

WawasanLink

Linking Students, Partners And Communities

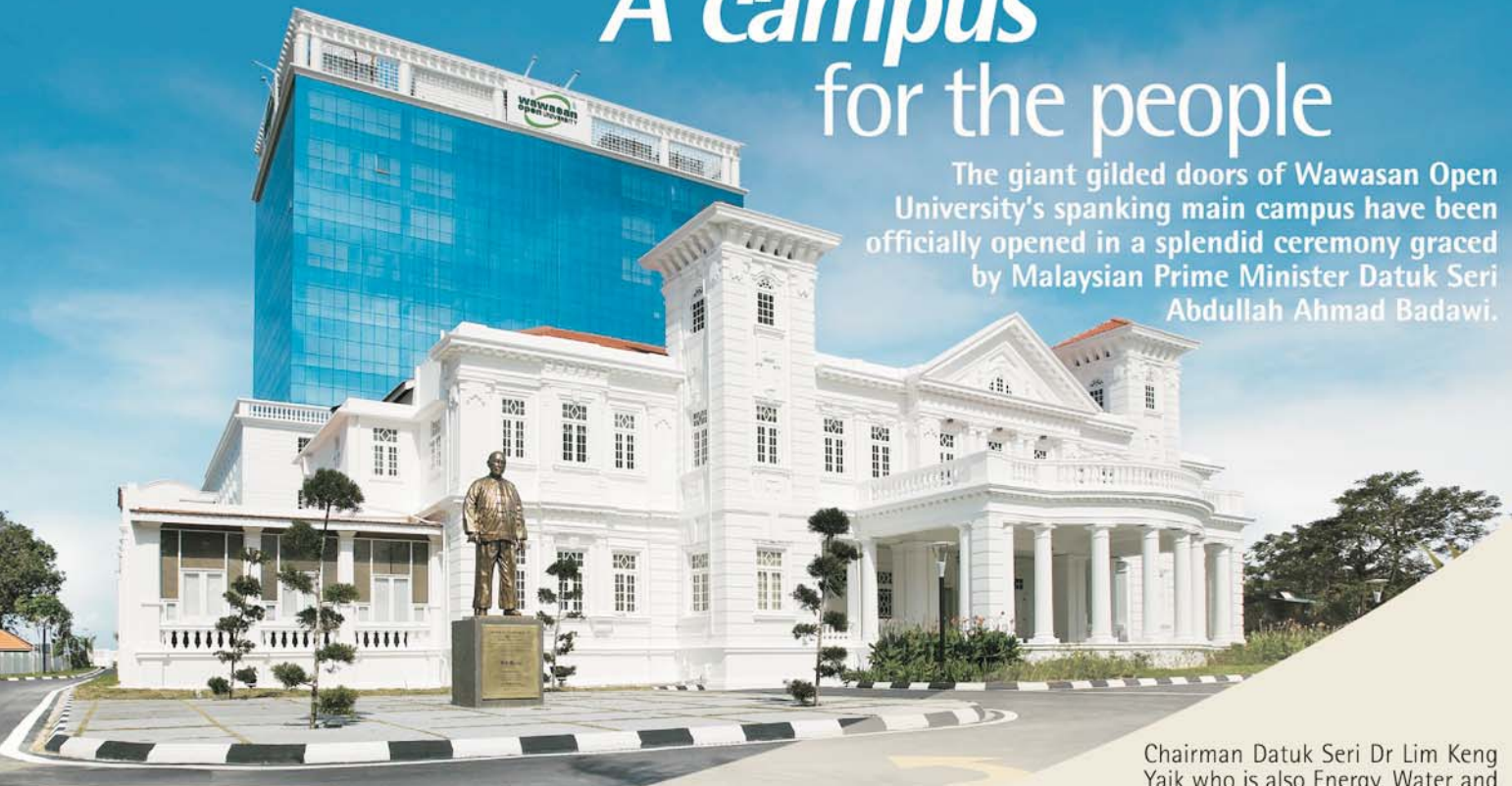


the people's university

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A campus for the people

The giant gilded doors of Wawasan Open University's spanking main campus have been officially opened in a splendid ceremony graced by Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.



Blending tradition with modernity, art with functionality, the magnificent 19th century heritage mansion and modern glass tower stood imposingly together to welcome some 1,200 guests who came to witness the event.

Sprawling across 3.4 acres of lush seaside grassland along Penang's 'Millionaire's Row' of Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, the campus took two years to complete at a cost of between RM36 million and RM40 million.

In his speech, Abdullah expressed great pleasure at seeing the progress made by WOU since its launch 15 months before.

The new campus houses the WOU administrative headquarters as well as the technological infrastructure for WawasanLearn, the University's online Learning Management System.

Facilities include lecture theatres, tutorial rooms, a video conferencing room, a fully equipped library and a performance arts centre.

The meticulous planning in developing the campus had taken

into account the heritage value of the Homestead mansion, restored and refurbished to reflect the University's respect for tradition.

