

Memorandum to the Minister of Higher Education

13/12/11

Private Nursing Colleges: High Time to Stop the Fraud

We, Malaysians are deeply disappointed with the failure of the High Education Ministry to control the private institutions that offer nursing courses. The ministry's failure to control these institutions' greed has established a situation in which thousands of its graduates are jobless. And yet, they are burdened with PTPTN loans of as much as RM 50, 000 to RM 60, 000. Here are the facts:

- 61 private institutions have been given the go-ahead by the Higher Education Ministry to conduct nursing courses;
- there are currently more than 37, 500 nursing undergraduates enrolled in these 61 private learning institutions. A large percentage of these undergraduates have acquired the PTPTN loan, normally around RM 55, 000:
- the total amount of staff nurses employed throughout the country as of December 2010 were 61, 110. Of that total, 47, 992 were stationed in the government sector and the remainder 21, 118 in the private sector;
- in 2010, 7, 665 nursing graduates from private institutions sat for the Nursing Board examination. Only 70.1% of them passed the examination compared to the passing rate of 98.4% amongst graduates from Malaysian Health Ministry colleges.

- only 42.7% of nursing graduates from private higher education institutions in 2010 succeeded in acquiring jobs at hospitals and clinics

Taking all these facts into account, we wish to know the following:

1. Is the Higher Education Ministry that determines the intake quotas for nursing courses in private educational institutions in Malaysia? If so, what is the rationale for allowing an intake quota of 9, 000 undergraduates for the year 2011?
2. Is the Minister aware that every trained nurse must renew his or her professional license (APC-Annual Practicing Certificate) per year? One of the terms that is required to acquire the APC is an occupational status as a nurse in a hospital. Therefore, if one is unable to get employed as a nurse, he or she is not eligible to renew his or her APC.
3. Is the Minister aware that the marketability of a staff nurse will be adversely affected if she is unable to get a nursing post in a hospital? This is due to the fact that a nurse's skills will deteriorate if the graduate is not given a chance to practice as a nurse.
4. Is the Minister aware that a lot of the graduates at nursing private higher education institutions originate from families that are not rich? They are hoping to get a job as a nurse in order to pay back their PTPTN loans and to aid their respective families.
5. Is the Minister aware that repayment of the PTPTN loan is required even if the graduate is unable to acquire a job as a nurse?

6. How many of the 61 private higher education institutions currently offering nursing courses have started or are applying to start medicine courses to train doctors?

Our demands:

a. Freeze the intake of new students into private nursing colleges. The market is flooded at this point in time. Do not burden more young girls with PTPTN loans that they will not be able to pay back.

b. Look into the other courses that are offered by the private colleges such as physiotherapy, health care, laboratory assistants, radiology and others. If there exists a similar situation of over-supply for these other courses as well, please freeze the intake of new students into these courses.

c. Reject applications of private higher education institutions to conduct doctor courses if the passing rate in the Nursing Board Examination was below 90% for graduates from those institutions in 2010 or 2009.

d. Take over the PTPTN debts for all nurse graduates who have not acquired a nursing post in a hospital despite passing the Nursing Board's examination.

e. Conduct an investigation to determine why the market for trained nurses is flooded- 37, 500 will graduate in 3 years, whereas the need for nurses is only 1, 500 per year (more or less 5% of the total currently employed in the private sector). Is this because of poor judgment on the part of officials who determine the quota, or is corruption involved? The profits of private higher education institutions are immense!

f. Review the validity of the policy of relying on private companies to provide higher education for our younger generation. It is evidently clear from the actions of the private nursing colleges that maximising profits is their main focus! The existence of PTPTN loans have underwritten the income of these private higher education institutions, and they are currently competing to attract as many students as possible without a care whether they can provide adequate practical exposure to their students or whether there are sufficient job opportunities for their graduates.

We hope that the Higher Education Ministry officials will study the issues that we have brought up and fix a date within a month's time to inform us of the steps that will be taken by the Ministry to manage the identified problems in this memorandum.

Thank You.