

OU MALAYSIA NEWSLETTER

INSIDE...



Registering Second Batch of Students in the Apprentices Scheme



5th National Human Resources Management Conference



United We Stand in Diversity



Dedication to Education: Sean Patrick Sta Maria

Tutors Getting Survival Tips at Colloquium on Issues and Challenges in ODL Tutoring



left - right
Senior Vice President Prof. Dr. Ansary Ahmed, President YBhg. Tan Sri Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad, Vice President (Academic) Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mansior Fadzil



left - right
YBhg. Datuk Ir. Haji Ahmad Zaidi Laidin, Chairman of SIRIM Malaysia and Senior Vice President Prof. Dr. Ansary Ahmed



Participants at the opening ceremony of the colloquium held at Eastin Hotel, Kuala Lumpur

February 22, 2003

OU Malaysia has taken great pains to ensure all tutors are well trained in providing the highest quality education to students in the best possible manner. 170 participants took part in the Colloquium on Issues and Challenges in ODL Tutoring held at the University's campus, 100 of whom were tutors who flew in from different parts of the country.

Officiated by the University's President, YBhg. Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Hj. Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad, the 2-day colloquium featured five guest facilitators, namely Mr. Haslee Sharil Lim Abdullah of Universiti Malaya, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zoraini Wati Abas of International Medical University, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kuldip Kaur of Open University Malaysia, Mr. Badri Che Wan (student perspective) and Ms. Chiew Wye Mei (tutor perspective).

Speaking at the opening ceremony at Eastin Hotel, YBhg. Tan Sri Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad said, "One crucial area that needs to be addressed is the charge that ODL's learner-centred approach is simply not learner-centred enough, that it lends itself to rote learning and a depersonalized learning experience ... Without the proper support, e-learning technologies might

alienate ODL learners, especially those who perceive technology as a threat."

Participants were encouraged to share their best practices for tutoring, academic counseling and online learning skills with one another, as well as to identify and solve the common problems they may encounter when tutoring as they worked around the following themes:

- Effective Skills in ODL Tutoring: Lecturing or Tutoring?
- Tutors as Academic Counselors: Towards Effective Self-Managed Learning
- Online Collaborative Learning: Tutors as Catalyst

"This seminar has been mutually beneficial to both Open University Malaysia and the tutors," said a representative from the Corporate Relations Unit. "Tutors were exposed to a myriad of ways in conducting a tutorial session, solutions to pitfalls and barriers that they might encounter along the way, while staff members were made acquainted with tutors from different faculties."



Getting acquainted with the operation and maintenance of student management at the Learner Service Centre



Guests getting insight into one of the advanced technology facilities available at the University



A sumptuous barbecue dinner at OU Malaysia after a long day of workshops

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Corporate Visits

"Information Technology." The phrase is on the tip of everybody's tongue these days - computer training institutes mushrooming all over the country, the number of fresh IT graduates produced each year topping the statistics, the increasingly rapid growth of high technology sectors across the region opening the gateway to countless opportunities for computer savvies to develop and grow, and the public's growing interest in education for life in the wired world.

It wasn't so long ago when the breaking wave of e-learning started having everyone looking at education from a different angle. The idea of earning tertiary qualifications from home doesn't seem so farfetched anymore. With the birth of this new breed of education, it has become far more important for OU Malaysia to familiarise the public with the concept of e-Education. The following chronology highlights on the visits conducted by corporate bodies to the University in the past few months.

January 7, 2003

It was only recently the University invited delegates from foreign embassies to visit the University's campus so as to enable them to learn more about OU Malaysia and its role in open and distance learning. The 8-member delegation from ASEAN and South Asian countries were

- **HE Mr. Bruce Cleghorn**
British High Commission
- **HE Dato' Paduka Hj. Abdullah B. Hj. Mohd Jaafar**
Brunei High Commission
- **HE Mr. Norberto Basilio**
Philippines Embassy
- **Mr. Istiaque Ahmad**
Republic of Bangladesh High Commission
- **Mr. Ros Simara**
Cambodia Embassy
- **Mr. Khin Maung Lynn**
Myanmar Embassy
- **Mr. Ameer Khurram Rathore**
Pakistan High Commission for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
- **Ms. Venetta Miranda**
Singapore High Commission

It is planned that more invitations will be extended to other foreign embassies in the near future to further enhance the University's position in the region as an e-Education provider in higher learning.



Picture Perfect -
Management staff of OU Malaysia (standing)
with visiting Heads of Mission



Visiting the Digital Library



Exchanging of views and experiences

United We Stand in Diversity



Raising the Flag

January 8, 2003

The solemnity at the University's campus had never been greater.

"Our commitment to a united Malaysian nation inspired our people to strive in the faces of these obstacles to build a society in which a nation of diverse races, religions and cultures would endure and flourish. We are convinced that our very diversity can be a source of strength." President YBhg. Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Hj. Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad had said in his speech during the inaugural Assembly of Unity in Diversity that had all staff gathered round the campus building foyer, reciting the National

Pledge of Allegiance and singing the national anthem.

