

CONTEXT FOR THE NATIONAL DATA: MALAYSIA

Malaysian higher education has expanded rapidly as the provision of universal secondary education has resulted in increased demand. On the public side, 2002 data show 11 universities, 5 university colleges, 6 polytechnics, and 27 teacher-training colleges and there are plans to build a community college in each of the 193 parliamentary constituencies.

Whereas the state was traditionally the overwhelming provider of higher education, massification has brought tremendous expansion of private higher education in the last decade. The number of private higher educational institutions rose from 156 in 1992 to 632 in 2000. The number fell to 534 by 2002 due to two factors. One is government closings, attributed to malpractice. The other is merger with other institutions. Of the 534, 11 are universities, 1 university college, 4 branch campuses of foreign universities, 3 branch campuses of local universities – and 518 are private colleges. Most of the private colleges are concentrated in the Klang valley for about 45 percent of the colleges are located around the capital city, Kuala Lumpur.

Unlike all the private universities, other private institutions are not allowed to confer their own degrees. To overcome this obstacle, some of the bigger private colleges and institutes establish linkages with foreign universities as well as local universities to offer external degrees, twinning and credit transfer programs. Among these programs, as in private higher education overall, the most popular are in engineering, computer studies and business studies.

The total number of students at the tertiary level has increased from about 400,000 in 1995 to 600,000 in 2000 with 39 percent in private institutions. Female enrolments exceed male enrolments in the public universities (a 70:30 ratio in 1999), but the ratio is more balanced, 55:45, in overall tertiary enrolments. As for academic staff, the proportion of Ph.D. degree holders is only 25 percent in the public universities but a meager 5 percent in the private sector.

Since the late 1990s, the Malaysian government has put in place quality assurance mechanisms to monitor and regulate the quality of higher education in both the public and private sector. Private higher educational institutions have to obtain accreditation from the National Board of Accreditation before they can offer their programs, while public universities have to carry out regular academic audit on their educational programs.

The Program for Research On Private Higher Education (PROPHE) seeks to build knowledge about private higher education around the world. PROPHE focuses on discovery, analysis, and dissemination. PROPHE neither represents nor promotes private higher education. Its main mission is scholarship, which, in turn, should inform public discussion and policymaking. PROPHE's Working Paper series is one vehicle to promote these goals.