

UNIVERSITE DE NANTES

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U.F.R DE LANGUES - CENTRE INTERNATIONAL DE LANGUES
LEA

SESSION 1- 1er semestre

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NOM DU PROFESSEUR RESPONSABLE : F. MULLER
OBSERVATION DU PROFESSEUR :

Banking on education to propel a new spurt of growth

If the priorities of South-East Asia's politicians are anything to judge by, few subjects are more important than education. The former prime minister of Malaysia made education reform the centrepiece of his final year in office. His Thai counterpart has churned through five ministers in three years in a desperate attempt to improve the local schools. Singaporean officials can barely open their mouths without mentioning "the knowledge society" and "lifelong learning". The bit about education in the Philippines' constitution is longer than America's Bill of Rights.*

No wonder. Before the crash of 1997, education was said to be propelling South-East Asia's breakneck growth. Now it is billed as the factor that could fuel another boom. Two-thirds or more of all children in the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam attend secondary school, compared to around half in India and 68% in China.

But South-East Asian leaders are terrified that their countries will lose out on foreign investment and economic growth unless they produce more skilled workers. So they want to improve the quality of teaching and keep children in school longer. Such ambitions are expensive, of course, and money is in short supply. So South-East Asian governments have been trying to improve education on the cheap by decentralising the administration of public schools.

* Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme

The Economist, December 13th 2003