

UM on par with NUS? Not in 100 years

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YOURSAY 'It is not rocket science to conclude that racist education policies are not good for the country's education system.'

'When will UM be on par with its Singaporean twin?'

your sayPemerhati: In the 1960s, National University of Singapore (NUS) and University Malaya (UM) were roughly of about the same standard as they both recruited the best lecturers from around the world and only admitted the best students from their respective countries.

Singapore has continued with those policies and that has resulted in it maintaining its remarkably high rankings all these years.

Malaysia, on the other hand, gradually changed its policies where recruitment, promotion and admission was based not on ability but on race and religion. Consequently the standards began to slide and have reached the current low levels.

As long as Umno continues to practice its discriminatory policies, the standards will keep coming down. The previous standards can be easily restored by just resorting to the 1960 policies of recruitment and admission.

Based on past experience, it will mean that less than 20 percent of the students and staff in the best universities will be Malays. Racist Umno is unlikely to accept that. Can Pakatan Rakyat accept that and risk the political fallout?

Odin: When will UM be on par with its Singaporean twin? Answer: Let 'x' be the number of years from now and that when a person qualified for the position of education minister is appointed and he begins work.

He must nurture a batch of pupils into a pool of well-educated individuals who will excel in a wide range of disciplines and be capable of producing impressive research results and other similar measures of deep knowledge.

Let us say that will take 13 years of schooling + 8 years of studying at tertiary level + minimum of 5 years in putting knowledge into practice = 26 years.

Since Singapore already has had a 50-year head start, it will take Malaysia at least $x + 26 + 50 = (x + 76)$ years to be on par with Singapore - but at its present level,

mind you.

Over the $(x + 26)$ years, Singapore will have progressed. Therefore, at the $(x + 76)$ th year, Malaysia must have performed sufficiently better than Singapore to match what Singapore will have achieved over the previous $(x + 26)$ years.

YF: One based on merit, the other based on race. So it is not rocket science to conclude that racist education policies are not good for the country's education system.

RA 1: It is strange that Singapore with an ageing and diminishing local-born population is rising in the world university rankings.

My 'hunch' is that foreigners are being imported into Singapore university teaching staff to boost research. These research papers are published and other researchers elsewhere cite them, thus boosting Singapore's ranking.

This is an artificial process and would not last. It is one of Lee Kuan Yew's (LKY) last hoorays before he kicks the bucket.

Cala: RA 1, of course you are partly correct. To the best of my knowledge, some of NUS' most productive professors worked until 70 and beyond.

Also, LKY conceded that Singapore needs talented new migrants from China and India to make up the shortfall of low-productive Singapore parents. That is why someone said not too long ago that 30 percent of the people you see there are actually recent migrants.

To continue to compare universities of Singapore and Malaysia is meaningless and a waste of time. It is akin to comparing the governance quality of a First World nation and that of a Third World state. You know the answer and yet you are trying to force on a near 'retard' to play the catch-up game.

Tell me, how many of the Third World states progressed in the last 20 years and joined the First World club? My answer is zero. So what is the chance of Malaysia (or for that matter UM) to be able to make the grade?

UM feels contented to take in their matriculation students (pre-university) into their first-year courses. Everyone knows the criteria of intake of these students - race and connections.

The best of Malaysian students - holders of STPM - are consistently denied the

chosen courses every year, all in keeping with Dr Mahathir Mohamad's concept of selecting the 'okay' but not the best students for local universities. The real culprit is none other than Mahathir.

Consider another issue, as former PM Abdullah Ahmad Badawi readily argued (see Welsh and Chin, 2013), he did try to bring about a change in the socio-economical and political institutions which were damaged by his predecessor (Mahathir), the civil service obstructed and derailed his well-intended plan.

Indeed, Abdullah saw no hope of progress for Malaysia.

Doc: When will UM be on par with its Singaporean twin? The problem is Singapore and Malaysia have two different types of teaching modalities from primary school right up to university.

Singapore keeps raising the bar of their school education system which forces their students to be better than the generation before them. Secondly, only the cream of their students enter NUS.

In Malaysia, the story is the exact opposite. Our education system is constantly revised to ensure students can cope in school. If the bar/standard of a subject is too high, it is lowered. Thus our passing marks for SPM subjects are pathetically low.

Ipohcrite: Just restore true meritocracy and discard mediocrity in deciding university intakes.

Race should not be the promotion criterion when it comes to academic appointments but performance, intellectual acumen and the ability to write and be published in world-class academic journals.

But if these criteria are taken into consideration, 90 percent of the present academic staff will be out of work.

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