

## The perfect JUICE for WOU-Industry collaboration



When one thinks of the word 'juice', qualities that are likely to come to mind are aspects like nutrition, strength and healthy growth. There is now another equally significant meaning to be attached to the term in the sphere of higher education today.

Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye recently introduced the acronym JUICE which stands for Jobs, University, Industry, Collaboration and - most important of all - Employability.

Indeed, in order to produce employable graduates equipped with 21st-century knowledge and skill sets to fill job demands into the future, universities must work closely and collaborate with strategic partners from industries. And Wawasan Open University is responsible for producing such amply endowed graduates who are not only adapted to up-to-date intelligence, but are also effectively global citizens.

"This 4th Industrial Revolution that we are currently experiencing is all about smart factories and smart services. Its impact on higher education will inevitably shape and transform the way we teach and learn in universities," Prof Ho remarked in his address at the opening of a public seminar on *Managing Technology and Reinventing Education* at the main campus on 14 September 2017. Organised by the University's School of Science & Technology, the event was attended by about 80 representatives from academia and the corporate sector.

He said WOU must plan and strategise to meet the challenges of Industry 4.0. "Right job skills are vital in meeting future graduate employability challenge," he said, citing new career demands in emerging digital technologies.

Examples of these include demands in fields like smart sensors, 3D printing, big data analytics and advanced algorithms, multi-level customer interaction and customer profiling, augmented reality, cloud computing, IoT platforms, location detection technologies, advanced human-machine interaction, and authentication and fraud detection.

Prof Ho stressed that 21st century pedagogy is about developing fluency in information, media and technology, as well as skills in creative thinking, problem solving, and virtual global network and collaboration. One also needs to possess the ability to be agile, resilient and adaptive to disruption from new technologies.

### Being prepared for impending education trends

He also listed four imminent new trends in higher education. Firstly, learners prefer academic programmes that offer more flexibility in timetables and modes of delivery, with shorter completion time.

This leads to the second trend where programme designers must therefore consider switching the approach towards learning from 'just-in-case' to 'just-in-time'. "The focus is on personalised experiential learning and adaptive assessment tailored to meet the needs of the individual student," he said. "The approach has to be student-centric rather than teacher-centric. All these call for innovative programming that is personal, purposeful and collaborative in a customised learning format and timeline."

"Next is serious emphasis on joint university-industrial training involving external corporate partners, like mutually designed student internship programme. And lastly is the call for increased recognition of credentials and credit transfer to facilitate student mobility between universities," he added.

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Dear Readers, this is my last contribution for the column in my role as Vice Chancellor.

I would like to record my appreciation and thanks to members of the *WL* Editorial Board, both past and present, for their support, ideas and inputs without which this periodical would not have accomplished its intended objectives.

The essential role of *WL* is to provide news and information on the developments, happenings, events and plans of the University in an effort to connect with society, as well as with our stakeholders. I hereby reaffirm that this publication will continue to be produced for the stated purpose.

In this final issue for 2017, I wish to highlight the very fruitful one-day academia-industry dialogue that took place at our main campus on September 14th, which included a public seminar on the impact of new emerging technologies on higher education and industries. The event was well received and I believe that similar dialogues will follow. They serve as platforms for sharing new ideas and forging new university-industry collaborations that will ultimately enable WOU to better serve the nation through delivery of quality 21st century industry-relevant higher education.

The University recently also organised an in-house seminar to update our academics and senior management staff on recent happenings in open distance education. Registrar Dr Andy Liew shared his observations and thoughts on current practices gleaned from an international conference attended by him. He was followed by our external consultant Mr Wong Hun Heng who spoke of his impressions and the good practices adopted by the Southern New Hampshire University in the US.

