

Academicians question system's role

STPM and SPM school leavers, who received their results late last month, are awaiting an important letter.

The letter from the Bahagian Pengurusan Kemasukan Pelajar or BPKP (formerly known as Unit Pusat Universiti), one of the divisions under the Higher Education Ministry, will inform them if they have been successful in gaining a place in university.

The division has been processing applications since 1970s.

While it has proven to be efficient in streamlining the intake process, some academicians have questioned its role, especially with the country now aiming to raise the status and quality of universities.

Tan Sri Dr Nordin Kardi, president of the

Association of Malaysian Universities, does not think that the centralised intake system is in the best interests of public universities.

Nordin, who is also vice-chancellor of Universiti Utara Malaysia, said universities should be allowed to have a certain amount of freedom to recruit students to suit their strategic plans. This includes recruiting candidates while they are still in secondary school.

"BPKP doesn't support this kind of arrangement. I'm not saying it is bad. It worked in the past to serve a different purpose," he said.

National Union of the Teaching Profession secretary-general Lok Yim Pheng said the system should be more transparent because

more often than not, applicants did not get their preferred course despite being qualified for it.

"Sometimes, they are offered courses that are not relevant to what they have asked for. Some courses are also not relevant to market needs, making them unemployable after graduating," she said.

Former vice-chancellor of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Tan Sri Mohd Salleh Mohd Yassin, however, begs to differ.

"It is good to have a one-stop centre as it prevents duplication of applications, especially when there are limited places in universities."

He said the intake system should not be made an issue in the universities' aspirations to be the best.

"I'd like to believe students who meet the basic requirements should be given an opportunity to study in any public university."

He said the courses offered were not as important as the inculcation and acquisition of knowledge which would turn students into thinkers.

"A university's role is to educate and polish young minds because they are like raw diamonds."

Universiti Teknologi Mara deputy vice-chancellor (academic) Prof Dr Mustafa Mohamed Zain feels that the BPKP makes the tedious process of student selection more co-ordinated and organised.

"Before the system was implemented, enrolling in public universities was not cost or time effective," he said.

Mustafa also said students sometimes chose courses based on their popularity such as medicine and dentistry.



Tan Sri Dr Nordin Kardi says universities should be allowed some freedom in selecting students

Universiti Putra Malaysia vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Nik Mustapha R. Abdullah said the centralised system was needed as it provided an equal chance for everyone.

"If there is no centralised system, one may get two or three offers from different universities, thus depriving others of their chance."

He said in UPM's case, a CGPA of 2.7 was the cut-off point for admission. Professional courses, however, need a higher cut-off point — a CGPA of four for medicine and a CGPA of 3.8 for engineering.