

EMPOWERING WOMEN for A BETTER FUTURE



Wawasan Open University (WOU) in collaboration
with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) organised a forum
in Penang to discuss issues pertaining to women in leadership.



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EDITOR'S NOTE

As the preference towards open distance learning accelerates, universities are aggressively leveraging on digital technologies to design, curate and deliver courses at a faster rate. This supports universities in their goal to make education relevant to the needs of students and the changing world.

In this light, WOU aims to position itself as a university for the future by investing in infrastructure and delivering integrated, user-friendly digital learning platforms for optimal student experience.

At WOU, we also share and celebrate achievements. We had a special commemoration ceremony for the graduates of 2020 and 2021 who had missed out on having physical convocations due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

WOU recently had the honour of hosting the 4th Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme in Penang in partnership with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). It was indeed a privilege to have Permatang Pauh Member of Parliament, YB Nurul Izzah Anwar, deliver a resonating message on women's leadership and women participation in sectors like science, engineering and technology.

As part of its efforts to connect with communities, WOU published and hosted the launch of a book on the historic Koay Jetty of George Town. It features a visual record of this lost cultural heritage, to enlighten future generations on Malaysia's rich legacy. A huge gratitude to the George Town Institute of Open and Advanced Studies (GIOAS) for turning the dream for this publication into a reality.

In its promotion of culture and performing arts, WOU opened its 'home' to the Penang Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO). The majestic Homestead mansion is now the PPO's base for rehearsals and practice.

The University has not neglected its core mission of providing tertiary education and continuing education to enrich and equip the people. It continues to hold talks and foster agreements, like the recent memorandum of understanding with a kindergarten teachers' association to offer a pathway for its members to gain valuable qualification through the Diploma in Early Childhood Education (DECE) programme.

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SPECIAL POST-PANDEMIC CEREMONY FOR GRADUATES OF 2020 AND 2021



▲ Happy graduates.



▲ Graduates seated in the hall.



▼ The scrolls were presented by Prof Chan.

Nearly 400 graduates who could not experience physical convocation ceremonies in 2020 and 2021 recently attended a special commemoration ceremony at the main campus to share the happy occasion with family and friends. The event was held on August 27 and 28 this year.

In her speech, WOU Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Lily Chan lauded all the graduates, the majority of whom were below 40 years of age, for their ability to adapt to changing circumstances. She emphasised that continual education, lifelong learning, and online formats like WOU's are highly important for personal and professional advancement.

"Technological innovations, brought on by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0), are rapidly changing and improving workplaces," she told the graduates. She stressed that WOU's programmes and its soon-to-be-launched micro-credentials are designed to prepare graduates for "the future of work".

Prof Chan touched on how IR 4.0 has transformed diverse occupational sectors. "Manufacturers employ digital solutions to implement processes and oversee entire production lines," she said. "AI is used to automate production processes, detect quality defects for predictive maintenance, and enhance inventory management. They leverage on big data analytics for real-time monitoring of equipment, and to better customise products and services for customers."

In terms of finance, technology gives customers easy access to their financial transactions and accounts, she noted. "Companies no longer need to issue cheques and can better manage payrolls."

She also highlighted that innovation in logistics and supply chain management, like computerised inventory management and forecasting system, have replaced paper records to provide better warehouse storage and truck routing. "The entire supply chain has become a more integrated, data and network-driven ecosystem. E-commerce is on the rise due to massive online purchases, with digitalisation of the supply chain providing next-day or same-day delivery."

Prof Chan also cited the impact of IR 4.0 on sales and marketing, where social media (e.g. Facebook, TikTok) e-invites, online advertising (e.g. Google Ads) and social influencers, complemented by corporate websites, are norms today to promote businesses and reach customers.

"WOU seeks to equip graduates with the required skills and the right aptitude to wade through the challenges of the future workplace," she asserted. "We want our graduates to be well-prepared for the future demands of the changing job market. Learning should not end when you graduate; it has to be continual."

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION STALWARTS RECEIVE LIFELONG LEARNING AWARD

Two senior graduates from WOU's Diploma in Early Childhood Education (DECE) programme were honoured by the Perak Kindergarten Teachers Association (Persatuan Guru-Guru Tadika Perak) for achievements in lifelong learning.

Chee Moy Kia, 74, and **Mok Kam Wei**, 49, received the Lifelong Learning Award during the association's Teachers' Day celebration held on 15 May 2022.

Chee and Mok, who had enrolled at the Ipoh Regional Centre, completed their studies to graduate in 2020 and 2021 respectively.

EXEMPLIFYING LIFELONG LEARNING

Chee has been in education for 51 years. She spent the first 33 years as a primary school teacher and later as vice-principal. Since then she has been managing a kindergarten over the last 18 years.

"Ever since I was in elementary school, I had aspired to be a teacher," she said.

