

UEC: A TUG OF WAR NOW BETWEEN STATE AND FEDERAL GOVT

12 November 2015

- Daily Express

Kuching: The Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) saga has now become a tug of war contest between the State and the Federal government.

Despite the State calling for its recognition in the public service and universities, the issue may not be as simple as it seems.

State Welfare, Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Fatimah Abdullah said the issue was far more complex as it went through both jurisdictions. "We may recognise them in our civil service, but due to the national education policy, they will still not get a place in public universities," said Fatimah when met at her ministry.

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak Vice-Chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Muhammad Kadim Suaidi poured cold water over the idea as the university intake was governed under the Higher Education Ministry.

Earlier, Kadim said public universities were obliged to the rules set by the ministry.

"Even if we are excluded from the ministry, we still need to abide by the national education policy," said Kadim.

Kadim also said he has explained the situation to the Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem on the matter and also said Adenan had accepted his explanation.

The UEC is the Chinese Independent school equivalent to Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (STPM), where the curriculum is independently set by the schools.

On Saturday, Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Mary Yap Kain Ching said the ministry was willing to consider UECs position if its curriculum was in tandem with the National Education Policy.

Yap also said the UEC's curriculum was not defined within the Education Act 1996 and that the standard of Bahasa Malaysia component of the UEC was not equal with the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) and its history curriculum coverage on the nation was inadequate.

She also said the general requirement for entry into a public university is a pass with credit in Bahasa Melayu for the SPM examinations.

Fatimah, who is also the Minister in charge in education, also agreed that the door to negotiations was still open for the independent Chinese schools in the State, adding that there are only 12 of such schools here.

"Most of the Chinese schools have complied with the National Education Policy, unlike these 12 Independent Chinese schools that draw up their own curriculum. There is still room for us to discuss on this matter and I believe we can agree somewhere in the mid point."

"The State's decision to recognise UEC is to avoid brain drain, but since education is governed under the national policy, we have to find ways to agree on something," said Fatimah.

Last Wednesday, Adenan said he found it "stupid" that the Federal government was not recognising locals with UEC qualifications but welcomed foreign students into the public universities.

"I find it stupid for the government to welcome foreign students into our public universities, but not locals who have UEC qualifications," Adenan had said at the launching of Sarawak Economic Development Corporation 2015 Integrity Day celebration here on Nov 4.

He also blamed this as one of the reasons behind the brain drain experienced in the country.