies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACCA • CIMA • ISCA • ABE • CGLI • LCCI

Open/Virtual learning	Private Local Universities	Local University Franchise Programmes
<p>By way of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer • Correspondence notes • Internet (e-mail and intranet system) • CD-Rom • Television and Video conferencing • Interact with lecturers <p>In areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information technology • Business • Multimedia 	<p>The local university that are owned by private</p> <p>In areas of :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Engineering • Information Technology • Management 	<p>By way of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • franchising their programmes to private colleges • Student can pursue the degree without studying at the local university. <p>In areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business and Management • Computer • Information Technology • Commerce

4.1 Internal Programme

Under the internal program, colleges will offer certificate and diploma courses. The local private college will follow the guidelines set by the Ministry of Education to set their curriculum and examinations. The courses vary in different basis, either on full time, part time or on distance learning basis. Sometimes, the courses are validated by renowned oversea higher educational institutions abroad. The courses offered under the award of certificate and diploma were:

Table 4.2

Courses Offered Under Internal Programme

Arts, Business and Humanities	
Accountancy	Advertising
Banking and Finance	Business
International Trade	Commerce
Office administration	Management
Marketing	Economics
Art and Design	Humanities
Law	Public Relation
Science, Technology and Engineering	
Applied Science	Computer Science
Architecture	Building studies
Engineering	Industrial Skill Training

4.2 Overseas or Local Bachelor Degree Programmes

As for the overseas or local Bachelor degree program, it was plan through typical arrangement between private colleges and overseas or local public university. It offered by way of linking arrangement with the universities in which the qualification is conferred by the linked universities. These courses need to get permission from Ministry of Education. Part VII of the PHEI Act:

Education Part VII of the Private Higher Education Institutions Act²⁶

Box 4.2: Education Part VII of the PHEI Act Section 77:1 provides that no private education institutions shall conduct any course of study or training programme jointly, in association, affiliation or collaboration or otherwise, with a university or institution of higher education or other educational institution or organization within or outside Malaysia, except with the approval in writing of the Minister (Education Act 1996).

This was done through twinning program, credit transfer, advance standing program, external degree and distance learning. The areas of study are almost the same as the courses offered in the internal program. The main difference is that the student will obtain a degree instead of certificate of diploma after attending the course.

4.2.1 Credit Transfer Degree Programme

The credit transfer started with the American Universities under American degree Programme (ADP) and later it is extended to other countries such as United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. The student under this program need to fulfill the total number of credit hours as stipulated in the program requirement by the university. Each subject studies is assigned with a certain number of credit hours. The students who studied locally can transfer the course in stipulated credit hours to the overseas university linked to complete the degree program.

²⁶ Educational Act 1996.

A student of a local private college transfer the course (a stipulated credit) which he or she has studied locally, to one of the overseas linked to complete the degree program. In order to graduate with a degree, the student has to fulfill the total number of credit hours as stipulated in the program requirement by the university. Each subject studied (locally and overseas) is assigned with a certain number of credit hours.

Local private colleges formulate courses syllabus in consideration with the requirement of the curriculum of the overseas university. Broadly, an American degree student is required to accumulate 120 to 130 credit hours for the award of Bachelor degree²⁷. Even though so, there are also some of the credit transfer were done by connecting to the local universities.

Besides that, credit transfer program does not force any local college to be bound with a particular university overseas. Students are free to choose the University of their choices. By doing so, overseas university therefore are not obliged to admit any student under credit transfer scheme unless the university is satisfied with the entry qualifications of the studies.

Students are expected to pay tuition fees in the region of RM 2,000 to RM 3,000 per semester (usually 3 semester per academic year) for the portion done locally. If the student go on to complete the degree in the United States, budget for around US\$ 10,000 to US\$ 30,000 for one academic year depending on the type of college and location²⁸.

²⁷ Bhaumik (1998).