It is intended that the assembly be held every two months with the purpose of fostering the spirit and appreciation of patriotism among all staff members by understanding their rights and responsibilities as Malaysian citizens. It is also planned that guest speakers from other organisations will be invited to talk on topics related to patriotism, loyalty, racial integration, national unity, and current issues pertaining to politics and national development.



Singing to the National Anthem



Reciting the National Pledge of Allegiance

OU Malaysia Education Fairs

What better time than the beginning of the year to publicise the University's academic programmes when young and vibrant teens, fresh from finishing the Malaysian Certificate of Examination, seeking tertiary education from universities with tuition fees set at an affordable rate and academic courses that hold a high standard of excellence?

Participating actively in the recent numerous education fairs that were held nationwide, including the Star Education Fair (January), Sarawak Education Fair (January) and the Facon Education Fair (February), OU Malaysia promises these young bright minds nothing but quality education that matches up with foreign universities.



Realising the Vitality of Human Resource Management in an Organisation at the 5th National Human Resource Management Conference *by Izzal Asnira Zolkepli*

March 5, 2003

An effective human resource management system in an organisation is imperative as it holds the key to attaining a greater competitive and adaptive advantage. In this regard, the 5th National Human Resource Management Conference, jointly organised by ICC Consultant Centre and Malaysian Institute of Corporate Governance (MICG), supported by OU Malaysia and the Research Institute of Investment Analyst Malaysia (RIAM), was held at the University's campus. Launched by YBhg. Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, Executive Director of National Economic Action Council (MTEN), the conference was organised with the objectives to:



left - right:

- Dr. Abdul Farouk Ahmed, Managing Director, ICC Consultant Centre Malaysia
- President YBhg. Tan Sri Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad
- YBhg. Dato' Mustapa Mohamed, Executive Director, National Economic Action Council
- Mr. Lee Leok Suan, Executive Director, Malaysian Institute of Corporate Governance (MICG)
- En. Abdullah Naib, Director, Research Institute of Investment Analyst Malaysia (RIAM)



President YBhg. Tan Sri Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad presenting a token of appreciation to YBhg. Dato' Mustapa Mohamed

- facilitate interaction between public and private sectors participants on current issues concerning public accountability, ethics, transparency and integrity in management decision making
- enable professionals in leadership positions to appreciate the essence of the new corporate governance particularly its implications on human resource management
- clarify the roles of the remuneration and nomination committees and principally to address issues and implementation challenges faced by the committees
- formulate transparent, equitable and motivating policies to reward directors and top management
- offer reliable and valid evaluations of human resource methods, systems and procedures to ensure integrity

The conference dealt with issues on striking a good balance between those concerning the structural corporate governance mechanism to improve the rules, regulations and role of the Board of Directors and the human factors that deal with the quality of human resource management and other intangible elements.

"Good governance cannot just be legislated but requires the nurturing and development of people to assume greater accountability and ethical behaviours," said President YBhg. Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Hj. Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad.



left - right:

- Dato' Johan Raslan, Partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers Malaysia
- YBhg. Datuk Prof Ir (Dr) Hj. Ahmad Zaidée, Chairman SIRIM Bhd.
- Mr. Edward Chan, Member ICSA International Council
- Mr. Sukanta Dutt, Partner, Ernst & Young Malaysia



Filling up the front rows - Management staff of OU Malaysia and invited guests

As quoted by YBhg. Datuk Mustapa Mohamed on the new era of globalization and liberalization, "Financial markets in developed and developing nations need to evolve rapidly to face challenges in an increasingly competitive landscape. With the emergence of global, highly-mobile and powerful institutional investors, both the governance and regulation of companies need to embrace change as well as be responsive or run the risk of being marginalised in global competition."

Previews: Promoting the Open Education Concept

The large sum of money the University invested on heavy promotional advertisements in major newspapers for the May intake preview sessions (which were held for two consecutive weeks in late February and early March) has certainly proved to be fruitful. Attracting hundreds of visitors from all over, the previews which took place in various states did just as well as the previously held sessions.



Participants at the briefing session

The public was not only given valuable insight into the historical achievements of OU Malaysia, but also an introduction to the teaching-learning methodology the University uses, academic courses that are available as well as new programmes which will soon be offered.

"The University officials are generally satisfied with the response from the general public," said Mr. Justin Chong, manager of the Marketing Unit. "The revised and improved version of the University's newspaper advertisements has made an exceptional contribution to the increase in the number of participants. However, all promotional activities and materials will be continuously improved and developed to tackle a wider section of the Malaysian society, especially the East Malaysian market."



En. Mustafa Hj. Md. Hanafiah introducing OU Malaysia to prospective students in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

OU Malaysia Welcomes Second Batch of Jaya Jusco's Apprentices

February 5, 2003

Already firmly established as one of OU Malaysia's strategic partners, Jaya Jusco Stores Bhd registered its second batch of 165 students in the Apprentice Scheme programme at OU Malaysia campus and Jaya Jusco Taman Universiti, Johor. In collaboration with OU Malaysia, this programme will be delivered at both Certificate and Diploma levels.



left - right
President YBhg. Tan Sri Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad and
Vice President (Academic) Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mansor Fazlil



left - right
Executive Director Mr. Masato Yokoyama,
Managing Director Mr. Soichi Okazaki



Mr. Soichi Okazaki, Managing
Director of Jaya Jusco Stores Bhd
delivering his welcoming speech

Having developed as a full-time employment based training programme, it provides opportunities for those who wish to work while in the pursuit of a tertiary education.