She pursued DECE to fulfil her dreams of a university qualification and to meet the government requirement for all kindergarten teachers to have at least a diploma. She was able to apply what she learnt at WOU to guide the kids in her kindergarten.

"Every child has different talents, personalities and learning abilities, and so we adapt our teaching accordingly," she shared.

Chee appreciates the award from the association, viewing it as a gesture to "respect and appreciate the learning spirit of the elders".

Indeed, she is a testament to lifelong learning. She also holds a diploma from the Academy of Fine Arts along with a professional diploma in traditional Chinese medicine.

Her philosophy is encapsulated in the succinct adage of "live and learn".

YEARS OF DEDICATION REWARDED

Meanwhile, Mok is a principal at Tadika Sihat Ria in Ipoh which she founded in January 2007. She has been in early childhood education for 30 years, having entered the field at the young age of 19 because of her soft spot for children.



She currently manages her kindergarten alone due to the dwindling enrolment numbers caused by the recent lockdowns. She also conducts tuition for 10 to 15 primary school pupils at the kindergarten to supplement her income.

On her award, she remarked: "It is fulfilling and rewarding because I have been in this line for so long. The award makes me feel like all my hard work and efforts in teaching the kids are not wasted."

She had taken up the DECE because she needed to get her licence renewed and continue operating the kindergarten. She relished the opportunity to learn more while gaining a qualification.

Every child has different talents, personalities and learning abilities, and so we adapt our teaching accordingly.

* The Perak Kindergarten Teachers Association had joined WOU's Valued Partnership Programme (VPP) in December 2021. Under the VPP, its members can study at WOU with a 20% discount on their tuition fees.

MOU WITH PENANG KINDY TEACHERS' BODY ON DIPLOMA PROGRAMME

▼ Signing of the MoU. From right - Prof Anna and Dr Chow of WOU, with Ng and Beh from the Association.

The Penang Kindergarten Teachers' Association (Persatuan Guru-Guru Tadika Pulau Pinang, PGTPP) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with WOU to facilitate its members to be enrolled in the Diploma in Early Childhood Education (DECE) programme. Recognised by the Ministry of Education (MOE), the programme run by WOU's School of Education, Humanities & Social Sciences (SEHS), enables preschool educators in the country to become qualified professional teachers.

At the same time, the arrangement under the MoU helps DECE students to get hired after graduation in a part-time or full-time capacity by kindergartens associated with PGTPP.

Speaking at the signing ceremony at the WOU City Campus on 6 August 2022, WOU Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Lily Chan remarked: "The MoU signifies collaboration with noteworthy partners to enhance the learning experience of our DECE students. Besides attaining the necessary education, our aim is that students graduate with the required core competencies and mindset."

Prof Chan also said that the School must create and facilitate simulation-based experiences to accomplish the learning outcomes.



The MoU was signed by SEHS Dean Assoc Prof Dr Thomas Chow Vonn Foo and PGTPP president Sally Ng Chit Peng. The occasion was witnessed by Prof Dr Anna Christina Abdullah, director of WOU's Centre for Graduate Studies, and Association deputy president Beh Sock Eng.

Prof Chan later launched the kindergarten and nursery simulation rooms at the city campus to enable DECE students to execute simulation exercises for young learners.

ENTREPRENEUR-CUM-DBA STUDENT HONoured WITH WOMEN LEADERS AWARD

Rina Neoh Siew Lian, a student of WOU's Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) programme, has been recognised for her leadership achievements in entrepreneurship and business by the Women's Institute of Management (WIM).

The 47-year-old entrepreneur is the co-founder and managing partner of Ficus Venture Capital and Mercatus Capital. She received WIM's Tan Sri Dato' Napsiah Omar Women Leaders Award from Tuanku Zara Salim, the Raja Permaisuri of Perak, during a gala dinner in Kuala Lumpur on 16 May 2022.

Neoh has over 25 years of experience in the corporate and entrepreneurial sector. She serves as coach and advisor to several business advisory boards, NGOs and educational institutions, and sits on the board of directors of the Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE).

"I was delighted to get recognition from a prestigious women's organisation like WIM," remarked Neoh, who holds an MBA in International Business.

Unbeknownst to her, Neoh was nominated by her long-time friend, Assoc Prof Dr Cheah Phaik Kin from Universiti Tunku

Abdul Rahman (UTAR), during the open call for nominations. Incidentally, it was also Dr Cheah who persuaded her to enrol in WOU's DBA programme during the January 2021 intake.

With her years of experience and well-earned accolades, Neoh proffers words of wisdom to the younger generation aspiring for success. "Strive to be a better version of you every day and refrain from comparing yourself to others," she said.

"Devote your heart and soul to your goals and have a deep comprehension of the subject matter. Always stay grounded and make a name for yourself by doing something you are passionate about."



▲ Neoh thrilled with the recognition.