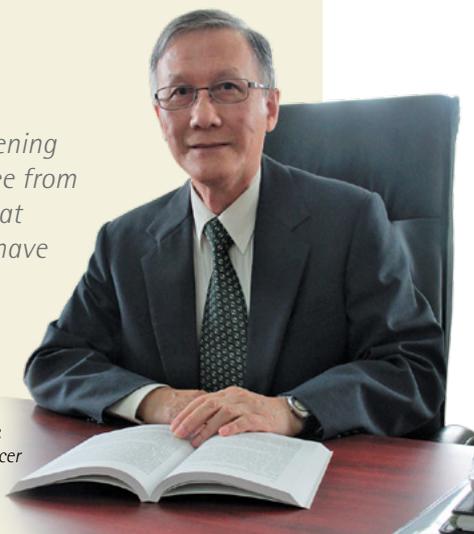
WOU is a vibrant, happening university as you can see from the various activities that our staff and students have participated in. The objective is to build a close-knit 'family' as well as to practise a culture of good corporate social responsibility, as a people's university. For this reason, WOU has been faithfully supporting the annual Relay for Life Penang since 2007.

Last but certainly not the least, I wish to take a moment to thank Prof Madhulika Kaushik for her many years of dedicated service in various top management capacities in WOU, culminating in her serving as the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic). We wish her continuing success in her career back in her home state in India.

I wish to conclude by saying that the opportunity to serve *WL* and its Editorial Board members has been an honour and privilege I shall never forget. *WL* will certainly continue to be in circulation.

Thank you all. Goodbye Readers.

“WOU is a vibrant, happening university as you can see from the various activities that our staff and students have participated in.”



**Professor Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye**  
Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer



Dr Koh listens as Dr Yeong Che Fai (left) talks on commercialising research (see page 3).

Prof Ho recommended a dual-track approach – one mainstream track delivering programmes and courses in full compliance with government requirements, while the other track delivering specially customised continuing professional development (CPD)-type training courses to help meet industry needs.

### Deepening industry involvement in academic programmes

Prof Ho also said it has been a regular practice in WOU to invite captains of industry to comment on proposed contents and curriculum designs of new programmes. Such industry involvement should be extended to teaching and assessment as well. This is especially so in activities like guest lectures, leading of group discussions using real-life case studies with students, as well as co-supervision and grading of jointly designed university-industry project assignments," he said.

"What's in it for the industry partner you ask? The completion of a company-defined mini-project, the opportunity to grade student performance, testing of new ideas or products, enrichment of student learning experience at real job sites, strengthening relationship with the university, and a pipeline for prospecting new staff for recruitment – these are some possible win-win outcomes that both parties can benefit from," he elucidated.

"What's in it for the student? Opportunity to apply theory to real-world work situations, learn actual work skills and make a concrete contribution, work with talented and experienced professionals, get paid for real work done, and strengthen resume or CV," Prof Ho added.

He also urged participants from the various corporate companies to suggest how they can help move the University forward in this regard.

The seminar and subsequent discussion under the Academia-Industry Dialogue (AID) were moderated by Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, WOU Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Board of Governors.

In his remarks, Dr Koh reinforced the importance of this form of dialogue for the benefit of WOU. He explained that conventional ideas and practices in universities and industries must change for transformation to take place. He also reiterated the commitment of institutions like WOU in energising industry and corporate partners to plan towards the creation of employable graduates.

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# Education of the Future

As part of WOU's Academia-Industry Dialogue (AID), the School of Science & Technology organised a public seminar on 'Managing Technology and Reinventing Education' at the main campus on 14 September 2017. Three highly interesting speakers from both industry and academia broached the challenges and rewards of the Internet of Things, especially in its relevance to the higher education sector.

As human capital demands across the world transform rapidly due to advances in technology, higher education institutions of today must urgently adapt and keep up with the changes over the next ten years in order to survive and thrive.

"Universities will be gone if you don't take the right strategy to be relevant," cautioned Dato' Yoon Chon Leong, Director of Penang Science Cluster, in his talk on *Creation of a Market Aligned Education Industry to Meet Future Demands*.

"In doing a business plan, we need to look at what the driving trends in today's world are," he said.

He cited examples of these technology drivers. They include the evolving of the Internet to 5G; the increasing exponentially in computing power; the global process integration driven by cloud computing; the proliferation of data and software platforms; the beginning of data analytics and machine learning; the rise of smart materials; and the replacing of automation with "autonomation" - a word used to describe intelligent automation.

"You need to digitise your company as the other industries are becoming increasingly digitised," he said. "If not, you cannot collaborate."