²⁸ Education Quarterly, July/August, 2000, pg.55.

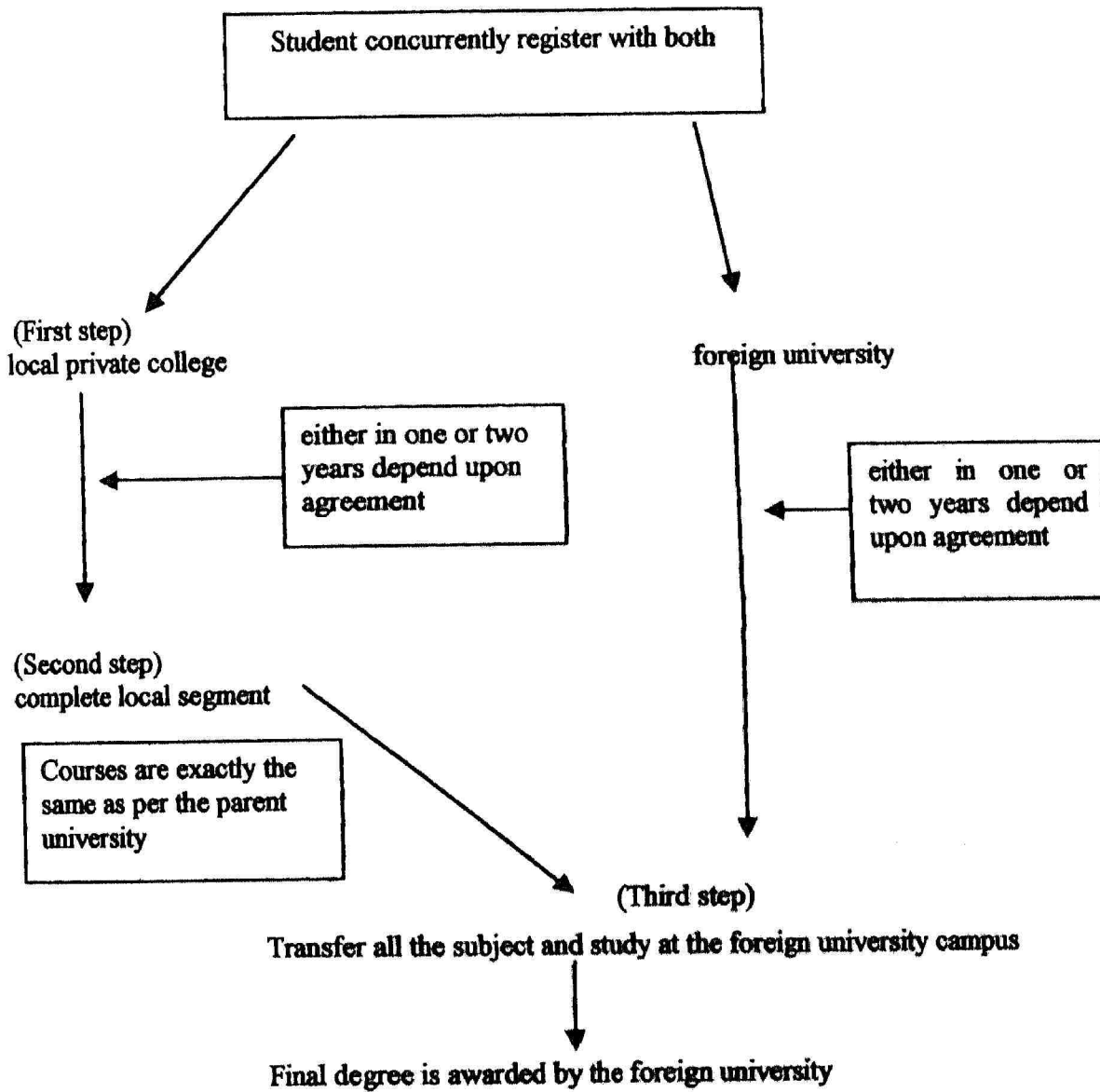
The costs of completing the degree overseas is high and yet the quality of courses offered by local colleges may be variable and not all credits may be transferable to the university of the students' choice.

