Local education on right track

BUILDING A SCHOLASTIC HUB: Educationists agree that Malaysia must continue to address issues to stay current and relevant

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MALAYSIA is making significant progress in its education system as it continues to stress quality, say educators.

The fact that the country was ranked 38 out of 142 in terms of higher education and training qualities in the World Economic Forum’s 2011-2012 Global Competitiveness Report, is indicative that the right steps are being taken to enhance the education system.

“We are a developing nation, and yet, we have been ranked 38th and this shows we have made tremendous progress. “I am not saying we are the best but what is important is that we make effort to address issues in education, stay current and relevant, and bring the quality of education on a par with global standards,” said Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Vice-Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Zaini Ujang.

He also said people should not feel anxious about reports on the medium of instruction in schools, the approach taken to teach in an exam-oriented system and the employability of local graduates as these were also issues faced by developed countries.

“Even in the United States and Britain, these issues are constantly discussed. These are common issues faced by all.”

Zaini said the Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education, introduced in 2006, had helped put the country in good stead.

The initiative, he said, had ensured that higher education was properly benchmarked with other established universities in the world.

“This has helped to bring in more foreign students and there is now more focus on postgraduate studies and research.”

On the issue of low tertiary education enrolment (36 per cent) that placed Malaysia at 66th position in the global competitiveness report, Zaini said the figure was not reflective of the actual situation.

“The data only captured the enrolment of students at tertiary level within the country. It did not include the large number of students studying abroad at higher-learning institutions.”

Former secretary-general of National Union of the Teaching Profession, Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam, said it could not be denied that Malaysia was an exemplary country in providing quality education.

“It is not easy to manage a multicultural education system which caters to the needs of all races in the country.

“There is no other country in the world which has successfully provided learning opportunities in three mediums — Malay, Chinese and Tamil. “On top of that, we have private and international schools providing opportunities to learn in English.”

Although, the global competitive-

ness report also stated that Malaysia had low enrolment rates in secondary schools, Siva said it was not worrying as many students who dropped out of school were learning other forms of skills.

The report stated that the enrolment rate of Malaysian secondary schools was 69 per cent, which placed the country in 101st position behind Thailand (94th), Indonesia (91st), Brunei (35th) and Singapore (17th).

Siva also said the country’s education system had often been highly praised at international forums.

The World Economic Forum’s 2011-2012 Global Competitiveness Report was compiled using 30 per cent statistical data and 70 per cent of feedback in the Executive Opinion Survey.

The survey also ranked Malaysia 14th in the world for quality education, and second after Singapore in Southeast Asia.

The report also stated in its summary that as the country becomes increasingly innovation-driven, “Malaysia will need to improve its performance in education and technological readiness”.

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