The mansion had been handed over to WOU in 2003 as a gift from the family of Datuk Seri Stephen Yeap, grandson of the late magnate Yeap Chor Ee.

To symbolise the coexistence of future aspirations amid past traditions, the contemporary 12-storey tower was engineered to reflect the historic mansion on its giant glass panels.

The glass building has been named Bangunan Albukhary after Yayasan Albukhary, the building's principal donor.

Also present at the event were Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, Higher Education Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed and Yayasan Albukhary Executive Vice Chairman Datuk Ismail Yusof.

They were welcomed by WOU Council

Chairman Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik who is also Energy, Water and Telecommunications Minister, WOU Chancellor Tun Datuk Seri Utama Dr Lim Chong Eu and Wawasan Education Foundation Board of Directors Chairman Datuk Seri Stephen Yeap.

In his speech, Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan hailed the new campus as a milestone in the University's history.

"Our method of delivering education, though not constrained by the walls of a classroom, will be strengthened by this campus," he said.

"Higher education may be rooted in tradition but if it wishes to serve the modern citizen, it has to adapt and use the tools of the 21st century," Dhanarajan said.

"While we may offer our students state-of-the-art learning facilities to study from a distance, this campus is a presence and a physical reminder to all our students that they are part of the laudable tradition of lifelong learning," he said.

"We truly want to be the people's university."

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in the know

Welcome to the third issue of our quarterly newsletter

Exactly a year has passed since Wawasan Open University launched its academic programmes, making further education for a tertiary qualification accessible to all.

The official opening of the new WOU main campus by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is but a part of the ongoing efforts by the university fraternity to continuously improve, expand and grow.

This campus would not have been a reality but for the far-reaching vision of the late local philanthropist Yeap Chor Ee, who started his life in an impoverished household in Fuchien province in China.

The campus moreover would have never seen the light of day had Yeap's very own grandson, Datuk Stephen Yeap, not had the inspiration and commitment to crystallise the noble aspiration of his grandfather.

So the fruition of the Yeap family's dream coupled with the social commitment of Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, past president of the PGRM, now serves to benefit thousands of Malaysians who are seeking the opportunity and facility to further their education and knowledge with the best available support.

The main campus is evidence of our social commitment towards developing a society that is more conscious, more qualified and more learned.

It is a manifestation of WOU's commitment towards enhancing the standard of living among all eligible Malaysians, regardless of their backgrounds, and thereby contributing to the positive growth of human resources in our nation.

Certainly, there will be many more exciting landmarks to come at WOU. We have seen over the new year the opening of the Kota Bharu Regional Office and preparations towards the launching of the Commonwealth Executive Master of Public Administration programme in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning.

Alvin Toffler once said that "the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn."

Recognising the rapidly transforming pace of the modern world today, WOU is working towards ensuring that working adults in Malaysian society do not end up becoming the "illiterate of the 21st century" who are unable to adapt to the changing environment.

It is precisely because of this that we shall be actively committed to continue promoting life-long learning among all Malaysians.

Tan Sri Emeritus Professor
Gajaraj Dhanarajan
Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer

Movie buffs can finally get hold of DVDs of the acclaimed "Road to Dawn" movie which saw full houses during its screenings last year.

Deputy Information Minister Datuk Seri Chia Kwang Chye officially launched the DVD for public sale at the Wawasan Open University (WOU) headquarters in Penang recently. Also present at the launch were Puan Sri Chui Kah Peng, representing the Chief Minister of Penang, Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and WOU Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan.



"Road to Dawn" DVDs released

Speaking to reporters at a press conference held in conjunction with the launch, Chia said, "With the release of the DVDs, more people will be able to watch the movie at their leisure. At the same time, they are also contributing to a noble cause - enabling Wawasan Open University to reach out financially to ordinary Malaysians seeking to equip themselves academically".

Proceeds of the DVD sales will benefit the WOU Chancellor's Scholarship Fund, a financial support programme set up to award scholarships to financially lacking students who excel academically.

The University, Malaysia's first private not-for-profit Open Distance Learning educational institution dedicated to adult learners, owns exclusive copyright of the movie for five years in Malaysia and Brunei.

"After successfully raising substantial funding from charity premieres held in 2007, this will be an extended fund-raising effort for Wawasan Open University to uphold its vision and mission

of providing accessible and affordable tertiary education for Malaysians," said Dhanarajan.

Directed by Derek Chiu of Hong Kong, "Road to Dawn" was filmed entirely in Penang from August to September 2006. Set in the early 1900s, the movie traces a historical period in the life of Dr Sun Yat Sen when the late Chinese leader lived and plotted his country's revolution in Penang.

The DVDs will be made available at Speedy Video stores nationwide at a cost of RM19.90 soon.



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Statue of Yeap Chor Ee Unveiled at Homestead

On 28 November 2007, the statue was unveiled – a ceremony led by Yeap Chor Ee's grandson, Datuk Seri Stephen Yeap Leong Huat, Chairman of the Wawasan Education Foundation (WEF).

