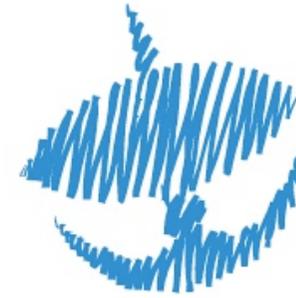


Public-Private Partnerships in the Malaysian School System

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InterContinental Hotel Kuala Lumpur

IDEAS



Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs

The Malaysian Education System: Past, Present and Future

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IDEAS and Education

- IDEAS' mission: market-based solutions to public policy challenges
- IDEAS' principles: individual liberty, free markets, limited government and rule of law
- But public-private partnerships?
 - Consistent with our principles
 - Economic logic and a moral basis

IDEAS and Education (2)

- Tadika Wau Bebas
- Previous papers such as republication of James Tooley's *Could the Globalisation of Education Benefit the Poor?*
- Just published M Bakri Musa's *Enhancing the Role of the Private Sector in Education*
- This conference and subsequent workshops
- It is indeed an exciting time for education policy in Malaysia!

Choice, competition and the role of private providers in the Malaysian school system

- This research paper as a lens to view the past, present and future of the Malaysian Education System
- This paper originally a literature review but it evolved into a Perspective Report supplemented by interviews with members of a Project Advisory Group

Choice, competition and the role of private providers in the Malaysian school system (2)

- Aims of the report:
 1. Examine whether or not choice and competition exist in the Malaysian school system
 2. Describe models of school systems that utilise market competition as the driving force for continuous development
 3. Explore how choice and competition can be strengthened/introduced to catalyse the improvement of Malaysian schools
- Key research questions
 1. Does choice and competition exist in the current Malaysian school system?
 2. Are there barriers to greater choice and competition in Malaysian schools?
 3. What models currently exist that utilise market competition as the driving force for continuous development?
 4. What can be learned from the various models and how beneficial are they?
 5. If choice and competition have benefited other countries, how can Malaysia bring more choice and competition into the school system?

Important definitions

- 'Choice':
 - Ability of parents to choose how the education of their child is structured, managed and ultimately executed
 - Ability of schools to select teaching staff, widen admissions policies, administer finances and control discipline, uniforms, meals, etc.
 - Ability of teachers to choose schools in which they would like to teach

Important definitions (2)

- ‘Competition’:
 - The condition in which the choices stated create incentives for schools, parents, pupils and teachers to behave in such a manner as to be selected by the other parties
- ‘Private providers’:
 - Schools or other organisations that provide educational services run in a private manner, including conventional ‘private sector’, community groups, trade unions, social enterprises

Choice and competition in the past

- The origins of schooling in Malaysia
- Many schools private at first, but appropriated by interest groups and political parties that competed for recognition and power, leading to subsidy, perpetuation and expansion of certain types of school

Choice and competition in the past (2)

- **National schools** were built and operated by British colonial government and subsequently the Malaysian government, in addition to missionary schools today fully assimilated into the national education system
 - For a time many were **English national schools** until their medium of instruction was changed to Malay
- Sekolah pondok grew from Muslim families seeking a religious instruction, but madrasah were more systematic; today they cover the full spectrum of being fully private, government-aided or fully public – nonetheless they were originally built in response to demand

Choice and competition in the past (3)

- What are now known as **vernacular schools** were established to cater for the education of immigrants from China and India; typically built by philanthropists or mining companies; a majority now known as **national type schools**, but still some that are run autonomously

Choice and competition the past (4)

- The Barnes Committee (1950) that wanted to minimise dangers of ethnic cleavages would have reduced choices by replacing myriad of school types with just one
- Fenn-Wu Report (1951) opposed Barnes – not to defend freedom of choice, but to defend Chinese education
- Razak Report (1956) retained the ‘national unity’ agenda of Barnes but allowed vernacular schools to operate; after the Rahman Talib Report (1960), Education Act 1961 was passed

Choice and competition in the past (5)

- Education Act 1996: 'Nothing in this Act can be interpreted as prohibiting the institution of new private schools'
- National Education Philosophy 1988 did not place restriction on private providers either

Choice and competition in the present

- There is indeed room for choice in present day Malaysia
- Don't forget tuition!
- In some cases that choice is restricted by academic performance, geography or other criteria determined by the Ministry of Education
- But some parents work outside the system to circumvent these restrictions
- Private, and within public there are different possibilities

Choice and competition in the future

- Developments with PEMANDU, Khazanah Nasional
- Trust Schools and Yayasan Amir; The Pintar Foundation and Teach for Malaysia
- Not forgetting of course the great schools that have endured the past few decades
- And the great schools that have sprung up in more recent time without – perhaps they will say despite – government intervention
- Religious communities e.g. Khalifah Model School, the Methodist Church
- International schools

Conclusion

- The past as a series of experiments?
- Let us end that experiment and use the evidence we have from our own history and the experiences of other countries
- The present is a time of uncertainty; government is seen to be flip-flopping on an issue which is seen by many to be only the tip of a much bigger and deadly iceberg
- But there is huge potential for the future!

Thank you!

