

Muhyiddin's Fantasy Education System
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Muhyiddin is said to have made this statement in light of a recent survey by Introspek Asia, which apparently revealed that 55 per cent of Malaysian adults believe that our education system is comparable to other countries, while 35 per cent said it is "better than that of developed countries".

Previously, Muhyiddin had selectively quoted part of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index Report 2011-2012, and used it as basis to prove that the quality of education in Malaysia is better than that in the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom. If this is the case, then he should answer why there is not a single Malaysian Nobel Prize winner and why is there not a single Malaysian university ranked amongst the Top 200 Universities in the world? Or when given the choice, why do more Malaysian students choose to study in the US, UK and Germany rather than in Malaysian universities?

Once again, Muhyiddin is cherry-picking favourable statistics to prove his point. For example, in the WEF report, he chose an indicator that reflects a survey of 87 "leading business executives", a sample of people who are more likely to be wealthy urban dwellers who send their children to better government schools if not private schools. It is therefore unsurprising that they would think highly of the education system.

The truth is that the reality of our education is far from the rosy picture that Muhyiddin is painting. From the same WEF report that he quoted earlier, our Secondary Education Enrolment ranking lies at 101, which points to a significant number of students dropping out after primary school and thus deprived of a chance to pursue higher education. Our ranking of 101 puts us below Thailand (94), Indonesia (91) Brunei (35) and Singapore (17) in the ASEAN region.

This worrying trend is also reflected in the Legatum Prosperity Index which shows that Malaysia has a mere 68% Secondary Education Enrolment rate, ranking us 81st in the world, while our Tertiary Education Enrolment rate of 36% ranks us at 59th, far behind most OECD countries which see enrolment rates of higher than 50% on average.

Malaysia's relatively low performance on objective or non-subjective measures such as primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment rates should be highlighted over and above that of survey opinion indicators such as on Quality of Education. Hence, to highlight this subjective indicator and to ignore the other more objective indicators is highly irresponsible and diverts attention from the problems in our education system, including that of high dropout rates leading to low enrolment rates especially at the secondary and tertiary levels.

Other international indicators rank our education system in Malaysia poorly as well. For example, in the 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) involving 75 countries, Malaysia was ranked 55th in reading ability, 57th in Mathematics ability and 52nd in Science. Our performance in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) has also seen a steady decrease from 1999 to 2007.

Data and statistics from world renowned international reports have shown time and time again that there is a crisis in Malaysian education. In fact, Malaysians do not even require a report to tell them that there is a dire problem with our education system that produces unemployable graduates who are unable to think critically. And what about the other two thirds who do not even make it to university?

Unfortunately, instead of admitting our weaknesses and searching for solutions, the Education Minister prefers to be in denial and attempts to bamboozle Malaysians with selective and subjective data in order to whitewash the true state of Malaysian education.

By continually insisting that our education system is better than that of developed nations, Muhyiddin not only reveals that he suffers from denial syndrome but that he is also stuck in fantasy and also raises questions about his competency.

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