Mr. Soichi Okazaki (Managing Director), Mr. Masato Yokoyama (Executive Director) were some of the names who attended the registration session at the University's campus.



Singing to the Jusco song -
Management staff of OU Malaysia & Jaya Jusco Stores
Bhd and the new batch of students



Students at the oath-taking ceremony

Retailing Gaining Booming Popularity

March 10, 2003

It is safe to say that retailing is slowly gaining popularity among Malaysians and has become one of the nation's major job generating industries. OU Malaysia has embarked on a larger and more formal role to support the government's effort to provide all sections of the society, especially the Bumiputeras, with ample job opportunities when it join-ventured with Peheli Sdn Bhd and Jaya Jusco Stores Bhd to offer the public Career Certificate in Retail Business.

"One of the objectives of developing this programme is to encourage more Bumiputera entrepreneurs to seek business opportunities in the retailing line," En. Abd Manan Mansor of Peheli Sdn Bhd said at the soft launch of the programme where 25 students registered and attended their first class.

The programme, which involves the following six courses, will utilize case studies, workshops, examinations and practicum learning experiences to complement lectures on entrepreneurship.

- Introduction to Business
- Communication
- Introduction to Retailing
- Merchandising
- Selling
- Customer Service



Students registering for their first class



Students at the first conducted class

Classes will meet once a week between 9am and 5pm at OU Malaysia campus and OU Malaysia-Jusco Retail Centre, Wangsa Maju while practical trainings will be held at Jaya Jusco Wangsa Maju.

Representatives from OU Malaysia, Jaya Jusco Stores Bhd and Peheli Sdn Bhd at the soft launch of the programme



Quality Assurance in Open



By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Abtar Kaur

Director,
Centre for Instructional
Design and Technology

Introduction

Most on-campus universities and colleges are experiencing increasing pressure to improve the quality of educational experiences they provide to students. In Malaysia this has resulted in the government clamping down on the setting up of new colleges unless they meet minimum quality standards. Similarly, open and distance learning universities are aware that such standards apply to them as well. But being open and distance may have some other peculiarities not often found in on-campus universities and this may have an added dimension of quality. In fact due to their nature, open and distance universities have a greater need for quality assurance responsibilities and processes to be clearly articulated and shared.

Meaning of Quality

Experts generally agree that quality is meeting or exceeding customers' requirements consistently. In the context of education, students form the primary customer group. In this regard, educational institutions should focus on meeting or exceeding the students' expectations. Undoubtedly, educational institutions also have to meet the expectations of other internal and external customers including the academic staff, support staff, parents, prospective employers and society as a whole. The primary challenge faced by educational institutions is to provide quality educational services which meet the expectations of its customers at minimum cost.

Meaning of Quality Assurance

Quality assurance can be defined as planned and systematic actions taken to meet the expectations of customers with regard to the services or products provided. According to B.G Dale, this simply means good management. In general, the literature on quality assurance refers to two key purposes, namely accountability and improvement. The main objective of quality assurance is to build quality into the product and/or service during the upstream design and planning processes. Simply put, it is the "before the event process." On the other hand, quality appraisal/control consists of the processes taken to check the extent to which the outcomes were reached. It is the during/after the event process.

Implementing Quality Assurance

Quality assurance can be externally or internally controlled. External quality assurance reviews are normally conducted by agencies set up by the government and for private institutions in

Malaysia, they conform to those policies set up by LAN (Lembaga Akreditasi Negara). Internally, quality assurance should not be the sole responsibility of a particular department but should be an integral part of all departments within the university. It is normally visible in the overall mission statement of the university and may be expressed in the objectives. For example, the Open University, UK has the values and principles related to quality expressed as such:

"We regard the maintenance of quality in the services provided to students, customers and staff as of the highest importance and vital to our future competitiveness. We therefore strive for continuous improvement in our performances, so that we are able to meet successfully the requirements of our students and satisfy the scrutiny of others."



Basically, the objective of internal quality assurance is to get every person in the organisation to take personal responsibility for the quality of processes for which they are accountable. The strategy for setting in place quality assurance processes,

delivering them and reviewing them reflects the organisational commitment of the institution. Internally, areas where quality assurance efforts should be emphasised may include the following: knowledge dissemination, student support services, admissions information, development of learning materials, programme evaluation, student assessment, e-Learning methodology and library resources.

Knowledge Dissemination

Accurate and timely dissemination of knowledge is important especially in an open and distance learning environment. Largeness of scale makes the responsibility for knowledge dissemination more intricate. For concise and accurate dissemination of knowledge, it is first important that a knowledge management team be set up within the institution. The knowledge management team's main purpose is to collect information, vet its authenticity and disseminate it. To reach an acceptable quality level, processes and procedures related to the collection and dissemination of information should be identified and feedback mechanisms should be designed so that the knowledge management team can keep track of areas for improvement.

