

Re-engineer the education market

JAPANESE and Chinese universities may have popular appeal but they do not pose much threat to private educational institutions in Malaysia.

UCSI University Business Development and Student Affairs vice-president Moses Ling Wei says: "There is no real competition as Malaysia also has a wide appeal."

Aside from strong government support, Malaysia has a multicultural society that many foreign students want to experience.

"Having English as a second language has also helped boost student numbers," he adds.

Foreign students are also attracted to the low cost of living, good infrastructure and political stability in Malaysia.

"Our position in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference has put us on the world map and indirectly influenced students from other Muslim countries to study here," he says.

While some foreign students may find Malaysia attractive, others may choose Japan and China for their strengths.

"China positions itself as the place to study Mandarin, Chinese Literature and traditional Chinese medicine, while Japan is the country for Biotechnology and Automobile courses.

"There is also strong government backing to attract foreign students in these two countries, which is why they have

been active in promoting their courses in Malaysia."

He adds that the education scene, like any other industry, is bound to face competition and this is something which local players have already anticipated.

Taylor's University College vice chancellor and president Professor Datuk Hassan Said agrees.

"We already have 70,000 international students and are aiming for 150,000 by 2020. Most other countries also aspire to raise their international profile and intake of foreign students," says Hassan.

That China and Japan are keen to recruit Malaysian students should be taken as a sign that "they recognise the quality of our students and education system".

Hassan believes that the competition for students with other countries does Malaysia a lot of good.

"This means we have to strive to provide top-notch services to our students," he says.

Ling agrees.

"(Competition) creates a healthy market force which will spur on business opportunities and ultimately re-engineer the education market."

As visa restrictions on those bound for Western countries become tighter, more students are looking towards Asia as their study destination.

"We in Malaysia need to be flexible in order to remain attractive to international students," says Ling.



We need to be flexible, says Moses Ling Wei



Competition is good, says Hassan Said

Chinese medicine will persuade Malaysians to join the university.

"The influence of traditional Chinese medicine is great and more people globally are accepting it as an alternative form of treatment. So far, we have only one Malaysian undergraduate at CMU and we hope more will join us as we are one of China's top medical institutions," says Feng.

Beijing University of Technology (BUT), a multi-disciplinary university established in 1960,

receives about 500 foreign students yearly.

BUT International Exchanges department officer Zhou Yuan says: "However, we don't have any Malaysians on campus. We know that about 24 per cent of Malaysians are ethnic Chinese.

"We hope the economic prosperity of Malaysia will spur them on to invest in education in China."