## Laggards left behind in "tsunamis of Internet"

Dr Mazlan Abbas, co-founder and CEO of Favoriot, a company specialising in the Internet of Things (IoT), stressed on the importance of organisations reinventing themselves every three to seven years for business survival.

He said there have been three "tsunamis of Internet" that have hit users - fixed Internet, mobile Internet and more recently, the IoT. Such tsunamis, he warned, would wipe out the laggards.

He urged universities to inject new ideas into their educational content to help support the "big IoT cake". He emphasised that about 100,000 IoT professionals are needed to support the whole value-chain and build a new generation of IoT, to propel Malaysia into the era of Internet of Things.

In his talk titled *Generation-IoT: The Key to Business Survival in 21st Century*, he explained that there are four phases of maturity in the IoT - monitoring, control, optimisation and being autonomous.

Dr Mazlan cited the example of a motor vehicle - how it can firstly be monitored with GPS and then controlled by having it immobilised. One can also use IoT to optimise or select the best route for the vehicle's journey, and ultimately allow it to be self-cruising, he added.

"If we put more and more sensors, we create value for the person who owns the asset," he said, explaining that there are many benefits of such connected assets. One can know the wear and tear of a hardware he uses, be shown alerts and even have replacements ordered before the

## A tech academician's entrepreneurial adventure

Meanwhile, the event also saw a talk by Dr Yeong Che Fai, Senior Lecturer at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, who spoke on *An Academician's Journey to Entrepreneurship - Building Research into a Commercial Venture*.

Dr Yeong, who teaches electronics and robotics at UTM incorporating IoT in the syllabus, has won some 100 awards in innovation and entrepreneurship. He has also co-founded five companies which employ many UTM graduates.

Dato' Yoon also urged universities to have value differentiation to make themselves look different. He said they should focus on producing employable graduates with key qualities like hands-on skills, communications, innovation, self-learning, relevant knowledge and self-leadership.

He pointed out that 31.4% of fresh graduates were unemployed in 2016, based on JobStreet's statistics for that year. The main reasons for this problem were poor command of English, poor communication skills, and poor attitude or character.

He quipped that if he had a university, he would focus on E&E, software, automation and artificial intelligence (AI) in the human capital management. The infrastructure would feature digital libraries, business intelligence, industry collaboration, design software, AI analytics, entrepreneur facilities and technical services, he added.



Dato' Yoon explains the current driving trends.

equipment breaks down, while measuring driving behaviours and have connected healthcare devices.

There is therefore a huge market potential for IoT in sectors like transportation, construction, insurance, connected home, healthcare, smart buildings and manufacturing, he said.

"Look at the assets in each sector, ask the right questions and collect the right data," he said in advising businesses taking advantage of IoT.

"Generating data comes from many sources and various forms," he added. He pointed out that the data can be generated from people moving around with smartphones, sensors in pet collars, sensors in oceans, sensors in gambling casino chips, sensors in product pallets, Internet browsing and sensors in the soil. By making sense of the data, one creates value, such as, for example, in determining the location of available parking and in utilising smart parking.



Dr Mazlan expounds on IoT.

One of the companies designs and manufactures Automated Guided Vehicles for local MNCs as well as for overseas exports.

In his talk, Dr Yeong shared the challenges he has faced as an academician in venturing into entrepreneurship and how he and his team overcame them to grow the business, including empowering students with the required skill sets to stay relevant with technology needs.

# ‘WOU always a part of me’: A farewell from Madhulika Kaushik

Prof Madhulika Kaushik returned home to New Delhi after having served as Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) till the end of July 2017, thus ending a long and eventful service with WOU. She had been appointed to the position on 24 February 2014.

Prior to this, she had coordinated the CeMBA/CeMPA programmes as Director of WOU’s Centre for Graduate Studies (CGS) during the University’s formative years from 2007 to 2009. She had considered her return to WOU as something of a homecoming and was happy to see the rapid strides made in the interim.

“I reserve a very special place in my heart for this institution. My time at WOU was a great learning experience for me. WOU has been a very important part of my life and my development as a higher education practitioner, particularly in open distance learning.