Also present at the unveiling ceremony were Wawasan Open University's Chancellor Tun Datuk Seri Utama Dr Lim Chong Eu, and Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan.

In 2004, Leong Huat and the trustees accelerated the terms of the Yeap Chor Ee Endowment Trust, enabling them to donate Homestead and properties along China Street Ghaut to the WEF to establish Wawasan Open University. Homestead was the residence of the Yeap family for well over 80 years.

One of Yeap Chor Ee's most memorable gestures – a vast donation totalling RM250,000 to the University Malaya Endowment Fund in 1950 – was regarded the largest single individual donation at that time.

Describing his grandfather's support of society and education, Leong Huat expressed, "He was perhaps a pioneer of corporate social responsibility in the country. During his lifetime, he had donated towards many worthy causes but the one closest to his heart was education. He never doubted the benefit and usefulness of learning to a person's well-being."

He had always dreamt of establishing a university. Today, The Grand Old Man's dream lives on through a legacy of goodwill and great deeds.

Standing tall on the campus front, a magnificent copper statue of the late Yeap Chor Ee watches over Wawasan Open University (WOU) – a vision brought to life, a visionary honoured for all of time.

The larger-than-life 2.5 metre-tall statue of the Towkay, as he was affectionately known, was erected in celebration and commemoration of his fortitude, foresight and above all, his generosity.

Yeap Chor Ee was born in the village of Nam Aun, China, in 1867. Armed only with indefatigable energy and strong business acumen, he came to Penang at a mere age of 17 and grew to become Penang's richest man of his time and one of the State's greatest philanthropists.

Chor Ee passed on in 1952 at the ripe old age of 85. By then, he was known as The Grand Old Man of Penang, well loved for his old world courtesy, humility, generosity and integrity.



Orientation day 2008

Smiling faces greeted WOU students as they gathered at regional offices across the country during Orientation Day.

For students returning for their third semester, the day was an opportunity to meet up and exchange notes with their course mates again. It was more overwhelming for new students, especially those who had traded the classroom for the working world and various other responsibilities a long time ago.

This semester's orientation also included the participation of the inaugural batch of WOU's new Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration (CeMBA) students.

All regional offices held the orientation exercise simultaneously on 20 January 2008, with the exception of the Kota Bharu Regional Office, which ran their

session earlier on 17 January 2008. It was an added bonus for students enrolled with the Penang Regional Office who had the pleasure of attending the session at the spanking new auditorium of the newly launched Homestead campus.

As early as 8am, students started streaming in to the registration counters, and were given a WOU tee shirt, 2008 student handbook, annual planner, library student guide and a self-learning CD in a non-woven bag.

The programme began with welcome speeches delivered by the directors of the regional offices and student representatives. At the Penang campus, Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan gave a pre-recorded big-screen address to welcome the students.

Varsity officials then briefed students on WOU's study model in the concept of Open Distance Learning and the University's regulations and procedures.

To help break the monotony of the sessions, refreshments and lunch were served to allow students, tutors and lecturers alike the opportunity to get further acquainted.

An overview of WOU's learning support and services was given to introduce students to IT services and facilities, the WawasanLearn student portal, and library services provided at the respective regional offices and learning centres. The floor was then opened to students for a short Q&A session.

The programme closed with a final session on study skills and preparations for tutor-marked assignments, while an optional lab session was on hand for eager students who could not wait to manoeuvre their way around WOU's interactive portal.

More than 750 students and 50 tutors attended the orientation nationwide.





in the know

A LIBRARY THAT LOOKS FORWARD

Functional yet aesthetic, intimate yet professional, the spacious library of the Wawasan Open University main campus occupies two floors within the tower block of the Albukhary Building.

Covering about 13,000 square feet, the new library is stocked with some 7,000 volumes of print materials, with plans to double the size of its collection by the end of the year.

On the fifth floor is a service area that has 10 open-access computers, journals and newspapers, reference and red-spot collections as well as textbooks loan service for tutors.

The sixth floor is the primary study section. It houses the general collection of books with audio-visual equipment, three student discussion rooms and another 10 open-access computers for library users. The library is a wireless internet zone.

"We aspire to be a vibrant ODL library," says Learning and Library Services Director Kamsiah Mohd Ali. "Certainly we are headed to become one of the most vibrant open learning libraries in the region."

The library team is already working to get the best titles on the shelves. "Our collection is forward-looking," says Kamsiah.

The collection is diverse in breadth and format, and publications are from reputable publishers.

The library's strength lies also in its digital base, which is the backbone of WOU, serving students in other parts of the country.

"The digital library provides seamless web-based access to information resources," says Kamsiah. "The plan to further enhance electronic resources constitutes a large part of the University's future."

Another function of the library is to preserve the University's collection of literature and print resources in a digital base.

The WOU library is open to staff, students and members of the University community, as well as the public who may apply for external membership to use the facilities.