4.2.2 Twinning Degree Programme

This program is more or less the same as the credit transfer degree program. The private college will conduct half of the degree course and the overseas university conducts final half of the degree course. Usually, the curriculum conducted is the same as conducted in the overseas university. The situation is the same as study overseas. The students in this case manage to do the course locally instead of studying abroad and save the living expenses, which cost quite an amount compared to study the whole course abroad.

Most of the local private colleges offer twinning programmes in a variety of disciplines. Most of the twinning programmes have traditionally been with United Kingdom and Australian countries. The twinning degree programme is conducted in such way:

Figure 3: Flow of Twinning Programme Conducted



The twinning programme allows the student to complete either one or two years of the studies in Malaysia (“1+2” or “2+1”) before proceeding to the twinning partner institution overseas for one or two years to complete the degree. The portion has done locally usually mirror the programme of the twinning partner.

The newly innovative “3+0” program is basically an extension of the Twinning program, where the student can complete their final year in Malaysia without having to go overseas like in the Twinning program in which they need to spend one or two years at the universities abroad. Malaysia Government has approved only 26 major private colleges to conduct this programme (Table 4.2). This is a very cost-effective program as compared to going overseas. Obviously, the student will miss out the exposure of going overseas and some of the colleges also being facing a problem of sufficient infrastructure and expertise to conduct the final year. Total fees for all 3 years range from just under RM 30,000 to just RM 60,000, depending on the course, college and foreign university involved²⁹.

Tuition fees in the private colleges range from RM 7,000 to RM 12,000 per academic year. Budget at least \$10,000 for once academic year in the United Kingdom or A\$ 20,000 for Australia (this will vary depending on the type of course the student choose and the location they wish to study at)³⁰.

²⁹ Education quarterly, July/August 2000, pg.54.

³⁰ Education Quarterly, July/August,2000, pg.55.

Under the Twinning program, it provides the ideal mix of going overseas and studying locally. But, its cost for the final year remains a burden for the student. Furthermore, the quality of the local colleges and foreign universities twinned with them can be very variable.

4.2.3 Advanced Standing Programme

This program is more or less the same as the twinning program. The advantage of this program is that it is more flexible than the twinning program. The curriculum of the private college is moderated by a group of overseas university to determine the quality of the student. Under this program, a student has the flexibility by not bound to one university. They are free to choose among the consortium of overseas universities to complete their degree program. Since the quality is assumed by the group of overseas universities that set up their curriculum.

Anyway, a student under this program should not study more than three years in the private college. The overseas university confers the final award of degree and the local private colleges are based upon requirement of foreign university degree program or professional bodies developed to the course curriculum.

4.2.4 Distance Learning Programme

Under this program, students enroll themselves directly with the foreign university and private college plays its role as a tuition class. Students under this programme is more dependant because the way this classes conducted is more to self-study. Students do not need to face to face with tutors or lecturers in a classroom setting overtime the class are conducted. They study by themselves through media as the third party. This type of self-study have printed material which are used together with other kinds of teaching techniques and media equipment such as television, radio, video cassettes, audio-visual teaching aids and computers as well as other electronic medium in the teaching-learning process.

Therefore, as such coursework, assignments contribute part of the percentage to 100 percent of the overall results. The attendance is not necessarily in this program. The students can enhance their professional status with academic qualification and yet to stay ahead in the job markets. The main problem in this program is how much a student understands the handout and to what extend does a student learned. The lecturer usually left after their classes, and they are left with their own to do the assignment with very little guidance. Assignments and coursework cannot prove its originality as may be done by other people.