WOU STUDENTS BAG GOLD AWARD FOR FINAL YEAR THESIS POSTERS

Two pupils of WOU's Master of Arts in Psychology (MAPS) programme have bagged gold awards for their research thesis posters in a competition to pit final-year projects and theses, or dissertations, of tertiary-level students. Intended to foster research and innovation among students, the online poster competition's focus was on projects in the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and social sciences and humanities.

Named '*Final Year Project & Postgraduate (FYPP): Research & Innovation Poster Competition (RIPC) Series 1/2022*', it was organised earlier this year by Mediate Nexus and Nurture a Fast Network (MNNF Network), an event management company.

Dato' Che Seow Foon and Tan Siang Hee won in the master's social sciences and humanities category, for their posters' appearance, organisation, content and innovation. They were both supervised by lecturer Dr Chong Chew Wuei from the School of Education, Humanities & Social Sciences (SEHS).

RESEARCH SPURRED BY INTEREST IN HUMAN BEHAVIOUR



Dato' Che Seow Foon's winning entry depicted her research thesis on *Decoy Effect in Malaysia: Influence of the Label of Price Per Unit*.

The research focuses on the decoy effect - how consumers switch preferences when presented with a third alternative. It also examines the impact of incorporating price per unit on the decoy effect.

"The decoy effect and the practice of including price per unit are both beneficial strategies in the marketing industry, enhancing the sales of targeted products," she explained. "This combination strengthens the influence on consumer behaviour."

Chew who is from Bayan Lepas, Penang, is also the founder and head of Reiki Institute Malaysia. Her interest in the functioning of the human mind and behaviour led her to enrol in the MAPS programme at WOU in June 2020. She found that WOU, with its qualified educators and course materials, offers her adequate opportunities and support to obtain quality higher education.

"Winning the competition helps me bring recognition and triumph to WOU," she said.

The 40-year-old hopes to promote a culture of research and innovation among her peers. Her focus in life is also to accomplish her set goals while finding joy and fulfilment through the journey of lifelong learning.

HYPNOTIST INTRIGUED BY INDIVIDUAL'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS



Tan Siang Hee, a certified hypnotist from Bukit Mertajam, Penang, was encouraged to participate in the competition by Dr Chong. He took it on, determined to learn and experience something new.

The 32-year-old ended up bagging the gold award for designing a creative poster on his research thesis titled *Factors Influencing Adoption of Cashless Payment Systems in Malaysia*.

The research seeks to identify influences on the decision-making process of individuals when it comes to accepting the use of cashless payments, and whether age is a contributing factor.

"The results present a new model that recognises the elements that individuals consider when deciding whether to adopt cashless transactions," he elaborated.

As a hypnotist, Tan helps individuals to enhance communication, manage stress, and so on.

He enrolled in the MAPS programme in May 2018 to augment his academic and professional experiences.

His goal in life is to develop himself professionally. He credits the support of his siblings for his success. In fact, he is already eyeing to pursue a PhD after he completes his master's degree programme.

4TH PAN-COMMONWEALTH TRAINING PROGRAMME

INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP CRITICAL IN TODAY'S ENVIRONMENT

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in collaboration with WOU organised a workshop on 'Women Leaders: Shaping the Future for a Sustainable World' in Penang recently, weighing in on the themes of leadership, technology, and climate change.

EQUIPPING WOMEN LEADERS TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

Prof Asha Kanwar, President and CEO of COL, emphasised the importance of leaders being aware of the key issues of our time, which include the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, and achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) by 2030.

"What can we do, as women leaders, to accelerate achieving the SDG goal of inclusive and equitable quality education for all?" she said. "What can we do to avert the climate crisis? Are we equipped to address these issues and provide leadership in our own sphere?"

In her presentation titled *Towards Innovative Leadership* at the WOU City Campus on 1 August 2022, she also highlighted the gender gaps that exist in information and communications technology globally. Women make up only 14% of the workforce for cloud computing, 20% for engineering, and 32% for data and AI, while the majority of the estimated 3.7 billion without Internet connectivity are women and girls, she added.

She said although women outstrip men in academic achievements, few women reach the top because of "family responsibilities, social norms, and a desire to be liked". "Women face an uphill battle to break all those biasness, stereotypes and barriers. So how do we build up our capacities and achieve our targets?"

Prof Kanwar stressed on the requirements of open distance learning (ODL) leaders in this regard. "Leadership is a skill and must be promoted among women if we want innovative leaders in ODL," she said.

For example, they must encourage a spirit of inquiry to assess what works and what does not, and why. "They must promote networking to spark innovative ideas and expose the people to emerging technology developments," she said. "They should encourage people to try out new ideas, take risks, learn from that, and proceed."

She pointed out that research and innovation in an organisation are driven by the right people, the corporate culture, sponsorship, adequate resources and innovation processes.

Prof Kanwar said that innovators should have the skills of questioning, observing, networking, and experimenting. "Innovative leadership is applying innovative thinking to leadership tasks and creating a climate where others are applying innovative thinking," she explained.