Student Support Services

With the development of distance education, student support services have become more important than ever. It is essential that students are provided with a support system that is efficient, effective and user-friendly. Support may be provided through various means, including phone lines, email, faxes, face-to-face meets, internet and others. Whatever the means, it is imperative to identify the specific information that students will most likely

and Distance Learning

request for. The information provided should be accurate, concise and be made available on time. Also, the support staff should be properly trained with the proper manners and procedures to follow.

Admissions Information

As the student population and number of programmes and learning centres increase the accuracy and quality of admissions information can be affected if policies and procedures are not properly documented. In a distributed environment, the use of well researched student management system via the web is important. The central coordinating body must require participating campuses to maintain the currency and accuracy of the campus Web information in an environment that is seamless from the student's perspective.

Development of Learning Materials

Processes and procedures for development of learning materials are crucial to the success of an open and distance learning university. A large measure of quality is accorded to this as the main form of interaction for ODL earners is through the learning materials. Many ODL organisations invest a lot of time and energy for the development of high quality, well designed and reader friendly materials.

Programme Evaluation

It is important in any proper academic system to properly evaluate the programmes offered by the institution. In large scale distance education programmes, where collaboration plays an important role, it is best to provide the faculty and administrators with all the existing evaluation criteria and methodologies and then allowing them to choose the best from among those criteria and methodologies. Besides that, they should also be provided with a critical mass of data to analyze.

Student Assessment

Delivering final results to students on time is one of the factors that will determine the quality culture of the institution. In this age of powerful databases, Internet and telecommunications, delivering results on time should not be a major issue. Thus having procedures and processes in place are crucial for this success.

E-Learning Methodology

Adopting a reliable learning system is not an issue with many open and distance learning universities. However, what can be of concern is the methodology that is adopted to conduct e-Learning. Online moderators and students have to be trained the proper procedures related to e-learning.

Library Resources

When it comes to collaborative multi-campus environments (which is an indispensable part of distance education), library resources play a very important role. In this respect, electronic and digital libraries are more efficient and accessible because they are able to provide information across great distances with the help of information and communication technologies.

Despite the listing of these areas of quality assurance, the ultimate performance of one is dependent upon the other. For example, the quality of teaching depends upon effective functioning of a range of tasks (including quality of learning materials, selection of



academics, availability of resources and operational activities). The range of activities and individuals involved in the provision of education to an individual student and the co-ordination of these into a relatively personalized and locally based service adds considerable complexity to quality assurance. Thus for quality assurance to take root, certain organisational structures may need focus:

1. The appointment of an authority in charge of the overall integrity and effectiveness of quality assurance. The purpose is to embed quality assurance in all levels of the organisational structure and operations. While the individual posts, teams and committees carry out their respective quality assurance processes within their task scope and responsibility, a larger and wider focus for quality assurance as a whole will enhance and strengthen ties between the separate units, encourage good practices, and drive all parties in the same direction.
2. Documentation of the quality assurance processes within the separate units as well as overall structure. The documentation will act as a guide or reference so that there is consistency in the information, methods, skills and controls used. Accordingly, there should be two levels of documentation: Level 1 - Institutional Quality Manual, which provides a concise summary of the overall quality policy, structure and objectives, and Level 2 - Procedures Manual, which describes the procedures and processes of the activities within the organisational units.
3. Setting up of an internal quality assurance audit. This is to monitor all levels of operations so that it can be determined to what extent the set policies and procedures are being followed. The internal audit reports to management and also supports the assurance of quality in terms of effective use of resources.
4. Adjusting set policies to change. Policies and procedures need to be constantly assessed and adjusted given the rapid development of e-Learning as a new instructional paradigm. Measures need to be taken to support information provision and student interaction as internet-enabled environments replace the more traditional methods. In the same way, the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to cater to the needs of students from all aspects should be focused on the suitable inputs, processes and outcomes.

Those organisations that have made quality their way of life will live to fight another day.

Walkathon

in Aid of a Scholarship Fund

University for All

March 16, 2003

In aid of the Diamond Jubilee Scholarship Fund, 50 staff members of OU Malaysia took part in a walkathon organised by Bukit Mertajam High School Alumni Malaysia. The walk, which stretched over 6km, began and ended at the Lake Garden, Kuala Lumpur.

With YBhg. Tan Sri Lamin Yunus served as the patron of the event, this charity walk began at its scheduled hour at 8am with approximately 1,000 participants of various age groups taking part in it.



Book Exhibition the Digital Library

March 24, 2003

Heeding the Malaysian government's call to move towards a knowledge-based society, OU Malaysia has made a step forward in promoting literary and good lifelong learning habits among all members of staff. A book exhibition was held at the Digital Library for three consecutive days (March 24 - 26) displaying over 500 titles from various disciplines featuring exhibitors from Malaysia and Singapore, namely Universiti Malaya Bookstore Cooperation, Azure Trading, Ibanis Bookstore, Karisma, One Stop Magazine and Wyser Creation.



Dedication to Education

Sean Patrick Sta Maria

Tutor, School of Education, Arts & Social Sciences



For most people, finding their true calling in life can be a long and convoluted process, with many false starts and dead ends. There are not many people who know what they want early in life and set out to achieve it with a strong sense of purpose. Meet Sean Patrick Sta Maria, one of those lucky few who know what they want out of life, that is to learn and spread the knowledge that he had learnt.