4.2.5 Branch Campuses

A branch campus is first type of foreign education that is allowed to confer degree courses in the country using the same courses as in the foreign country and thus delivered awards to the same standards as the “headquarters’ in the home country. The establishment of branch campus of foreign universities is done at the invitation of the Malaysian government. The foreign universities that have set up their branch in Malaysia are the Monash University, Curtin University of Technology, and the University of Nottingham (Table 4.3). Fees for these branch campuses differ from university to university. Fees for Monash range between RM 17,000 to RM 29,000 per year depending on the course and level of study. Curtin’s tuition fees for the Bachelor of Business Administration programme is RM 12,500 per year. Nottingham’s fees range between RM 25,500 to RM 41,998 per year for undergraduate course³¹.

Table 4.3

Branch Campuses

Foreign University Branch Campus	Country of origin
i) Monash University Sunway Campus	Australia
ii) Curtin University of Technology Sarawak Campus	Australia
iii) The University of Nottingham Campus in Malaysia	United Kingdom

Source: Education Guide 2000, pg.214

4.2.6 External Degree Program

Distance learning program and external degree program are almost the same. Under this program, student is registered as an external student with the foreign university directly. Local private college plays the same role as tutorial center and provides tutorial materials for the student, the same as in the distance learning program. Furthermore, the private college also prepares the student to sit for 100 percent assessment.

The difference between external degree program and distance learning program is that the distance learning program pays more attention to assignment and coursework compare to external degree program. Under the external degree program, the university involve provides the courses and conducts the examinations at one of the appointed overseas centers but only the authorized examination bodies are allowed to supervise the examination.

The most established and will known foreign external programme if the one offered by the University of London (UOL). Many local colleges offer teaching support, but yet the university may not have formal arrangements with these colleges with the exception of courses such as the LSE Diploma in Economics, which require official recognition from the LSE.

³¹ Ibid.

Students are expected to pay between RM 4,000 to RM 6,000 per year in tuition fees to local colleges. On top of this, the student need to factor in the costs of application, registration and examination fees payable to the university in around £2,000 in total for London.

By under this programme, students can obtain a prestigious degree at very cost-effective rates. Flexibility of study arrangements provides an attractive option to those with family and work commitments. But, the absence of direct teaching and comprehensive resource support on the part of the university makes a student not feeling 'belong' and hard to understand their studies. Again the quality of tuition by local colleges may be variable and those studying on their own miss out interaction and exposure.

4.3 External Professional Examinations

Not only do the colleges offered the certificate, diploma and degree courses, it also offer the courses that lead to qualifications awarded by External Examination Bodies either locally or overseas. Most of the qualification are practical/vocational in nature, as opposed to academic and are designed to produce technically skilled members of the work force. They prepare students to sit for professional examinations and become the professionals after graduation. The examination bodies are such as CLP, MACPA, IBBM and others. As for the external bodies are such as ACCA, CIMA, ISCA, ABE, CGLI and

others. Similar to external programmes in that students are free to make their own study arrangements.

These examination bodies will conduct the professional examinations. Besides that, these examination bodies are also a part of professional association that set the course syllabus or curriculum. In this way, they can assure the qualifications relating to trade or specific skills. After qualifies themselves to the examinations, the student need to fulfill other requirement such as working experiences for certain periods of years, then only they are awarded membership by the professional association. Usually these examination bodies are known as the “qualifying’ examination bodies.

As for the “academic” examination bodies, it is an institution of international standing manages academic examination body. It awards qualifications to those who have passed the examination without considerate whether they are not the association or body representing their specific profession and thus offering the membership. Even though so, these examination bodies need to be the examination bodies that only set syllabus, examination and confer the qualifications. These examination bodies are such as LCCI, SAM, CGLI and others.

The professional programs also offer their courses at certificate and diploma levels. The private local colleges conduct course to prepare students to sit for external and internal examinations set by both local and foreign examination bodies leading to professional and semi-professional qualifications.