When I had first joined the University, initially as a Professor of Management and then as the Director of CGS, WOU was in the initial years of its establishment. The pioneering spirit was very strong and we were in the phase of development of many of our policies which in retrospect seem to have served the University well. A very strong sense of core values and adherence to the University mission guided all actions and the very committed leadership was able to enthuse most of the first batches of WOU academics and staff into going well beyond their stated job profiles to actualise the vision of Malaysia’s first not-for-profit open university as “the people’s university”. Those were also days of long and frequent meetings aimed at setting up the in-house infrastructure for a technology-supported learner management system, another investment which has enabled the University to attain its positioning as a responsive and learner-centric higher education provider.



March 2014.

My first major responsibility then was to prepare for the launch of our first postgraduate programmes - the Commonwealth Executive MBA and MPA (CeMBA/CeMPA). While the core material had been licensed from the Commonwealth of Learning, major effort was required on the part of the School of Business & Administration (SBA) faculty to contextualise the content to local realities, identify local case materials and adapt the content to the WOU template of instructional design.

Hard work by everyone paid off and the programmes were launched in January 2008 to enrolments that exceeded expectations. The CeMBA programme has stood the test of time and is now being offered on both ODL and online versions. I keenly look forward to the programme being extended to overseas markets.

Along with the SBA colleagues, I was also assigned the responsibility of designing and offering a 6-month strategic leadership training programme for Intel Malaysia, which helped establish WOU’s footprint in the high-end corporate training space in the country. As the University has demonstrated that capability, I look forward to many such opportunities being capitalised by it and to WOU becoming a player of note in the corporate training arena.

My return to WOU in 2014 saw me taking on a different role, as the DVC for Academic. The University by then had made impressive strides in its growth and systems and I was now responsible for overseeing the

Schools. It was a different vantage point of looking at the challenges we now faced, but the added advantage of long-term familiarity and the excellent teamwork that is almost embedded in the WOU culture made working in my second innings both enjoyable and very satisfying.

There were constraints and challenges, mostly on account of factors beyond the control of the University community, but at most times the academic community as well as the divisions were ready to pitch in with contributing efforts and some sacrifices, enabling the University to achieve the milestone of financial viability in the stipulated time. The need for financial prudence in the face of resource constraints and cost efficiencies was at times painful as it seemed to slow the desired pace of expansion, but also served to strengthen a resolve to persevere and be self-reliant.

The University is at a strategic inflection point at this stage of its life cycle. The Malaysian higher education market is a ruthlessly competitive one with most private players playing rough in their bid for better enrolments. Most players also do not have any specific positioning and seem to compete on price points as well as product proliferation with little differentiation.

WOU therefore will need to chart its growth strategy imaginatively, carefully looking at new products and new market combinations, while also capitalising on its core values of customer service and care with the help of its technology-enabled infrastructure and care. The University is well placed to meet its growth aspirations with good and committed faculty resources, a timely bid for the online education market in the country and abroad, and the strategic rollout of regional services. It would need however to continue to invest in its people to capitalise on the rapidly evolving education technologies, enhance its research and innovation profile and make a very determined push for penetrating the corporate training market. It would also need to guard zealously its good governance practices regarding academic autonomy and stakeholder accountability. With its strategic road map in place, I am very confident of the University’s intent to actualise some of these and wish it all the very best.

Lastly, I would not like to term these inputs ‘parting words’ as I still feel a part of WOU in terms of my abiding interest in its continued growth and know that it will always be a part of who I am today.



On her last day at WOU - 27 July 2017.

# WOU shares benchmarking standards with MEDIU delegation

A seven-member delegation from Al-Madinah International University (MEDIU) recently graced the WOU main campus where they were imparted with pertinent features of our academic and learning management philosophy and systems.

The visit on 3 August 2017 was led by MEDIU's Deputy CEO for Research and Development Assoc Prof Dr Abdul Rahim Ismail, and included Dean of University Development and Quality Assistant Prof Dr Bakare Kazeem Kayode and Head of Quality Assurance Unit Assoc Prof Norhayati Ahmad. They met with WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye, Registrar cum Director of Quality Assurance (QA) & External Relations Dr Andy Liew Teik Kooi, and a few senior management staff.

The hosts happily shared the University's rigorous standard processes covering quality assurance, timetabling management, development of MOOCs and implementation of APEL (C) for credit transfer/course exemptions.