"I've always liked the idea of being an academician, having enjoyed subjects like English, literature, culture and sociology," Sta Maria said. *"And becoming a teacher is just an extension of my interests."*

So it's not surprising to find him standing before a class full of adult students, a part-time TESL tutor for Open University Malaysia with an unbeatable enthusiasm in teaching. *"It's the drive, the discipline, the passion for TESL. I love what I studied and I dream about what I studied."*

Sta Maria finished both primary and secondary school in Malacca before leaving for Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur in pursuance of a Bachelor's degree programme in language and literature. He then moved on to Diploma in TESL, after which he began his long career in education as a teacher in secondary schools. During that period, he furthered his education in post-graduate studies and earned himself a Masters in TESL. Upon

graduation, he was sent to International Islamic University (IIU), Kuala Lumpur on secondment where he taught mainly international students.

"It was a very interesting experience while teaching at IIU," Sta Maria remarked.

"I had to teach non-English speaking students from all over the world and more often than not, I was the only Malaysian in the class!"

Sta Maria then pursued his second Masters in Literature at Deakin University, Australia. While there, he took the opportunity to visit classes and observe how lessons were being carried out.

"There is a noticeable difference between the education systems of Malaysia and the United Kingdom, United States and Australia. In Malaysia, a lot of the classes are teacher-centered, with teachers talking 90% of the time. In the western countries, instead of just passively learning by having information fed to them, students are encouraged to express themselves even if they cannot speak English fluently."

When asked whether there was any difference between teaching working adults and students fresh from school, Sta Maria's analysis on the situation was, *"Younger people are more adept at studies because they have no preconceived ideas about the subject matter. Teachers on the other hand, find it difficult to let go of the concepts and methods first taught to them some time back. It involves a change of mind set, something that is difficult to achieve."*

He added wryly, *"It seems that teachers are among the most difficult people to teach."*

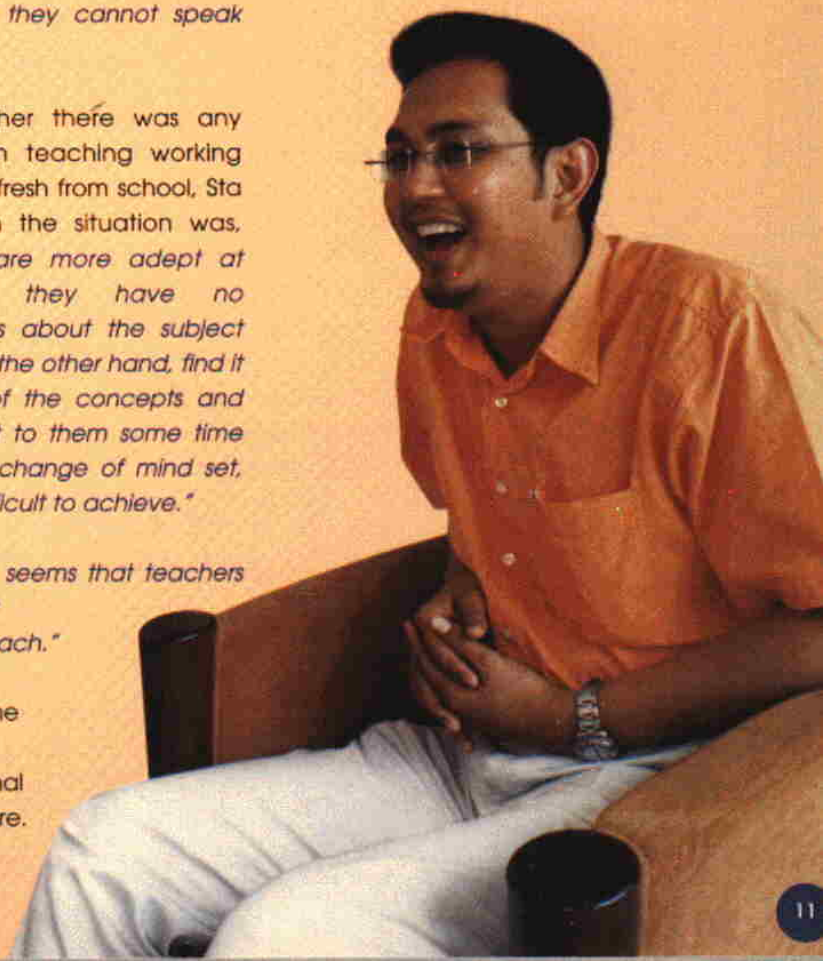
Sta Maria is now in the midst of completing his PhD at the National University of Singapore. On top of that,

he is a part-time tutor here, and is a language consultant for organisational managers and members of the business and corporate sectors. That does not include his family duties as a husband and a father of two children.

Talk about a fulfilling life! What is his secret in juggling all that he does?

He confided, *"I think to be able to do all these, one has to be disciplined and know how to divide time. I have been able to work and study at the same time because I applied what I learnt at work in my studies, and also the reverse. I also learnt to cope with the pressure by refusing to give up when things got a bit hectic or tough, which is part of life. It takes a toll on the family life, but sometimes sacrifices have to be made to achieve success."*

Sean Patrick Sta Maria is a shining example of someone who is dedicated to his profession and whose adage in life could well be *"Dedication to Education"*.