FOUR FRAMES OF LEADERSHIP

Prof Kanwar also spoke on the four frames of leadership that lead to innovative leadership.

The first is the structural frame. It involves setting up strategic plans, policies and goals, chains of command, specialisation, and analysis and data.

Next is the human resource frame which relates to meeting employee needs, getting consensus, helping them to fit into the organisation through training workshops and retreats, coaching, and communicating clearly what is going on to navigate solutions.

The third is the political frame. It entails aspects such as securing critical resources, funding, reaching agreement by negotiation, and networking to create coalitions and build a power base. She noted that it is important to build good relations with governments and other institutions, and to cultivate communities of students and alumni.

The symbolic frame refers to elements such as the mission, vision, slogans, songs and rituals which help to build a sense of identity for the institution.



▼ Prof Kanwar (right) with WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Lily Chan.

4TH PAN-COMMONWEALTH TRAINING PROGRAMME

A CALL FOR GENDER PARITY

The event titled 'Women Leaders: Shaping the Future for a Sustainable World' was jointly organised by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and WOU from 1-3 August 2022. About 30 women leaders of open distance learning institutions attended from 15 Commonwealth countries in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean - including Canada, Malaysia, Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Fiji, Bahamas, Barbados, Ghana, Nigeria, Botswana, Sierra Leone and Tanzania.

NURUL IZZAH: VOICE OF WOMEN NEEDED IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING



◀ YB Nurul Izzah (The Star pic)

Malaysian Member of Parliament (MP) Nurul Izzah Anwar highlighted the need for more active participation of women not only in spaces of leadership and decision-making, but also in science and innovation.

"Nothing can truly be 'sustainable' if we fail to include different voices at the table," she said. "If more women for example are involved in decision-making, there is a greater probability that more family-friendly policies will be designed."

Besides participating in policy-making, women are also needed to drive professional fields like engineering and technological innovation, she stressed. For instance, women should be at the forefront of cutting-edge medical research. "Females are still routinely left out of biomedical research, and ignored in analyses of data," the popular legislator and politician shared.

Nurul Izzah was delivering the keynote speech via live video feed during the opening session held at WOU's City Campus on 1 August 2022. The event featured workshops on the themes of leadership, technology and climate change.

She lauded COL and universities like WOU that promote and practise open and distance learning (ODL), which is inherently inclusive. "Improving access to education is an important way to increase inclusivity, which then can accelerate action on policy matters that meaningfully contribute to a nation's sustainable development," she said.



▲ YB Nurul Izzah delivers her keynote speech.

Nurul Izzah is the MP for the Permatang Pau constituency and a former chairperson of the Consideration of Bills Select Committee in the Dewan Rakyat (Malaysia's lower house). Incidentally, she is also the daughter of Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Dato' Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail - both former deputy prime ministers who served in the position in different periods.

This training initiative by COL for participants from the Commonwealth is focused on enabling women to become good leaders, which demands the development of strategies to counter bias, stereotyping and discrimination.

ACCELERATING GENDER PARITY WORLDWIDE

Nurul Izzah pointed out that women lack power over resources and decision-making and disproportionately bear the impacts of disasters, including increased violence.

She particularly noted findings by UN Women that only 22 countries have an elected woman head of state or government, while 119 nations have never had a woman leader.

▼ Participants applaud after the keynote address.

"At the current rate of progress, gender parity at the highest positions of power will not be reached for 130 years," she said. "The analysis also showed parity would not be reached in national parliaments before 2063, and in ministerial positions before 2077."

She reiterated the need for more women representation, including as political party members and on party executive committees. "When gender sensitivity is not well understood at a political party level, how will the same people who then potentially go on to govern a country adopt these principles at a national scale?" she asked.

"Infrastructure, laws and regulations, progressive policies around maternity and paternity leave - these are all key to ensuring women are able to thrive in an environment that is safe and caters to their needs," she said. "When these needs are met, only then will more women be willing to take the leap into public life."

GENDERED LENS ON ENVIRONMENT CRUCIAL

Nurul Izzah also spoke on ensuring gender equality and promoting gender sensitivity within the country. She said this should be a priority for every leader, in government or otherwise, regardless of their portfolio. In this light, she welcomed the recent passing of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act by Parliament to protect the wellbeing of women and men.

She also called for a gendered dimension to the issue of climate change and environmental policies, pointing out that the devastating floods last year were not "natural" disasters but the impact of climate change. "Applying a gendered lens, even to environmental disasters, is crucial for



truly sustainable solutions to be formulated and ultimately executed."

She called on women, as leaders, to build "green skills" to adapt to the harsh impacts of climate change such as global warming, and to also nurture soft skills like problem-solving to apply their knowledge in the real world.

"If we find ourselves in a position of privilege, it is our duty to empower those without it, whatever their identity labels and categorisations," she asserted.

Meanwhile, WOU Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Lily Chan, in her earlier welcoming remarks, stressed that women need role models for inspiration.

