

Post Graduate

Branching out in education

FOR a country to progress, it needs to have a population of creative thinkers – individuals who strive to think outside the box and introduce fresh innovative ideas.

Since the late 1990s, the tertiary education industry in Malaysia has grown tremendously in terms of the number of higher learning institutions and the level of education available.

The large demand for postgraduate study along with the development of Nilai and Edcity Iskandar as education hubs are the reasons for the rise in the number of universities currently operating in Malaysia.

This also attracted reputable foreign universities to set up branch campuses in the country – elevating the number of postgraduate courses available to students.

Thanks to the Government's efforts to make the country a study destination, more students are choosing to pursue postgraduate study in Malaysia's private and public universities.

A significant number of international students from countries in the Middle East, East Asia and South-East Asia have also arrived on Malaysian shores for quality education.

The reputation of Malaysian universities in specialised fields of study has also been a major drawcard among students, allowing universities to expand and set up their own branch campuses around the country and abroad.

of Asia.”

By integrating international and intercultural dimensions into its course structure, these universities are able to produce graduates who can compete in the global marketplace with the relevant knowledge, skills and values.

Niche areas of study are another reason for the rise in education quality in Malaysian universities.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Bintulu (UPMKB) has managed to make use of the vast amount of resources available in Sarawak and expand its studies in the areas of agriculture, forestry, fisheries,

livestock, food and the environment.

“We are on par with some of the most renowned universities around the globe based on our niche areas.”

“Our current university ranking is among the top 1.5% of world universities,” says Prof Dr Bujang Kim Huat, dean of the School of Graduate Studies at Universiti Putra Malaysia.

The university offers joint higher degree programmes with universities from the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Australia, Japan and Thailand, and has courses that are exclusive to UPMKB.

Quality learning

Malaysians are assured of getting top education as only Tier One institutions – universities that are globally recognised for world-class research, academic excellence and highly prestigious scholarships – are allowed to be established in Malaysia.

Between 1998 and 2000, Monash University Malaysia, Curtin University Sarawak Malaysia (Curtin Sarawak) and The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus (UNMC) were the first foreign universities to operate in the country.

These establishments not only marked the beginning of branch campuses setting up in Malaysia but milestones for the respective universities.

Curtin Sarawak was the university's first international campus and UNMC was the first British university to have a branch campus in another country.

Since then, some of the other foreign universities that have begun operations in Malaysia include Swinburne University of Technology Sarawak Campus, Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia, Heriot-Watt University Malaysia Campus, Raffles University Iskandar, University of Reading Malaysia, Manipal International University and University of Southampton Malaysia Campus.

Come February next year, Xiamen University Malaysia will begin educating its first intake in Sepang.

With the array of top-quality institutions currently in Malaysia, universities have to ensure they continue to produce top graduates who have the relevant skill set.

Not only must universities maintain their reputable Tier One status, they need to ensure that all their programmes and courses are up to date with current industry changes and trends.

“It has become a more crowded marketplace for Malaysians in terms of foreign education and study options.”

“This is good as it means there is an extremely diverse education sector and this is a real strength,” says Prof Christine Ennew, provost and chief executive officer of UNMC.

The growth in the number of universities in Malaysia paired with improving education quality is a promising sign for a country that wishes to become a developed nation and students must take advantage of the many education opportunities available.



International exposure

Among the key factors that helped Malaysian universities raise their educational standards are its partnerships with established international universities, learning partners and industry affiliates.

This enabled local universities to draw upon collective expertise, prestige and resources to formulate and improve the quality of their courses and teaching programmes.

Asia e University (AeU) is one such institution that is internationally established under the Asia Cooperation Dialogue – an intergovernmental organisation that promotes Asian cooperation at a continental level.

Mizana Muhamad, director of marketing communications at Asia e University, says, “AeU collaborates with global educational institutions to offer quality academic and professional training programmes that are affordable and accessible.”

“It also acts as a catalyst for narrowing the digital divide among communities and nations and actively promotes e-education to meet the human capital needs