Head of School of Information Technology Assoc. Prof. Dr. Abdullah



Q: Have you always wanted to venture into the education / information technology industry? What was it that attracted you to it?

A: Yes, I think I have always been interested in offering my service to education, since this is the area where a person can make direct contribution to the development of the nation.

Q: I understand that the Bachelor of Multimedia Communication with Honours is the newest programme offered by the School. What can our students expect from this programme?

A: The school offers four programmes, namely Diploma in Information Technology, Bachelor in Information Technology with Honours, Bachelor in Information Technology and Management with Honours and Bachelor in Multimedia Communication with Honours. Each programme caters for a specific need of the IT industry.

Bachelor in Multimedia Communication with Honours is a relatively new programme in Malaysia, and we are proud to say that OU Malaysia is one of the first institutions in Malaysia that offer it.

This programme is a combination of information technology and mass

communication. We are now moving towards a more comprehensive use of multimedia technology in mass communication. For example, we are used to print-based newspapers and magazines. In the era of IT, more and more on-line newspapers and magazines will be produced. Similarly, we are used to normal radio and television services. Nowadays, we are moving slowly towards web-tv, web-radio and other services such as video on demand. The use of these technologies certainly requires graduates who are well trained in IT as well as mass communication.

Q: Malaysia has reached an unprecedented level of advancement in multimedia and communications technologies over the last decade. To learn at OU Malaysia, it has become a necessity for one to possess computer skills. However, what concerns us most is the underprivileged communities scattered around the country. They are in constant struggle to attain the basic necessities of life, let alone to possess a computer.

A: This phenomena is not unique to Malaysia. Even in some developed countries, we can still find some areas where basic computer facilities are not available. Our government has taken the right steps in solving this problem. For example, by introducing schemes to

Q: Let's start out with a little information on your background and your education.

A: I consider myself to be quite lucky because I was selected to further my studies in the United Kingdom. I was in the United Kingdom twice. Once was from 1979 till 1985 for my Bachelors and Masters programme and then from 1990-1993 for my Ph.D.

After completing my first degree, I received a few offers. I accepted an offer from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia to become a tutor at the Department of Computer Science. I was then appointed as lecturer and later as an associate professor at the same department.

Technology and Multimedia Communication, Mohd Zin speaks up

encourage people to own computers. The government has also started to equip schools with computer labs. Many state governments are also involved in setting up computer centres in rural areas. The telecommunication service in Malaysia has also improved tremendously. Right now, unless you are really in remote areas, you will have some access to computers and Internet facilities.

Q: There's no denying the fact that we've come to depend heavily on the many advantages that information and communications technology can offer us. It has become one of the major job-generating industries, not only in this country but others as well. In just a short period, we have all sections of the Malaysian society, ranging from fresh school leavers to professionals, seriously considering this as a career option. In short, information technology has practically ruled our lives.

A: Information Technology has indeed become part of our lives. It is very difficult to imagine life without IT. We can now get a very efficient service from the bank and other companies due to the availability of IT. We can communicate and obtain information from any part of the world in a split second through the use of web technology. We can now use the Internet to purchase books and air tickets on-line.

The development requires a lot of manpower. The country needs software and multimedia programmers to develop new programs. We need IT planners to study and plan the IT needs of an organisation. We need IT project managers to manage IT projects and installations. We also need network practitioners, network managers and web programmers. As we progress further, we need a lot of other new professionals in IT.

Q: What are the common challenges / problems faced by students of the School of Information Technology and Multimedia Communication?

A: All courses in Information Technology at diploma and degree levels involve a combination of theory, concept and practice. Some students thought that the main emphasis in IT is the practice. They spent a lot of time on the computer and they do a lot of programming practice, for example. And then they were surprised to find out that they could not answer questions during the examination as most of the questions involved thorough understanding of theories and concepts. Similarly, we have some students who spent a lot of time reading modules without practice. This misunderstanding, in my opinion, is one of the most common challenges faced by our students.

Q: Is the School planning to offer any new undergraduate or postgraduate programmes any time in the near future?

A: In our five year plan, we hope to introduce at least one new programme each year. For example, this year we are going to introduce two new postgraduate programmes, Masters in Information Technology and Postgraduate Diploma in Information Technology. Masters in Multimedia Communication and Postgraduate Diploma in Multimedia Communication will be introduced next year. In 2005 and 2006, we plan to introduce two new undergraduate programmes.

Q: What would you advise to those who wish to pursue their education in Information Technology?

A: In order to excel in IT, all students must be prepared to work hard. They must spend sufficient time to study in order to understand the theories and concepts that is involved in the course. They must also be prepared to spend sufficient time to practice the skill that is required by each course.

Heartiest Congratulations!

OU Malaysia would like to congratulate the following outstanding students who made it to the August 2002 President's List.