The library is open during semester days from 8.30am to 10.00am (Tuesday – Friday), 8.30am to 5.30pm (Monday) and 9.00am to 10.00pm (Saturday – Sunday). During the semester break, the library opens from 8.30am to 5.30pm (Monday – Friday) and closes on Saturday and Sunday.

For details visit www.wou.edu.my/library



Two senior professors representing higher education institutions of the Gulf Cooperation Council for the Arab States recently made a working visit to WOU's Kuala Lumpur Regional Office in Cheras.

Dr Saeed Saleh Al-Rogaib, director of the e-Learning Centre at King Khalid University, and Dr Khalid Ahmed Bu-Gahoos, director of the e-Learning Centre at University of Bahrain, were in Malaysia to share their expertise on e-learning within the open education system.

They were welcomed and briefed by KLRO director Meilina Puteh before being taken on a tour of the centre's facilities and library where they browsed through WOU course materials.

The visitors were particularly keen to learn about the development of course materials at WOU and the IT support that the university has implemented.

The visit on 23 November was part of a study programme organised by Open University Malaysia and its parent body METEOR to help enhance expertise on e-learning at Malaysian universities.

Some 53,000 students are currently enrolled in at least one of the 13 e-learning programmes at the King Khalid University, while about 8,000 students are taking courses through e-learning at the University of Bahrain.

Bridging the Gulf



A storm of art



Penangites were recently treated to a unique creative arts project featuring locally conceived mixed-media presentations, all dealing with complex human themes and issues.

Featuring three separate segments, the project entitled Storm in a Box was performed at the seafront on the field opposite St. Xavier's Institution in George Town.

What made the three works interesting was the way they utilised metaphors and allusions to portray their stories in an abstract fashion.

In one segment, a flock of birds threatened by pollution turns to the mayor with pleas to keep the city clean and friendly to nature.

Using live vocals and instruments such as the flute, violin and erhu, a group of young singers played out the birds' pleas and their plight.

Backed by a band that made use of traditional drums and everyday objects to create an assortment of rhythms, the singers of Ombak Ombak ARTStudio produced a variety of bird calls.

Using small crates held in their hands accompanied by their own voices, the singers brilliantly depicted scenes of tall man-made buildings, birds imprisoned in cages, the carrying of protest signs and piling work at a construction site.

The performance, directed by Tan Sooi Beng, was one of three stories presented during the evening.

The other two performances comprised a dance installation choreographed by Aida Redza and a drama presentation directed by Janet Pillai.

The dance segment, through symbolic movements combined with lighting and sound effects, showed how an individual's "sins of the past" affected the person's future.

The drama version was a commentary on how television addicts respond to the stereotypical plots and images propagated in serialised soap operas.

Comic characters like the karaoke-crazy wife, pent-up foreign maid and pot-bellied husband evoked deeper issues of human loneliness and desire.

An interesting device used throughout the three segments was the crate. In the very spirit of abstraction, crates were passed on as props from one performance to the next like a thread that linked the three artworks together.

Wawasan Open University sponsored the thought-provoking performance arts project.

Education as a service: challenges for the provider

In the complex taxonomy of services offered in the world market, education is categorised as an almost purely intangible service product.

Education represents the class of services that interacts with, and processes, people's minds. It is therefore classified as a mental stimulus processing service.

Like most services, education is a direct distribution service. It is people-based and has a high level of contact with consumers.

However, the emergence of open and distance learning, coupled with advances in information and communication technology, have ensured that simultaneous presence of the teacher and the taught is no longer a prerequisite for the service exchange process.

The service transaction can take place using the power of technology and other forms of distributed learning, directly between the provider and the consumer even though they may be separated in space and time.

The intangibility characteristic of education – coupled with other service characteristics like inseparability, heterogeneity, lack of ownership – create unique challenges for marketing and positioning of education services.

This is because consumers display different types of information search behaviours, alternative evolution behaviours and post-purchase behaviours.

Research shows that because the purchase decision of intangible services like education is viewed a riskier proposition, the consumer's information search behaviour is categorised by:

- use of more personal than commercial sources of information;
- smaller number of alternatives considered in the evoked set;
- longer decision time between problem recognition and final decision; and
- a greater tendency towards post-purchase evaluation.

The great reliance on personal sources, rather than commercial sources like mass media advertising, is on account of the fact that education as a service is high on experience attributes rather than search attributes.

Experience attributes are those that can only be evaluated after experiencing the service. Search attributes are those that can be evaluated prior to the purchase of the product, and include qualities like style, colour, feel, texture and other physical attributes.

Attributes like quality of teaching-learning processes, learner-support levels and other service outputs, which form the bulk of the value of this service product, are essentially experiential in nature.

Since pre-purchase evaluation of such experiences is difficult, prospective consumers seek present consumers and their evaluation to guide their purchase decisions.