Registration and exam fees for professional/examination bodies will vary. So, the fees charged by local colleges for tuition will also vary. On average, the total cost will be around RM 12,000 to RM 20,000³².

4.4 Open/Virtual Learning Universities

It is the latest innovative of higher education study in this new millennium. Many foreign universities are offering their degree via distance learning. It is a flexible mode of study using a variety of delivery methods such as correspondence course notes and television. This is almost the same as the distance learning programme but the infrastructure and the materials used are more comprehensive. CD-Roms, computer, internet (email and intranet system) were used supplemented by some "real" contact with lecturers and peers. Virtual education format provides flexibility, letting students plan and study in their own time, pace and space.

UNITAR (University Tun Abdul Razak) is the first virtual university in Malaysia. Student can study degree courses in Business and Information Technology. The public universities have formed a consortium, Multimedia technology Enhancement Operations (METEOR) to coordinate the distance learning programmes.

This type of learning is cheaper compared to study in the universities of foreign higher institutions. Besides that it is flexible for the student to arrange their study especially for those with family and work commitments. The problem is that there is lack

³² Education Quarterly, July/August, 2000, p.58.

of interaction of students with the lecturer even though email has played its role of reducing the distance gap between them and yet it is not enough. This type of study is more suitable for the more mature students.

As for the cost, it is more cost-effective. One can study and yet maintaining their work and at the end obtaining the Bachelor degree. The cost of completing a degree after SPM is RM 30,000. A 3-year local university distance learning degree ranges from RM 12,000 to RM 25,000³³.

4.5 Private Local Universities

Previously, none of the private colleges were allowed to confer degree courses or to establish universities. Now, there are 4 main private universities: University Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN), Multimedia University (University Telekom), University Teknologi Petronas (UTP) and International Medical University (IMU) and more seems to be emerging in an indirect way such as the branch campuses or the programmes offered to joint with the foreign universities. These private local universities offered a variety of courses mainly in Business, Engineering, Information Technology and Management.

Students studying the local private universities can obtain their degrees even though didn't manage to pursue a place in the local universities. Compared to going overseas to obtain degrees, student now can have it done locally. Furthermore, the curriculum and the content are directly relevant and applicable to the Malaysia context.

³³ Education Quarterly, July/August,2000, p.56.

The tuition fees for undergraduate programmes range from RM 6,000 to RM 13,500 per academic year depending on the type and level of programme³⁴. Anyway, the private local universities need to take their time to develop and establish their academic reputation and credibility.

4.6 Local University Franchise Programme

It is almost the same as the twinning program with the foreign countries. The main difference is that the joint partners are now the local universities. The local universities, such as University Putera Malaysia (UPM) and University Science Malaysia (USM) have franchised their programmes to private colleges so that the student can pursue their courses and be awarded without studying at the university. Some of the examples are in Table 4.4 :

³⁴ Education Quarterly, July/August, 2000, p. 58.

Table 4.4

Franchised Colleges with Local Public University

Private Colleges	Partner-Malaysian Public University
1. DISTED COLLEGE	UNIVERSITY SAINS MALAYSIA
2. IKRAM COLLEGE	UNIVERSITI PUTERA MALAYSIA
3. INSTITUT L&G TWINTech	UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA
4. KOLEJ UNITI	UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA
5. KOLEJ YAYASAN MELAKA	UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA UNIVERSITI PUTERA MALAYSIA
6. PRIME COLLEGE	UNIVERSITI PUTERA MALAYSIA
7. PUSAT TEKNOLOGI DAN PENGURUSAN LANJUTAN	UNIVERSITI PUTERA MALAYSIA UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA
8. SAL COLLEGE	UNIVERSITI PUTERA MALAYSIA
9. STAMFORD COLLEGE	UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA
10. TERENGGANU ADVANCED TECHNICAL INSTITUTE	UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA

Sources: Education Guide 2000, pg.214

4.7 Conclusion

The private sector is expected to play a more active role at all levels of education with the major expansion in higher education. Therefore, the government encourages the private sector to focus their efforts on the provision of science and technology-related courses. Along with this, the government also implemented the PHEI Act 1996 to enable

the private sector to establish degree-granting institutions. It was to enable the foreign universities to set up branch campuses in the country and thus increase enrolment and output at the degree and diploma level.