School of Arts, Education & Social Sciences

AHMAD ZUBAIDILLAH B. OTHMAN
 AMREEK SINGH A/L PIARA SINGH
 AZLINA BT IDRIS
 BALASUBRAMANIAM A/L RAMASAMY
 BALBINDER KAUIAR A/P PRITAM SINGH
 CATHERINE CHIA OI YUN
 CHAN LING SUAN
 CHEAH SIEW KHIM
 CHEAM YOW FONG
 CHEE POOI SHAN
 CHUA LOK MIN
 DELVENDAR KAUR A/P GUJAR SINGH
 FARIZA BT SULAIMAN
 FAUZIAH BINTI JAIS
 GOVISELVAN A/L GOVINDARAJU
 HALIMA BINTI MOHD ISA
 HASMAH BINTI JUSOH
 HYACINTHA HENRY @ NIR HAYATI ABDULLAH
 JESWANT SINGH A/L HARNEK SINGH
 JULIE CHUJAH TAN
 KALYANI A/P VELLU
 KAMALESWARY A/P KASALINGAM
 LAU HIENG POH
 LEE CHEN SIONG
 LEE FA NYET
 LEE KUOK LOONG @ MOHD NOOR RIDWAN
 LIM CHOI YE
 LIM ENG SEONG
 LIZA BT OTHMAN
 MA HOCK CHEONG
 MAHESVERI A/P P THURASINGAM
 MAHISHAM B. MAHMOOD
 MARDZIAH BINTI ABDUL LATIFF
 MARY SELVARANI A/P APPADORAI
 MOLLY PING LENJAU
 NADIA KANG BINTI ABDULLAH

NARIMAHANUM ABU HASSAN SHAARI
 NG WEE GWEK
 NIK HAMINI BT CHE HAMID
 NOORMAH BINTI HAMZAH
 NOR'AINI BT SHAMAT
 NORHIDAYATI GOH BT ABDULLAH
 NUR HAYATI CHRISTINA LEE ABDULLAH
 PEK CHAI HONG @ PEK CHAI FONG
 PUNITHAVATHY A/P SELVARETNAM
 RAJASPARÉ A/P RENGASAMY
 ROSLINA BT IBRAHIM
 S. JOHTHI KURUMALOO
 SANTHA A/P PALANIASAMY
 SAW BENG HONG
 SHANTHI A/P SUPRAMANIAM
 SHEILA MARINA A/P SAPPATHY
 SIOW MING HUI
 SONIA LAHUNG JAU
 SU CHIN CHOO
 SURIANI BT MOHAMED
 T. LATHA A/P THARMALINGAM
 TAN BEE YEW
 TAN JOK HONG
 TAN PHECK LENG
 TAY TIEW SUI
 TEH BOON ANN
 TEOH YEW KOK
 THELAGAVATHY A/P SEENIVASAN
 VATSALA A/P PALMANAPHAN
 WAN AH HO
 WAN IZUDI B WAN MD ZIN
 WAN SUZILA BINTI WAN MOHAMAD
 WONG TECK LIM
 ZAKIAH BINTI OMAR
 ZAMZURI A/L BASHEER AHMED

School of Business & Management

AHMAD BIN MOHSEN
 AJIT KAUR A/P JAIP SINGH
 ALWI BIN ZAMAHARI
 BOOI AH HENG
 CHAN FOOK HONG
 CHEN YOK MOY
 CHEW LEN CHET
 CHEW PEI YONG
 CHUIE WEI CHUAN
 FARIDAH BT HJ ISMAWI
 HAFIDAH BINTI WAKIMEN
 HENG KEE JUU
 ILIAS BIN CHIN
 INTAN MASTURA BINTI OMAR
 ISKANDAR BIN BUSMAN
 KARUNANITHI A/L JOSEPH
 KHIRUZZAMAN BIN ABU BAKAR
 KHOO SEA YING
 LIAM POH SIM
 LIM BENG KOOI
 LOO SOON TONG
 MAHATHIR BIN ZAMRI
 MALIZAN BIN JAMUAN
 MARIA BEGELIN
 MOHAMMAD RAHIMEE BIN IBRAHIM
 MOHD FAIZARULAZWAN BIN AYOB
 MOHD SUFEAN BIN NORDIN
 MURALEEKARAN S/O RAJAGOPAL
 MURUGASAN A/L S. KATANG
 NORSIATUL AZMA BT MUHAMMAD DAIN
 NURUL AKMALIAH CHIA BINTI ABDULLAH
 PAUL LEJAU AJANG
 RANJEETA KAUR
 ROSNAH BT HASSAN
 ROZANA @ MINIROH BINTI ISMAIL
 SALINA BT JAAFAR
 SHARIFAH HUDA
 SUMED B ABANG SERMAN
 TAN PEI GEE
 TEH YEAP BENG
 WAN SHARJEE FITRA BT WAN YAHYA
 WANG KIM SUAN
 YAHASHIMAWATI BINTI MAT YASIR

HUMAN RESOURCE ANNOUNCEMENT

OU Malaysia welcomes
the following staff who have joined us
in recent months.

