

Malaysia

National Higher Education Equity Policy

Governance

The Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for defining national higher education policies (<http://www.mohe.gov.my/en/>).

Higher Education Policy Documents

What are the current official documents defining the national higher education strategy / policies?

The Government of Malaysia has always put equity at the center of its higher education development strategy. For example, the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010) placed high priority on increasing accessibility to higher education. The main relevant documents today are:

- Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) April 2015
- Strategic Plan for Higher Education: Laying the Foundation Beyond 2020 (2007)

Equity in Policy Documents

What broad and specific equity objectives do the policy documents identify?

- The first “thrust” of the Strategic Plan objectives is equity: “Widening Access and Increasing Equity”
- The Blueprint outlines a clear equity objective: “the Ministry aims to ensure that all Malaysians have the opportunity to fulfil their potential regardless of background. For example, the Ministry is committed to improving the enrolment rate and completion rate of students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and communities.”

Which equity target groups are identified in the policy documents?

- Low-income students
- Minority groups: ethnic/racial minorities (Malay and the Bumiputra indigenous groups)
- Students with disability

Malaysia does not have concrete targets for the participation of specific equity groups?

Malaysia does not have a standalone policy document dedicated to equity promotion in higher education.

Malaysia does not have specific anti-discrimination provisions.

What specific interventions and/or instruments of equity promotion are included in the official strategy and policy documents (monetary and non-monetary)?

Monetary Policy Instruments

- Public institutions do not charge tuition fees (very low tuition fees and subsidy for accommodation)
- Needs-based scholarships are awarded as a function of family background (<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/156135/adbi-wp280.pdf>). Students from the bottom 40% income group have privileged access to boarding schools.
- Student loans are available through the National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN). Students in both public and private universities are eligible for the loans. The *Education Blueprint* discusses changing the loan system to take income into account, but it is unclear whether that has been implemented.
- Each State has a Foundation that uses resources from religious charity (*Zakah*) to help needy students.

Non-Monetary Policy Instruments

- Institutions with a specific equity focus: MARA University of Technology (UiTM), which is today Malaysia's largest institution of higher learning in terms of size and population, started in 1956 as a small institute aiming at offering educational opportunities to Malay students from the rural areas. It offers scholarships to students whose family income is less than 3,000 Malaysian Ringgit (equivalent to 717 dollars).
- Recognition of prior learning (APEL - Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL))
- Reformed admission procedures / Affirmative action programs: Quotas for student admissions in public universities. Malaysia has implemented the largest affirmative action program in the world. With the 1970 New Economic Policy (NEP), a nation-wide affirmative action program benefiting the Malays and Bumiputra (indigenous groups) was implemented to tackle the impact of race on poverty and economic outcomes. The quotas awarded to these groups consist of places reserved in public universities and public jobs, among other benefits. While there has been a public debate about rolling back these policies, they still remain in place in higher education.

Financial Resources

Not available

Quality Assurance

The quality assurance criteria do not take equity elements into consideration.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Not available.

Dedicated Equity Promotion Agency

Malaysia does not have an agency dedicated to equity promotion in higher education.

Sources

Ministry of Higher Education <http://www.mohe.gov.my/en/>

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