

Just pay and you can get your certificate

Dato' Dzulkifli Abd Razak

Article

[The New Sunday Times - 11/26/2006](#)

Exam certificates are being forged. Pay slips are being forged. Now even some higher education institutes are coming under suspicion and may taint the good name of Malaysian higher education.

THIS is the time of the year when students, teachers and parents will be holding their breath in anticipation of public examination results.

It is a stressful time given the nation's preoccupation with the number of As one can score as this seems the absolute hallmark of success.

It was, therefore, not surprising to find out from a news report recently that forgeries and fraudulent practices are prevalent, driven by blind fascination with the paper chase and a string of As.

The demand has spun a new type of business where you can better your grade or certificate of choice on demand. Digital printing shops and free-lance designers are putting their talents to fraudulent use to "upgrade" examination results.

Pay slips too can be "upgraded" to improve your credit rating. That is, as long as you are willing to pay for the "makeovers" — anything from RM300 to RM4,000.

Even security features such as the wax seal, watermark and background words carrying the name of organisation pose no challenge for the counterfeiters, giving an air of sophistication and authority to their products.

Unless one is sharp enough to detect the differences, these forgeries can pass off as authentic certificates.

For those running these diploma mills for profit, the forgeries are of no concern.

With globalisation sweeping across all sectors, such forgeries and fraudulent practices are said to be on the increase. This is because education is now regarded as a commodity to be bought and sold.

It is tradable as the paradigm for education has shifted and regulatory and other barriers to trade have begun to break down.

With the current notion of globalisation leaning heavily on marketing and commercialisation, such notorious practices will flourish further.

Exploitation of students is fundamentally an attack on the notion of knowledge as a public good, and learning is fast becoming an economic activity per se.

This idea is now slowly becoming an issue for Malaysian enterprises as well as they begin to make their presence felt, even beyond our shores.

Many have started to tap the international market; some have even set up offices and branch campuses to attract foreign students.

In all such efforts, consideration for ethics takes the back seat.

Like the certificates and grades, the name of the institution itself can be subject to upgrading. Not too long ago, some Malaysians felt cheated when a polytechnic claimed to be a university when it set up operations in this country.

Some are non-existent or only have a postal address or website address.

We need to ensure that Malaysian educational enterprises do not get involved in such fraudulent practices, lest the nation's image and attempts to truly internationalise knowledge fail.

Unfortunately, this is no longer just a hypothetical situation.

This is certainly counter-productive to our attempts to create a strong brand of Malaysian higher education.

No matter how isolated the incident is, it is enough to drag down the entire name of the country.

Thus, put in the context of the internationalisation of education, the matter raises a number of serious implications that could threaten Malaysia's reputation as a hub for education.

Perhaps this is one reason why, during the recent Umno general assembly, the issue of private sector education was raised.

And rightly so because in a sector which has high demand, just one black sheep is all that is needed to tarnish the entire flock.

This brings us back to what education has been made out to be today when it is regarded merely as commodity to be traded for the sake of fame and name, or even material wealth.

To quote Erich Fromm (1976), it is a form of education that looks to "having" rather than "being", leading to what he called alienation.

He said modern man "has been transformed into a commodity, experiences his life forces as an investment which must bring him the maximum profit obtainable under existing market conditions".

Should this be allowed to happen, it would a sad moment for the pursuit of knowledge and will see a bleak future for Malaysian education.

The pantun recited by the Minister of Higher Education at the recent Umno general assembly gives more than a hint of how the issue is to be handled:

IPTS tumbuh bagai cendawan;

Wakil Wilayah membuka kata;

KPT sedar, usahlah terkilan;

IPTS ku jaga, tak ku biar melata.

Therein lies our confidence that action against the fraudulent educationists will be continuing.

[Terms & Conditions](#)