Maizura Yasin

Executive (Programme Management)
School of Science and Foundation Studies
who joined us on 2 December 2002

P Rajesh Kumar a/l K Parameswaran Nair

Lecturer (Physics)
School of Science and Foundation Studies
who joined us on 2 December 2002

Nina Nadzarina Mohd Sahnordin

Executive (Programme Management)
School of Information Technology and
Multimedia Communication
who joined us on 2 December 2002

Elysa Hani Hasnan

Executive (Programme Management)
School of Education, Arts & Social
Sciences
who joined us on 2 December 2002

Azham Zakaria

Executive (Programme Management)
School of Business & Management
who joined us on 2 December 2002

Abdul Rahman Sidek

Manager / Administrator
Learning Centre Operations & Monitoring
who joined us on 16 December 2002

Assoc. Prof. Dato' Dr. Nik Najib Nik A Rahman

Associate Professor, School of Science &
Foundation Studies
Director, Regional Campus, Learning
Centre Operations & Monitoring
who joined us on 1 January 2003

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Syed Abdullah B Syed Othman

Associate Professor
School of Education, Arts & Social
Sciences
who joined us on 2 January 2003

Azilawati Azizan

Executive (Instructional Design)
Centre for Instructional Design &
Technology
who joined us on 2 January 2003

Mohd Faizal Kasmani

Executive (Instructional Design)
Centre for Instructional Design &
Technology
who joined us on 2 January 2003

K. Thirukumaran a/l Kumarasamy

Executive (Instructional Design)
Centre for Instructional Design &
Technology
who joined us on 2 January 2003

Md. Din Talip

Security Assistant
Administration & Logistic
who joined us on 2 January 2003

Tan Saleh

Security Assistant
Administration & Logistic
who joined us on 2 January 2003

Ahmad Zulkarnain B Ramli

Executive (Instructional Design)
Centre for Instructional Design &
Technology
who joined us on 20 January 2003

Nur Azlin Bte Omar

Assistant Lecturer
School of Business & Management
who joined us on 10 February 2003

Nur Saadah Bte Fathil

Librarian
Library
who joined us on 13 February 2003

Shamsudin B Ibrahim

Librarian
Library
who joined us on 3 March 2003

Jamain B Manap

Librarian
Library
who joined us on 3 March 2003

Mohd Fauzi B Alias

Librarian
Library
who joined us on 3 March 2003

Gurrati Ain Bte Kamaludin

Administrative Assistant
ICT Services
who joined us on 3 March 2003

Zulkifli Kamaluddin

Property Management
Administration & Logistic
who joined us on 1 April 2003

The following staff have been transferred
to the following units.

Danny Ch'ng Loi Peng

Assistant Lecturer
School of Science & Foundation Studies
with effect from 1 March 2003

Rohana Bt. Hussin

Executive (Academic)
Registry (Academic Unit)
with effect from 17 March 2003

Wan Mohd Hatta Idris

Executive Assistant
Learners Service Centre
with effect from 17 March 2003

Mior Noorizham Fairuz Mior Azham

Accounts Assistant
Finance & Accounts
with effect from 1 April 2003

Azzah Bte Ahmad

Accounts Assistant
Finance & Accounts
with effect from 1 April 2003

Helma Madihah Bte Mohd Khir

Receptionist
Marketing Unit
with effect from 1 April 2003

Hany Zainal Abidin

Receptionist / Administrative Assistant
Marketing Unit
with effect from 1 April 2003

Advisor

YBhg. Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Hj.
Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad

Chief Editor

Prof. Dr. Ansary Ahmed

Editor

Repin Ibrahim

Writer

Shirley Lau

Contributor

Izzal Asnira Zolkepli

Guest Writer

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Abtar Kaur

Design & Production**Coordinators**

Izzal Asnira Zolkepli

Shirley Lau

Photographers

Azizan Jamaludin

Azmi Jamaludin

Azura Abdullah Zakl

Circulation

Azura Abdullah Zakl

Open University Malaysia
Jalan Tun Ismail
50480 Kuala Lumpur
Tel : 603-2773 2002
Fax : 603-2697 8816

EDITOR'S NOTE

Once again we are proud to announce the launch of yet another issue of OU Malaysia Newsletter. There is no fitting time than now as we publish the forth issue to give the newsletter a facelift. Every so often, the editorial committee evaluates this publication and renews its commitment to it. Many ideas were brought up but very few were actually implemented. It was only after hours of debate that the committee finally came to a compromise - toning down the palette of colors as used in previous issues, restructuring the Newsletter entirely to ensure the smooth flow of contents and have the articles more readable.

In this issue, we will continue to update you with the latest happenings around the campus. Read all about the heavy involvement of OU Malaysia in education fairs and preview sessions held all over the country, the inaugural assembly that marked the unity among staff, development of new partnership with other organisations and many more. Learn what it takes for an institution to maintain and improve the quality of teaching and learning materials in an article by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Abtar Kaur.

Lastly, we hope you'll find the contents are of your expectations. If you have any suggestion for improvement, please let us know. We depend on your feedback to help us make this a better publication.

Editor

editor@unitem.edu.my

We welcome letters, commentaries, features or short creative works

Points to Ponder

The Materialist

*Those ever valuable Materialists;
The crisp, sweet smelling power,
That dawns on every soul exists
Either to strengthen or rend asunder
Happy knights without armor,
And none by spared for the devour.*

*This white and falling pieces
Of hair - a mark of days lost
Amidst the laughters of children,
The Materialist - what have you cost?
An adventure you demand for us,
But now I sit here, alone a rust.*

By Zahirudin Fauzi
Centre for Instructional Design & Technology

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www.unitem.edu.my