

Educational Inequality in Malaysia (1970 – 2003)

RM 100
Rosni Bakar and Hamri Tuah
Faculty of Economics and Business
University Malaysia Sarawak
94300 Kota Samarahan
Sarawak, MALAYSIA

ABSTRACT

The study focused on the relationship between subsidy of higher education with inequality of educational opportunity at the higher level. Given the education system that is still represented by a broad based and narrow peaked educational pyramid, the increasing allocation and the existing capacity of the higher learning institutions is still insufficient to meet the growing demand for higher education. Thus in this study it appears that the subsidy index at second and third levels of education have an adverse effect on educational equality for the case of Malaysia.

Introduction

The relative importance of education in a country is normally measured in terms of the percentage of Gross National Product (GNP) and the percentage of total government expenditure that are allocated to education. In 1960s or earlier, many countries were experiencing greater expansion of education, as portrayed by greater educational expenditure during that period. Malaysia however, started her educational expansion in 1970s. This was only after the launching of the new Economic policy (NEP) in 1970. In this policy, education was given its priority in achieving the NEP objectives, which were among other things, to eradicate poverty and restructure society to reduce the socio-economic imbalances between and within the ethnic group. For greater expansion at all levels of education, government allocations for education have been increasing every year.

The intra-sectoral priorities of education could be also reflected by the educational expenditure at each level of education. From observation, it appeared that the allocation for the primary and secondary education slowly increased but at a very slow rate relative to higher education. When the world was experiencing the education boom in 1960s, many of Less Developed Countries (LDCs) started to expand education at the higher level instead of primary education, though it was realised that the primary education needed to be given priority for greater universalisation at that level. It is documented that the increasing allocation of resources for higher education at the cost of primary and secondary levels may produce not only an unbalanced education system, but also regressive effects on income distribution (Tilak, 1989). However, for the case of Malaysia, the trade-off was not as obvious as in other countries mentioned in Tilak (1994) and Jimenez (1995).