"One way to address biasness and barriers, and bring positive changes in the workplace and other decision-making efforts, is to have more women in positions of leadership, providing the support and role models women need to advance in their careers," she said.

▼ Making a change: Participants pose for a group photograph.



4TH PAN-COMMONWEALTH TRAINING PROGRAMME

SHARED INTERESTS AND COLLABORATION FOR BEST OUTCOMES

PERFECTING THE ART OF NEGOTIATION

A crucial element in any endeavour or project involving another party is negotiation. There are various aspects that makes the process effective, such as proper planning, observing, and adapting.

Prof Dato' Dr Ansary Ahmed, President and Chief Executive Officer of Asia e-University, gave valuable tips regarding the negotiation process for the best possible success. Sharing the four Harvard Principles of Negotiation, he highlighted the importance of separating the person from the issue at hand. Be not position-focused but interest-orientated, identifying each stakeholder's interest and finding a solution that satisfies everyone. Develop criteria that a good solution must fulfil, and also give options to choose from.

"Start the conversation first. If you let the other party start negotiations, you will be constantly giving up control," advised Prof Ansary during his talk on *The Art of Negotiation* at WOU City Campus on 1 August 2022.

"Be inclusive, involve all stakeholders. If you leave anyone out, it could be a source of barrier for whatever you sought to achieve," he added. "Be prepared by doing your homework. View the agenda ahead of the meeting, identify key issues, turn up earlier, and get to know the persons, their values."

During the negotiations, he stressed, one should listen to what the other is saying. "Read the silence and body language as well, and how they react to what you are proposing," he said.

"Understand the position they are coming from, and how you can change their mind. Consider the mindsets as some are open to compromise, and some are not. What beliefs do others hold and what can you do to cement or shift these mindsets?"

Prof Ansary added: "Consider the mood, behaviours, and feelings of others and how that has impacted on their positions. Do not just stick to dry data - use storytelling to give examples from others to explain your position. Offer a 'what if' scenario to make them consider the other position."



◀ Prof Ansary. (AeU pic)

▼ Prof Bandalaria. (UPOU pic)



DEVELOP POWERFUL NETWORKS TO BENEFIT YOUR ORGANISATION

Building a powerful network can help a leader raise her profile internationally, but not many understand the importance of this, said **Prof Melinda Bandalaria**, Chancellor and Professor of the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU).

"One network can connect you to other networks if you are a valuable member of that initial network," she said in her talk titled *How Can Women Leaders Build a Powerful Network?* on 1 August 2022. "It helps to build a good reputation for your university as it will be known for whatever initiatives you are doing."

She said networking also increases awareness of current issues and opportunities. "You can build links with diverse stakeholders, and tap into a diverse pool of talent," she asserted.

Prof Bandalaria mentioned three forms of networking. The first is operational networking where relationships are formed to accomplish tasks within one's own organisation, and secondly, personal networking where one seeks kindred spirits outside one's own organisation.

"It can lead to other connections and allow you to implement what you learn from the practices of other universities," she elaborated.

The most important is strategic networking. "Leaders must create a successful future plan and build social networks so as to develop initiatives and implement projects for the university, and mobilise resources," she stressed.

Among her suggestions to build a powerful network was to get mentored, as then the mentor's network can become your network, and to attend regular events. "Invest time for networking. Organise your network structure," she added.

4TH PAN-COMMONWEALTH TRAINING PROGRAMME

DIGITAL LEADERSHIP TO COPE WITH TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

INTEGRATED DIGITAL LEARNING CRUCIAL FOR OPTIMAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

As higher education is geared to pivot towards greater online learning in the future, it is imperative that universities incorporate an integrated digital learning platform to enhance student experience.

In asserting this, WOU Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor **Prof Dr Lily Chan** said that constant transformation and investment on current and future online Learning Management System (LMS) platforms are important.

WOU is in the midst of making its own teaching materials more interactive. It should complete uploading all relevant materials to FlexLearn, its LMS, by the end of 2023, she revealed. The University will have to migrate to a new Student Information System, and upgrade its LMS and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platforms.

"All these must be integrated into the operating system," she said during her presentation on *Women's Leadership in the Digital Era: Agility, Adaptability and Fluency* on 2 August 2022.

Prof Chan stressed that student experience relates to course content as well. The University aims to make its academic programmes and content more relevant to the changing times as well as the younger generation – considering that 89% of its students are below 40 years.

With more online learning, higher education institutions must focus on competing at scale. "It needs to be borderless, it needs to be short courses and degrees," she said. "You are now educating digitally native cohorts, and experiential or work-integrated learning is very important. You must incorporate all these into your thinking."

The focus on student experience covers learner experience, personalised experience, and customised experience, she explained. "The user interface has to be so intuitive that anyone can use it without much thinking."