Implications for planners and providers therefore include the following:

- While advertising and mass media promotion are important for creating awareness and product information, they may not be significant influences on consumer decision-making. Good word-of-mouth and satisfied customers as ambassadors form far more powerful influences.
- Personalisation of mass media messages by using testimonials from alumni and existing learners can lend greater credibility to mass media messages.
- Creating a satisfied customer base and consistently meeting customer expectations would go a long way in generating a favourable word-of-mouth and a lasting source of personal influence.
 - Dissatisfaction and grievances need to be dealt with swiftly and decisively. While a satisfied customer on an average shares his experiences with about four people, dissatisfied customers share experiences with from twelve to twenty people. Since providers have no control over what is being said and often have no knowledge of damaging word-of-mouth, damage control may be difficult and sometimes does not happen.
- Creating good referral opportunities - by regularly involving academic peers from outside the system in interaction, information-sharing, participation of university bodies, and exposing them to best practices in the organisation - ensures another channel of personal influence, which prospective consumers having access to such sources tend to utilise.

“The emergence of open and distance learning, coupled with advances in information and communication technology, have ensured that simultaneous presence of the teacher and the taught is no longer a prerequisite for the service exchange process.”



Source: Dr Madhulika Kaushik, Dean of Centre of Graduate Studies



The Transformation of the MBA



In the past, people viewed the MBA simply as a way to acquire knowledge of a discipline and qualification for a career.

For example, one took up an MBA to gain knowledge of a subject like law or management or finance, as well as to understand the theories and principles behind the respective subjects.

"In the past, learning in an MBA programme meant the imparting of knowledge. It was basically 'teacher knows best'," says Dr Cheah Kooi Guan, Dean of the School of Business and Administration at WOU.

This was a very traditional viewpoint of the MBA.

Today, the MBA is usually undertaken for more than such a basic traditional purpose. This is because most of the people who take up the MBA are already professionals in their relevant fields.

What they want from their MBA is insight into how the profession is evolving. They want to keep abreast with the latest developments in the field.

"There is a new expectation among people who seek the MBA today," says Cheah. "People want to learn about change. They want to know what

is new rather than to have basic traditional knowledge of subjects."

"For example, a person may want to know what the latest is in management thinking or business strategies, rather than to be fed with only the principles and theories of management."

Many people also expect an MBA to give them insight into the most current economic and social developments, and to have an idea on how to prepare for the future.

"Today students want to be free to challenge and have stimulating discussions. Learning through peer interaction is an important component of the MBA today."

"People today want a blended approach in their MBAs," says Cheah. "They want guidance and knowledge, but at the same time they also look forward to peer interaction."

For such exposure in an MBA programme, networking is vital. Ideally, an MBA today should

allow a student to be able to share knowledge and experiences with those of other backgrounds.

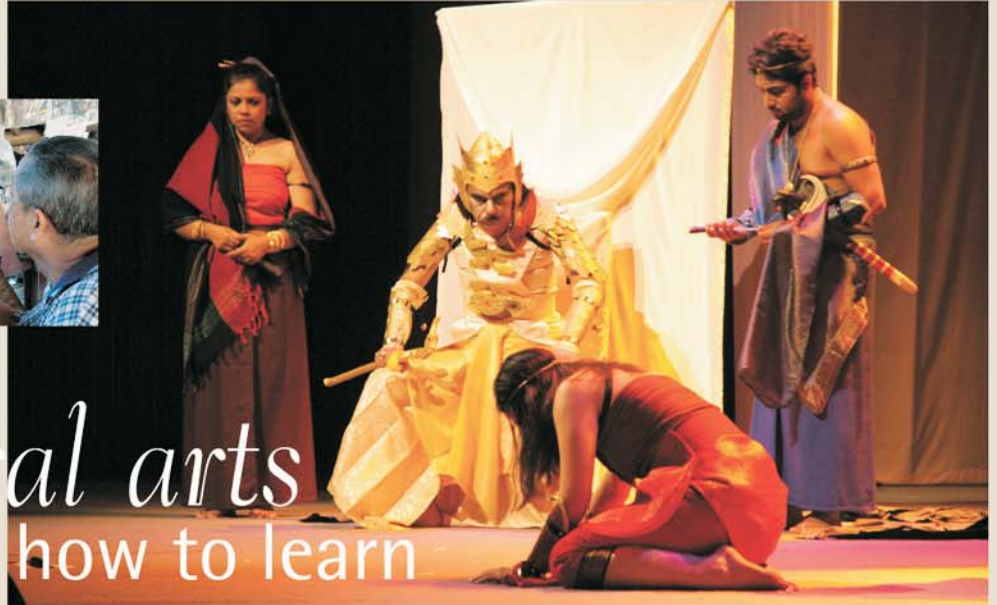
Such student groups that communicate and interact are very important in MBA programmes today.

The open distance learning MBA allows for optimum interaction among students under guided conditions with their tutors and leaders. The ODL MBA has the face-to-face component as students meet regularly while having interaction and discussions on the online medium.

This is especially true with the Commonwealth Executive MBA (CeMBA) programme offered at WOU. The programme requires students to attend a residential session and provides a platform for video conferencing as well.