If we examine the course offered by the private sector, only two out of ten are in science, engineering and technical related fields. Other courses are mainly focus on business and trade or more to service sector which is more market driven. The professional courses were also mainly focus to the trade and services sector. Towards this end, the institute will expand courses at the diploma and degree levels through twinning programs with foreign institutions of higher learning.

If we compare the costs among the programmes (Table 4.5), we will notice that the cheapest programmes are Distance learning and professional course and the foreign twinning is the most expensive programme. This is because student studying under this programme need to go overseas to further their study and this includes the costs of study overseas which is much higher due to foreign exchange. Above this all, it is up to the students to decide their choice depends to their qualification, ability and interest.

Table 4.5

Comparative Costs among the Programme

Comparative Costs*	
Local Franchise/External	RM 15,000 – RM 30,000
Distance Learning	RM 12,000 – RM 24,000
Foreign Twinning (UK '2+1')	RM 80,000 upwards
'0' program	RM 30,000 – RM 60,000
Foreign "Branch" Campus	RM 40,000 – RM 90,000
Credit Transfer (US '3+1')	RM 65,000 upwards
Foreign External (UOL)	RM 30,000
Virtual (UNITAR)	RM 22,500
Professional	RM 12,000 – RM 20,000
Private local University	RM 30,000 – RM 50,000

*Approximate estimates based on 3 years after STPM/ 'A' levels (except for 4 years US credit transfer programme).

Sources: Education Quarterly, July/August, 2000.

As recently due to the economic crisis, the demand for the "3+0" programme is the most popular among the programmes, but as it is projected, the twinning programme of "2+1" or "1+2" will be hot sell in the future market and the market for the "3+0" will decrease. Student with much exposure to the foreign countries have a better market value compare to the students who obtain their degree locally under the '3+0" programme due to their experience and command of English which is vital in the private sector. Even though so, it very much depends to the course under this programme. If it is a computer or information course that is more technical that do not need the verbal skills or experience, then the "3+0" programme will be able to maintain its market from deteriorating.

The objective on education and skill training programs in producing an adequate number of skilled and quality workforce to meet the man power requirements of the country in the Seventh Malaysia plan remains a problem to be solved. We know that most of the private institutions is profit driven and only offer the course that is “soft option” such as the business courses and the courses that is easy for the week student to cope on, where it is more profitable. Therefore, the government should take affords such as providing subsidy to encourage the private sector to provide the so called “hard option” course which is not market-driven especially the engineering and natural science courses. After all, it all depends on the objectives of the private institution, it is whether they give priority to the quality of education or foresee the education as a profit making industry regardless of its quality.

Even though so, the effort of meeting the objectives in Seventh Malaysia Plan still continues. The role of the private sector in providing skill-training opportunities is expected to increase substantially. The high cost of overseas training and the expanding market demand for skilled workers will encourage the private sector to establish training institutions and expand training programs. The private sector companies are also expected to enhance their training activities through greater utilization of the HRDF (Human Resource Development Fund) and participation in skill development centers established by state governments. In addition trade and industry associations will be encourage undertaking industry-related skill training.

The issues began when too many companies began to involve in the skills training and provide diplomas and degree. What will become to the value of the diploma or degree holders? Will there be 'inflation' of higher education of where they produce over access of graduate? To what extend the quality of the skill training to be enough for the companies need? These are the question we need to pay attention for. We don't want the higher education produce the adequate quantity but not the quality.