LEADERSHIP QUALITIES FOR THE DIGITAL ERA

In view of this scenario, digital leadership is critical to navigate the current business landscape where data is embedded in every decision, interaction, and process. "Digital leadership or leadership in the digital era is about understanding, embracing and figuring out how to use digital technology in problem-solving, decision-making and management."

Prof Chan shared the top ten emerging technologies and innovations in the education sector in 2022. They are immersive learning; artificial intelligence; e-learning; gamified learning; big data and analytics; personalised learning; blockchain; cloud computing; video assisted learning; and Internet of Things (IoT).

As for leadership qualities necessary for the digital era, she listed them as "adaptability, curiosity, creativity and comfort with ambiguity".

Firstly, she said, one must have a basic appreciation of the digital tools and data that the organisation needs to leverage on. These include CRM, cloud services, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence. "Secondly, you must learn to empower," she added. "Create self-organised teams, optimising the operations, as you cannot do everything yourself. You communicate with one another using digital tools. There is participation, involvement, and contribution from everyone. As a leader, you are a commander, communicator, collaborator and co-creator."

Lastly, "as a leader, you must be a lifelong technology learner" to gain fluency about IT skill sets and the digital world, and be able to communicate well, she said.

Prof Chan also shared with the workshop participants that WOU has set up the new School of Digital Technology (DiGiT), while a new School of Logistics and Supply Chain Management is under planning. "We want to make WOU a university for the community, a university for our futures, where we train leaders for the future," she said.

▼ Participants on second day of the event.



DEVELOP YOUR PERSONAL BRANDING FOR GREATER REACH ON LINKEDIN



Do you know that there is a way to measure your social selling effectiveness, relative to others in your industry and within your network, through the Social Selling Index (SSI)? It basically allows you to act to improve your SSI score to reach a wider audience on the platform.

LinkedIn is the only platform that generates a score based on how well you perform in four categories: establishing your professional brand (e.g. having an appealing profile, including photo); finding or connecting with the right people (e.g. leaders or others in your industry); engaging with insights (e.g. sharing or posting relevant content); and building relationships.

Social media and public relations strategist Andrew Chow recently shared ways to improve your SSI score. For example, you can use a concise and impactful headline that adds value, and have a well-written summary of yourself that includes your past and current responsibilities as well as your future goals.

LinkedIn, he asserted, is a good online platform to help you to establish a professional profile that highlights your work while also allowing you to meet new people, share knowledge, and build and maintain business connections.

Chow, who is based in Singapore, was speaking at a virtual talk titled *Personal Branding through LinkedIn* organised by WOU's School of Business & Administration (SBA) on 7 May 2022.

He stressed that it is essential to display, with validation, all the responsibilities you claim to have fulfilled, and highlight the skills you have developed together with endorsements and a well-constructed list of your professional experiences.

"To improve your SSI, you should gradually grow your

connections systematically," he said. "Connect with people you have met and include your LinkedIn URL in your email signature. You may also seek testimonials or recommendations from other professionals to boost your profile."

Chow said you can build relationships by participating in discussions of the LinkedIn groups of interest or leaving comments on other people's profiles.

"It would be excellent if you could write down your noteworthy projects and publications/written works from the past, and your volunteer activities," he added.

He also explained how to do a SWOT analysis for your profession by identifying your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. "You must first recognise people in your life who support you (such as mentors, family and friends or coaches) before you position yourself and strategise on LinkedIn. It is moreover critical to focus on your weaknesses rather than your strengths, and to treat networking as a business appointment by meeting new people on a regular basis."

He highlighted the importance of being willing to share opportunities and cooperate with others so as to learn from one another. "If you need to compete, simply compete with yourself because you must do better today than yesterday," Chow said.

He concluded: "Knowing knowledge is easy, but practising your skills is tougher and the toughest is transforming your mentality."

At WOU, learners can take up the Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Sales & Marketing (BBSM) programme through open distance learning (ODL) or the on-campus learning (OCL) mode.

IR 4.0 ADOPTION NOT EXTRAVAGANT, ENSURE TECHNOLOGY MATCHES DESIRED OUTCOME

It is often thought that adjusting one's operations for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) entails adopting extremely high technology and requires astronomical costs. This is a common misconception as the implementation can be done with "the end in mind" without incurring vast sums of money.

"Use discretion and choose something that's practical and effective for your purpose and offers best value-for-money," advised CK Tan, vice-president of NationGate Solution.

"As a manufacturer, whatever decision you make must be governed by the end in mind. If you want to automate machines, you can perhaps use simple mechanisation instead of investing millions of ringgit," he remarked.

Tan, who has over 40 years of experience in manufacturing, used the simple analogy of buying a smartphone, where the selection of a particular device is influenced by its intended use or purpose.

There are four fundamentals of manufacturing excellence to remember, he added. These are productivity, on-time delivery, quality, and competitive costing. The complementing factors are being predictable (no excuses), dependable, responsive (act swiftly), and systematic (good practices).