"Today students want to be free to challenge and have stimulating discussions. Learning through peer interaction is an important component of the MBA today."

The MBA students of today want to compare thinking and approaches, see different perspectives and angles, while having continuous exchange of information.



The liberal arts

- learning how to learn

The utilitarian view of education and in particular higher education has long been very vocation-oriented. Asians have tended to avoid liberal arts as they are apprehensive about the employability and future of graduates in this field.

There has generally been an over-emphasis on acquiring paper qualifications for the more traditional and 'hard' disciplines like business, engineering, science and technology.

This has resulted in neglect in the development of other attributes such as creativity, analytical and problem-solving skills, communications and other soft skills desired by employers - yet lacking among many graduates today.

"Many graduates may have necessary technical skills and knowledge, but when it comes to the work environment, we also require soft skills," says Dr Tan Toh Wah, Dean of the School of Foundation and Liberal Studies.

A liberal arts education is one that allows a person to be a generalist while providing the foundation to allow him or her to specialise in a particular discipline at a later stage.

A liberal arts student will study a variety of courses from the sciences, arts and social sciences.

"Liberal arts enable people to see a wider spectrum in things," says Tan. "Such people are able to participate effectively in informed discussions and intelligent conversations. They are able to make sound judgements and decisions."

As Malaysia progresses towards becoming a developed nation, more people will have the desire, luxury and time in wanting to understand their own selves and others, as well as the 'world' around them.

This is evident in the growing interest among young Malaysians in wanting to pursue careers

in psychology, design, communications and other 'soft' disciplines.

The desire to acquire knowledge and skills beyond the 'limited' scope of the 'hard' disciplines among working adults - exploring areas such as counselling, music appreciation, history and cultures - has also resulted in an increase in continuing and life-long education initiatives.

Given this scenario, it is now timely for Malaysians to look at the relevance of the liberal arts to inculcate skills to help understand society, and overcome problems related to productivity and unemployment.

"Liberal arts enable people to see a wider spectrum in things... Such people are able to participate effectively in informed discussions and intelligent conversations. They are able to make sound judgements and decisions."

In the ODL context, many students are working adults who are already engaged in their respective professional systems.

They do not necessarily lack technical specialised knowledge and skills in their respective fields. What they lack are skills in communications, analysis and decision-making.

"This is where the liberal arts come in," says Tan. "Liberal arts courses in humanities and social sciences emphasise strong analytical and communications skills necessary for one to adapt to the ever-changing workplace and environment."

There has been a shift, though slight, in the mindset of people who are now more receptive

to liberal arts courses like psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, geography, communications and literature.

While creative industries like advertising and journalism benefit most from the liberal arts, many people undertake such programmes not just for the pursuit of a career.

There are those who take it for the sake of new knowledge and interest.

Others, however, may undertake the liberal arts programmes alongside hard courses like technology and business studies.

Tan stresses that liberal arts help endow a person with a broader sense of judgement and thinking, besides equipping one with much sought-after soft skills.

In addition, the workforce today is more mobile than before. The average person is said to change jobs at least three times in his career. With each change, one is expected to adapt to a new environment.

The Malaysian education system can also benefit from the liberal arts. Teachers become better facilitators, and are thus better able to communicate their expertise in the single or few subjects that they teach.

Schools and universities today focus on co-curricular activities merely to cater for political themes like nation-building and ethnic relations, but do not do enough to improve creativity and free thought.

"Liberal arts form the basis for learning," says Tan. "People can learn how to learn better through a liberal arts programme. They can therefore become better employees, problem solvers and decision makers."

"At the end of the day it is the basis for communication, critical analysis, lateral thinking and creativity."

in the regional offices



It was a joyous occasion one fine Saturday morning in October 2007, when the Menteri Besar of Perak, Datuk Seri DiRaja Mohamad Tajol Rosli Ghazali launched Wawasan Open University's regional office in Ipoh.

Also present at the event were Datuk Chang Ko Youn (representing the Chairman of WOU Council Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik), and WOU Vice Chancellor and CEO Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, while Ipoh Regional Office Director Ching Huey Ling played host to guests and visiting colleagues.

The establishment of the Ipoh Regional Office further strengthens WOU's presence in the Kinta Valley, thus enabling it to develop WOU's capacity in delivering tertiary education to adult learners and working professionals residing in Perak and neighbouring states.

In his speech, Tajol Rosli stressed on the importance of education in achieving and sustaining growth and development for the nation. He also reiterated the Prime Minister's call to all Malaysians to embrace the culture of lifelong learning.

Excitement filled the air when Tajol Rosli promised the state government's assistance in identifying a suitable plot of land for WOU to build a branch campus. Earlier, his pledge to donate a sum of RM150,000 was greeted with applause from the audience.

The regional office is currently located in the heart of the city centre in Wisma Gerakan at Persiaran Greenhill. Supported by six full-time staff members, it is fully equipped with educational facilities that include meeting rooms, classrooms, a resource centre and computing facilities.

