

CORONAVIRUS DISRUPTIONS TO THE PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract Id: 47

Submitted: 01/10/2020

Event: PIconf2020 - Online Education without Social Distance: Challenges for Internationalisation and Culture of Peace

Topic: Education

Keywords: Higher Education, Malaysia, Pandemic, New Normal

As of 2018, there are 447 private higher education institutions (PHEIs) in Malaysia, which include 53 universities, 10 branch campuses of foreign universities, 37 university colleges, and 347 private colleges. These institutions enrolled over 666 thousand students. Yet in two short years since, the number has dropped a further 20%. Confronted with a shrinking enrolment and a relatively large number of institutions, the private higher education market is both saturated and competitive. The Malaysian government introduced a sudden lockdown in March 2020, and since then, educational institutions have to remain close and shift to online teaching. PHEIs, in particular, faced enhanced challenges. Many PHEIs and their faculty members are not adequately prepared for online teaching and learning. The lack of clear directives on the operations of internships and practice-oriented disciplines (such as hotel management and culinary arts) has left many PHEIs hanging. The uncertainties of the lockdown also triggered a severe dip in both local and international enrolment and deferment of studies, resulting in financial devastations for many PHEIs. This presentation seeks to detail the challenges faced by PHEIs in Malaysia, and thereafter, embark on a discussion of the 'new normal' in the private higher education sector post-COVID-19.