Tan was speaking at a webinar titled *The Imminence and Importance of the Adoption of IR 4.0 Framework in Manufacturing to Maintain Effectiveness* organised by WOU's School of Science & Technology (SST) on 20 June 2022.

He also cited the seven key success factors of manufacturing excellence. These are: man (productive workforce), machine (equipment efficiency), material (quality), method (robust process and intelligent system), system (smart), safety (culture), and environment (conductive).

"A machine that is not working well can affect output. And when managing a large quantity of components or a large workforce, you should have a good system," he said.

He asserted that the KPI of IR 4.0-ready manufacturers are high productivity, quality, on-time delivery, competitive costs, and customer satisfaction. On the other hand, IR 4.0-lacking manufacturers are complacent, suffer declining business and become obsolete.

Eliminating dependency on humans

There are nine pillars of IR 4.0; however not all need to be adopted. Of these - autonomous robots, systems integration, Internet of Things (IoT), simulation, additive manufacturing, cloud computing, augmented reality, big data, and cyber security - manufacturers must choose what they want.

"For example, data can help with early detection action, providing tell-tale signals, real-time triggers, and fast feedback for swift response," he elaborated.

Tan pointed out that the nine technologies under the IR4.0 framework remove dependency on humans and their memory, enabling faster decision-making and greater operational efficiency.

He gave scenarios of how manufacturers or owners can adopt the nine technologies into the IR4.0 framework, such as applying 3-D printing technology for prototyping to cut time and cost, and using robotic tools to improve efficiency.

"Simulation will help detect bottlenecks in operations for faster feedback, while IoT provides data collection and sensors for real-time triggers," he said. Cloud computing allows for embedded algorithms, AI, and coordinated processing; cyber-security protects against digital threats (anti-virus, anti-hack, anti-scam); and augmented reality (AR) provides interactive real-time experience for machine training.

Responding to a question on justifying return on investment (ROI) of IR 4.0, he said: "The ROI is good if the value or output achieved is more than the investment, such as digitalisation of data that can help with quick decision-making in the fast-changing corporate world."



▲ CK Tan



REMINISCENCES OF THE PAST: KOAY JETTY LIVES ON IN PHOTOGRAPHS

The George Town Institute of Open and Advanced Studies (GIOAS) has published a photographic book titled *Koay Jetty Penang - 25 Years Apart* which provides a glimpse of the heritage jetty and its residents before the structure's demolition some years back.

"This is part of GIOAS' efforts to contribute to the art and culture of Penang," said Tan Sri Andrew Sheng, Chairman of GIOAS, an institute under WOU. "The collections show the history of how the community was formed. What binds us all is the diversity of cultures."

The 140-page publication was launched by Penang Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak at WOU's main campus on 15 August 2022.

The book, which also features a narrative history by Dr Chan Lean Heng and photographs by Dr Ooi Cheng Ghee, highlights the scenes and community at the site in 1979 compared to the changes it underwent in 2004.

As explained in the book, the Koay community came to settle in Penang from southern China more than a century ago. Their livelihood then was mainly in handling charcoal.

The community was impacted in part by Penang losing its free port status and due to nearby public housing projects. The jetty lost much of its charm and residents had to seek livelihood elsewhere. Its eventual demolition took place in 2006.

The remaining six jetty communities in the Weld Quay area - of the Lim, Chew, Tan, Lee, Yeoh clans as well as one of mixed surnames - have become tourism landmarks, thanks to UNESCO's 2008 listing of George Town as a World Heritage Site.

Dr Ooi, 79, reflected on the changes he saw in 2004 after having last visited the jetty 25 years earlier. "In the 1970s, the jetty still had open access to the sea on both sides but when I returned, the reclaimed land completely cut off the jetty from the sea," he commented in an interview featured in the book.

"Towards the end, the residents collectively made the decision to accept compensation and move out," added Dr Ooi, who retired from medical practice four years ago but continues pursuing his passion for photography.

Dr Ooi, who previously had his photos of the Little India vicinity taken in the late 1970s published in a book, has been an avid lensman since the time he was young. He became enamoured by Koay Jetty after he had visited it to attend to a patient there.



▲ Tun Fuzi (2nd from left) launches the book on Koay Jetty.



▲ Dr Ooi with one of his favourite photographs (right).

Meanwhile, Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Chairman of WOU's Board of Governors, in his opening remarks during the launch, shared about the Koay Jetty Memorial Hall and plans for an eventual museum.

The hall has some photos of the old jetty, including one of Koay Jetty builder Keay Ah Yeaw, now 94, on a charcoal boat in the 1950s. It also features two miniature models related to the jetty.

Dr Ooi has offered to present several of his photographs to the hall, which is located in the apartment complex built over the jetty.

Among others present at the launch were WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Lily Chan, Think City Chairman Dato' Seri Anwar Fazal, and Keay himself.

A month-long exhibition of Dr Ooi's photographs on Koay Jetty was held at WOU until September 15th.