In his speech, Dhanarajan said that WOU is mindful of its primary focus to ensure that its adult learners are not deprived of a good learning environment.

"The University's aim is to provide such regional offices and learning centres in every state in the country, as our ambition is to reach out to our citizens to provide affordable, accessible and flexible learning opportunities throughout the country," he said.

A brief preview of the new Commonwealth Executive Master programmes in Business Administration (MBA) and Public Administration (MPA) was held shortly after the launch.

The Ipoh Regional Office currently serves around 250 students.



Official Launch of **Ipoh** Regional Office



Student Orientation at Kota Bharu RO

Wawasan Open University kicked off its academic activities in Kota Bharu on a very modest and promising note when the first orientation programme was held here with 13 students (4 for CeMBA and 9 for undergraduate programmes).

The students were welcomed by regional office director Azly Yong. They were shown a pre-recorded introductory address by Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, followed by presentations carried out by Chong Kong Hoong, Director of Regional Operations, and Kamsiah Md Ali, Director of Learning and Library Services.

The students were introduced to the open distance learning study model at WOU, the learning support and services, self-learning, study skills and tutor-marked assignments.

Students came out generally showing confidence and enthusiasm in using the WOU learning support and services.

in the regional offices

WOU's Fourth Regional Office Launched in Johor Bahru

It was a cool, wet morning when WOU staff and guests turned up to mark the occasion of the launch of the Johor Bahru Regional Office (JBRO) on 19 November 2007.



Menteri Besar of Johor, Datuk Haji Abdul Ghani Othman officially declared the office open. Other VIP dignitaries present included Deputy Information Minister Datuk Seri Chia Kwang Chye, WOU Vice Chancellor and CEO Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, and JBRO Director Ng Peng Long.

The fourth to be established, the JB Regional Office endeavours to support students in the state of Johor and its vicinity who are undertaking degree programmes and various other courses at the University.

Its premises in Taman Johor Jaya, Skudai, houses the regional administrative bureau and is equipped with meeting rooms, classrooms, a resource centre and computing facilities. Currently, approximately 310 students are registered with the JBRO.

In his opening speech, Abdul Ghani urged Malaysians to be active participants of lifelong learning as it offers everyone equal opportunities to contribute to nation-building. The Menteri Besar also gave a generous donation of RM300,000 and also supported the idea for WOU to set up a branch at the Iskandar Development Region.

Meanwhile, Chia in his speech said that WOU's mission of providing knowledge and skills to adult learners is in tandem with the aspirations of the state, which is already in the process of implementing several bold projects, including the Iskandar Development Region.

WOU roadshows at Queensbay Mall

On three separate weekends in November and December, WOU's Penang Regional Office (PGRO) held roadshows in Queensbay Mall, one of Penang's newest shopping complexes located in Bayan Lepas.

This was part of a final, all-out effort to register students for the January 2008 semester. Also on offer for the new semester was the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration.

WOU staff at Queensbay Mall received an overwhelming response from the public, with queues of enquiries about WOU, Open Distance Learning (ODL), fees, scholarships and programmes.

PGRO Director Manoharan commented: "Queensbay Mall has always been a good supplier of good traffic. The quality and characteristics of the people who patronise the mall match our market profile. By creating an interactive presence within a rich mix of professions from various factories in the Free Industrial Zone, Wawasan Open University can, directly and by word of mouth, make a mark."

The Long Distance Learner - Yusof of Yanbu



To many, Yanbu is just another city near Jeddah and Riyadh. To Yusof, it is a classroom.

The coastal city of Yanbu suddenly became significant to KLRO when one of its first students, Yusof Ahmad, decided to transfer to the faraway

land in Saudi Arabia. A dedicated and diligent student of KLRO, Yusof appreciates the mobility and flexibility of distance learning. Upon his return to Kuala Lumpur to sit for the Semester 2 examinations, he willingly shared his experience as a real ODL scholar.

"When you are away and you know that you have to study, the internet is the only way to go. I have time to study as I do not work at the moment. I also spend a lot of time online every day to search for information. I realise how powerful the internet can be," explains the homemaker, whose wife teaches in a school there.

He readily admits that face-to-face tutorials are very important and feels disadvantaged with his inability to attend any, due to his relocation. Thus, Yusof relies heavily on WOU's Learner Management System (WawasanLearn) which he finds very helpful.

"WawasanLearn has been my source of information. My course coordinators have been very helpful. I consider myself lucky because my tutors respond immediately to all my emails and queries. So I am doing fine even without attending the tutorials, though I wish to very much," he says.

"For those who have not heard of Yanbu, it is more than just industry and infrastructure. Today, it is an international community offering its residents the means to lead comfortable, secure and satisfying lives. I would say that I live in an attractive modern environment, though it is unmistakably Arabic."

"ODL should not be seen as a handicap - instead it should be seen as an opportunity. The geographical and time flexibility is an advantage. Thanks to WOU, my dreams are in the process of becoming a reality," he beams.