Prof Ho briefed them about the QA protocols in WOU's new programme and course development, delivery, assessment and learning support services. He emphasised how QA is infused into all planning and operations. He also briefed the delegation on WOU's role as a leading advocate of open educational resources (OER) in Southeast Asia, and on how all new courses are developed with OER in mind to enhance the quality of the course materials, besides saving cost and time.

Dr Liew elaborated on the implementation of APEL (C) for credit transfer at WOU while Senior Assistant Registrar Lim Swee Choo elucidated issues related to teaching timetabling management.

A discussion then focused on WOU's learner support services, tutorials and tutors, and its digital bandwidth availability and stability for online delivery.

The visiting delegation in turn shared challenges confronting MEDIU, which became a dual-mode institution this year to facilitate both full-time on-



Prof Ho briefs the delegation from MEDIU.

campus learning and part-time online learning. It has 500 to 600 online students, mostly internationals from countries across the Middle-East, Africa and Europe, and some 1,000 on-campus students, half of whom are locals. It has to manage different time zones for its proctored, computer-based exams at the selected examination centres and ensure the correct person sits for the exam.

MEDIU is also looking forward to moving from its existing premises in Shah Alam to Desa Petaling. Despite the fact that it enjoys a dual-mode status, the PPTN loan is only applicable for its online learning students. The university is however allowed to design new full-time face-to-face programmes and courses even though these are not offered online.

Both WOU and MEDIU expressed openness to the possibility of signing a memorandum of understanding to facilitate future collaborations.

## Fruitful refresher on WOU's priority for customer service par excellence



Vernon conducts training for senior management staff of WOU.

About 40 staff members of WOU gained the invaluable benefit of upgrading their understanding and skills on customer service when they recently participated in a training workshop to be reacquainted with the precepts of service excellence.

In line with the 'WOU Promise' asserted in the Client Service Charter which pledges "promptness, accuracy and respect", they were given refreshing insights on why and how customer service matters, as well as on the need to not just meet customer expectations but also exceed them.

Facilitated by certified trainer Vernon Christopher Fernandez, the workshop was held twice with a separate staff group in each session. The participants in the

first held on July 12th were the Vice Chancellor, Chief Operating Officer, Deans of the four Schools and the heads of department, while the second on July 17th saw the managers and assistant managers attending.

The workshop aimed to motivate staff to undertake their functions, services and interactions in line with creating a positive customer experience that results in increased new student enrolment, increased existing student retention and increased existing student progression. Employees were also encouraged to exercise promptness, accuracy and respect in their interactions with the bosses, peers and subordinates.

At one stage, the participants were prodded to name companies that are great. Many mentioned giant foreign corporations like Google, Facebook and Alibaba, but only few cited local successes like AirAsia and Grab.

During another point, they were divided into groups of four to peruse some provoking questions. One discussion had centred around the question: "From the

outside, how can you tell that a company is great?" Among the responses were turnover garnered, social media presence, word of mouth, great perks and quality of product/service.

Participants also conferred on a few significant customer experiences among their own group members. They listed and pondered over the components that made the experience great. This was followed by another exercise on negative customer experiences encountered and what factors had caused them.

The whole activity enabled the staff to empathise with various scenarios, serving as a valuable lesson and reminder not to repeat the shortcomings while learning from what creates great customer experiences.

Vernon encouraged the participants to anticipate customer expectations and to identify what hinders them from providing the service they want to provide. He motivated them to create a positive customer experience as much as they can in order to build customer satisfaction.

He later also conducted a 'Train the Trainer' workshop for 10 staff members selected from the earlier batches, on August 11th. They in turn facilitated workshops on the WOU Promise for the remaining employees in the months of September and October.

# Legacy of two patriarchs who shared in laying the seed of WOU

The little-known history of how Yeap Chor Ee and Tun Tan Cheng Lock shared the fervour to bestow an educational gift for future generations of Malaysians was told to an audience recently.



The authors are busy signing books for buyers.

Both were giants in the realms of philanthropy and social welfare. One was an illiterate who migrated from China to Penang as a penniless youth but rose to become one of the most prominent tycoons in the country. The other was a top-performing scholarship student of Peranakan heritage in Melaka who eventually founded and became the first president of the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA).