Koay Jetty Penang - 25 Years Apart is also the first published photographic record of a Penang clan jetty.

PENANG PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA FINDS NEW HOME AT WOU

In a move befitting the grand classical music traditions, the Penang Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO) – the State's volunteer-based orchestra – has found a new home at the Homestead heritage mansion within the WOU main campus. They began using the premise from August this year.

The orchestra will bring further excitement to the campus and spur the University to embrace a strong new cultural element. The campus will soon see the serenading strains of the likes of Beethoven and Mozart being played in concerts and other related events, drawing music aficionados and the public from Penang and the region.

WOU Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Lily Chan expressed hope that the new home would nurture PPO musicians' talents and help secure a more permanent setting for the accomplished orchestra.

"As a leader in adult and continual education, WOU seeks to enhance its community participation and linkages through the various cultural initiatives, and contribute to the development of the creative arts, particularly in the northern region," she said.

Meanwhile, PPO Chairperson Datin Seri Irene Yeap said she



intends to broaden the orchestra's network and outreach through exposure and education. "The orchestra finally returns to the stage after a two-year hiatus. We are pleased to have WOU as our partner as we ramp up our activities to bring in world-class musicians to work with our PPO members."

The orchestra gathers for rehearsals weekly and performs a varied repertoire that spans more than 350 years of symphonic composition. Its previous home was at The Star's Pitt Street building where they operated until July 2022.

GRADUATES OF CLINICAL HYPNOSIS AND HYPNOTHERAPY COURSE RECEIVE CERTIFICATES

WOU recently held a modest graduation ceremony for 24 students who successfully fulfilled the course on Introductory Integrative Evidence-based Clinical Hypnosis and Hypnotherapy (CHyp).

The course to develop clinical hypnosis skills is offered by the International College of Clinical Hypnotherapy Practitioners (ICCHP) in collaboration with WOU.

The graduates received their CHyp certificates from WOU's School of Education, Humanities & Social Sciences (SEHS) Dean, Assoc Prof Dr Thomas Chow Voon Foo, during the event at the WOU main campus on 3 September 2022.

Among those present were StudyPENANG executive director Dato' Khoo Boo Lim, ICCHP Asia regional director Synthia Surin and ICCHP trainer Dr Gayathri Kumarasurir.

In his speech, the graduates' representative Richard John Monaghan stressed that while we may conceal our life experiences, trauma and emotional issues from the conscious mind, self-discovery and hypnotherapy can help us better understand ourselves.

In a speech recorded on video, ICCHP founder and

Principal Tod Cury said that the ICCHP programmes have the highest level of accreditation recognition for clinical hypnosis learning. The British Psychological Society (BPS) has validated and approved the courses of ICCHP, enabling graduates to practise worldwide, he added.

"You are not just taught techniques or processes, but you will learn to develop the clinical skills needed to practise in the real world with clients and patients," he said.

The clinical hypnotherapy community consists of students, graduates, practising therapists and healthcare professionals from all around the world with a passion for clinical hypnosis.



MOTHER-SON POSTGRADUATE JOURNEY FOR THE LOVE OF TEACHING

A retired school teacher approached the Ipoh Regional Centre about postgraduate studies for her son, only to find herself pursuing the Master of Education (MEd) programme at WOU.

Fong Siew Yen, now 57, of Perak had initially come to the centre to inquire for her son, Gabriel H'ng Yung Yang. She then saw an opportunity to take up the Master's degree at WOU through the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

She ended up registering for the programme along with H'ng. Both mother and son began their studies through open distance learning (ODL) during the January 2021 intake.

Fong is presently the owner of Easy Melody Enterprise. A music teacher herself, she offers private lessons to students at home, online, and on-site at a few primary schools. She also coaches students to improve their school performance and publishes ukulele teaching materials.

Through her studies at WOU, she has gained valuable knowledge and skills on effective leadership in a school setting, and the right of every individual to basic education. She better understands her responsibilities to her students and their parents, and has a broader perspective about the management of music education. "I firmly believe that a child's life can be transformed through education," she said.

Meanwhile her son H'ng is currently a teacher at Wesley Methodist School Seremban (Private), where he teaches mathematics and physics. He describes his mother as a prominent figure in his life. "I see clearly the love she has



▲ Mother and son united in love for teaching.

for teaching and the joy she evokes in her students," he said.

"Since I tend to take after my mother in many aspects, it is only logical that she was my inspiration for becoming a teacher," he added.

Indeed, due to her passion for music and her affinity with young children, Fong is gratified whenever she sees improvements in her pupils' performance on stage.

She credits her husband for supporting and motivating her to pursue her goals. "He helps me with house chores and organises my teaching materials, while my siblings and sons provide me with all the support I need."

"I made a promise to myself that I will work hard until I accomplish my dream of a master's degree, because I do not want to have any regrets in life in the future," she asserted.

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