Agilent steps up

If there's one thing that attracts success, these guys are dripping with it - enthusiasm.

They work for a well-known, multinational corporation. They are young, lively and are very capable of nothing but fun. They already hold diplomas.

Yet, these four buddies - Leong Kam Foong, Chee Seng Kee, Ang Der Ching and Jeff Toh - are not quite done reaching higher. Their next goal - WOU's Bachelor of Technology in Electronics.

Striding into WOU's Penang Regional Office, heads held high and safety boots stepping in time, the guys are elated. That day, just two weeks after their orientation, all four 23-year-old Associate Product Test Engineers received their Chancellor's Scholarship.

Their colleague at Agilent Technologies, Karmjeet Kaur, who works as a Logistics Administration executive is instead taking on a Bachelor of Business in Logistics and Supply Chain Management.



The Septuagenarian Scholar

Sporting a Confucianesque beard on a wizened face, Chan Yiek Nung looks more like the philosopher than a university student.

He graduated in 1956 with a Senior Middle Three qualification in Singapore, but was unable to continue his education due to financial limitations and for want of opportunity.

When Wawasan Open University opened a Regional Office in his hometown of Johor Bahru, Chan's ship came in. After five decades of longing for the perfect chance for that elusive degree, Chan is now pursuing a Bachelor of Business in Banking and Finance (Hons) at the age of 71.

His age-flouting scholastic endeavour was given due recognition when he received a personal testimonial from WOU's Vice Chancellor, Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, congratulating him for successfully completing the January 2007 semester.

Inspiring his fellow coursemates with his infectious 'never say never' spirit and a fervent hunger for knowledge, Chan is a true ambassador of lifelong learning.

His commitment, dedication and perseverance have allowed him to sail through his first semester successfully, and he now takes on the next with even more enthusiasm.

For all working adults who have missed their tertiary education and are keen on getting one, Chan offers these words of wisdom, "One is never too late or too old to learn, as long as one has the will to do so. With burning desire and determination, every goal is achievable."



An Antidote for Idleness

When a busy doctor suddenly finds a lot of time on her hands, what does she do? Dr Deepti Manuja chooses to learn something new.

Having practised dental surgery as a certified surgeon for most of her life, Manuja stood face to face with idle days when her application to practise at her level was disallowed in this country.

The lady with the ever ready smile hails from Chandigarh, a beautiful city located near the foothills of the Shivalik Range of the Himalayas in north-western India.

Armed with a Bachelor's degree in Dental Surgery from Annamalai University, she worked her way up as an assistant dental surgeon in a clinic in 1998, and in 2000, advanced to the Chandigarh Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research as a house surgeon and research fellow.

In 2002, she moved to Singapore with her

husband, also a medical practitioner, to take up the position of dental therapist with the Singapore Health Promotion Board.

Last year, she moved to Penang with her husband who currently works with the Mount Miriam Cancer Hospice. "Apparently, my qualifications aren't recognised here and as such I'm not permitted to practise as a dental surgeon. So I have a lot of time on my hands," she said. The determined doctor immediately began seeking an antidote for her idleness.

When Wawasan Open University announced its inaugural offering of its Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration (CeMBA) programme, she thought to herself, "This is a wonderful opportunity. If I'm not currently employed, why don't I study? It's always great to learn something new."

So Manuja signed up for the January 2008 CeMBA semester, and is now happily whiling away her non-practising days ... productively.



Wawasan Open University Makes It Possible!

LEARNING STYLES

For effective learning and comprehension of any subject matter to take place, an individual must first determine his or her own learning styles. A person may learn best through a single learning style or a combination of styles that would guarantee optimum results.

The different learning styles are as follows:

a) Visual Learners: learn through seeing...

These learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid visual obstructions (e.g. people's heads). They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated text books, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts and hand outs. During a lecture or

classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information.

b) Auditory Learners: learn through listening...

They learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed and other nuances. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder.

c) Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners: learn through moving, doing and touching...

Tactile/Kinesthetic persons learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration.

EVENTS

Relay for Life

WOU continues its support of the National Cancer Society of Malaysia, contributing to the annual Relay for Life event promoting cancer awareness and donating a sum of RM10,000 towards its cause.



WOU's inaugural public lecture

"The 2008 Race for the U.S. Presidency: Gaining the Nomination, Winning the Election, and Governing the Country" was delivered by Prof. Burdett "Bird" A. Loomis from the University of Kansas, providing insight into the intricacies of the impending United States presidential election. This lecture took place at WOU's new Lecture Theatre 2.



A Bus for The Blind

Dolci Voci, a vocal group held a charity performance in WOU's new auditorium on 24 February 2008, raising funds towards the purchase of two new Toyota window vans for St. Nicholas' Home for the Blind, Penang.



In the minds of our readers

We would like to hear from you. Whether it's a view, a comment or even a question, don't hesitate to drop us a mail at mediainfo@wou.edu.my

For more details, visit wou.edu.my

CONTACT US

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