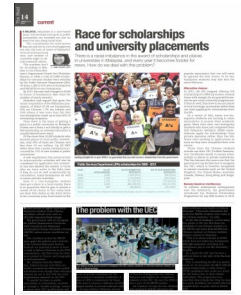


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The problem with the UEC

IN their pursuit of higher education, Malaysian students from Chinese secondary schools start with an officially imposed disadvantage.

The government will not recognise the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) issued by the Malaysian Independent Chinese Secondary Schools (MICSS) unless certain conditions are met.

One condition is that the MICSS must apply the policies and curricula of the National Education System. Students are required to score at least a credit in Bahasa Malaysia in the SPM examinations, and there must be more local content in History and Geography to instil patriotism.

Yet, students from the Middle East, Eastern Europe and China are readily accepted into Malaysian public universities even though their education systems are not in line with the same requirements imposed on the UEC.

To qualify for place in public universities or scholarships, students go through a “double-tracking” system to obtain their UEC qualifications and to sit as private candidates for the government’s standard certificates. A pass in SPM is compulsory for those who want to pursue a diploma and first degree studies in private institutes only.

As Suara Rakyat Malaysia advisor

Dr Kua Kia Soong points out, Bahasa Malaysia and English are compulsory subjects in the UEC. He says the SPM is also a part of the MICSS system.

For instance, he says his two children who studied in MICSS also have full SPM certificates and credits in Bahasa Malaysia. “This easily demolishes the myth that MICSS students only study in the Chinese medium,” he adds.

At the risk of making it a racial issue, Kua points to the fact that there are hundreds of non-Chinese students in the MICSS and more than 80,000 non-Chinese students in Chinese-medium primary schools in Malaysia.

“This is in sharp contrast to UiTM which does not admit non-bumiputras although taxpayers, including non-bumiputras, pay to run the university,” he adds.

As a result the UEC has become a political thorn in the side of the Barisan Nasional.

This is something the MCA is keenly aware of. At one point, the MCA offered partial scholarships to help Chinese STPM candidates who could not afford the full tuition fees in their chosen institutions. The programme was launched when Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat was party president, but ended when he stepped down as party chief in March 2010.

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The failure of the government to recognise the UEC means students in Chinese medium schools are left at a disadvantage