Yeap Chor Ee and Tun Tan Cheng Lock may have come from different backgrounds but they had a common passion that bound their friendship and legacy for generations to come. Both were committed to the cause of education. Their close bond and shared vision ultimately led to the establishment of Wawasan Open University centred on the grounds of the Homestead mansion in Penang.

The little-known relationship between the two patriarchs was revealed by Chor Ee's grandson Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap, who is also WOU Sdn Bhd Chairman, at a public talk held at the main campus on 27 July 2017.

The event was titled *Within the Walls of Tun Tan Siew Sin's Ancestral Home* based on a book of the same name co-authored by Cheng Lock's granddaughter Datin Paduka Tan Siok Choo and Dato' Seri Ir Dr Lee Yow Ching.

## A bond that manifested a shared vision for education

Dato' Seri Stephen recounted that his grandfather Yeap Chor Ee met Tan Siok Choo's grandfather Tan Cheng Lock about 90 years ago. "Since then, the two men forged a special bond that lasted many decades. It is through their special alliance that my family got involved in education," he said.

He added that Chor Ee was a significant donor towards the establishment of Universiti Malaya.

In fact, Cheng Lock had penned a letter dated 6 October 1951 to Stephen's grandmother in which he mentioned about having spoken to the government on an award for Chor Ee's services to the country. Stephen said Cheng Lock had disclosed the event in advance to lift Chor Ee's spirits since Chor Ee was not in the best of health, showing a genuine affection between them. Chor Ee passed away seven months later.

Stephen also referred to Chor Ee's will, in which Cheng Lock was an adviser and witness. He said a special feature of the will was the Yeap Chor Ee Endowment Trust created to look after the community beyond

Chor Ee's lifetime. The Endowment Trust owned several properties, including Homestead, and the assets were to go "to education or for the relief of the sick and poor, twenty years after the demise of my generation," he said.

Stephen however accelerated the expiry of the trust period in 2003 after a meeting in 2000 with then Gerakan president Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik who wanted to start a university. He obtained a vesting order by the court which assigned all the assets from the Endowment Trust into the Wawasan Education Foundation (WEF), then known as the Gerakan Education Foundation.

Today, WEF owns WOU and DISTED College, with the Homestead vested from the Endowment Trust used as the main campus of the University.

"For a man who was illiterate, education was important," Stephen said in paying tribute to his grandfather. "Through his trusted friend Cheng Lock, they crafted a visionary will to not only look after his family, but the community beyond his lifetime," he said.

## Genesis of book on the Tan legacy in Melaka

Meanwhile, Tan Sri Dr Koh in his talk stressed that the appreciation of culture, history and heritage "should know no political, ethnic or cultural bounds".

"We should all appreciate each other's culture and history, and take them as Malaysian history and Malaysian heritage." He said this was the response he would offer whenever he was asked why, being a former Gerakan president, he had mooted the idea for the book *Within the Walls of Tun Tan Siew Sin's Ancestral Home* on the family legacy of Cheng Lock and his son Tun Tan Siew Sin. Siew Sin, who is Siok Choo's father, was the third president of MCA for 13 years.

Dr Koh said it was important to showcase how cultures merge and yet certain core values from the ancestors have been preserved until today.

Describing the genesis of the book on Tan Siew Sin's ancestral home, he recalled that he and his late wife had visited the Tan Mansion located at 111, Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock in Melaka on 29 August 2013.

Siok Choo returns to the ancestral home for prayers during the main Chinese festivals every year, as well as on the death anniversaries of her direct ancestors who lived in Melaka, including Tan Hay Kwan who first arrived there in 1771, her grandfather and father.

She had told Dr Koh that it was Tan Siew Sin who drilled into her and her siblings the need to strictly practise Chinese values and customs, while he himself had inherited the dedication for such traditional traits from his own father Tan Cheng Lock.

Dr Koh said seeing the Chinese characters written on the hanging lanterns of the Tan Mansion sparked the idea to translate all the characters of

calligraphy and duplets in the house for others to appreciate. He then linked Siok Choo with Lee Yow Ching who did extensive research and consulted scholars in Malaysia, China and Taiwan.

"At the end of the guided tour by Siok Choo, we had gained a greater sense of appreciation and awe for the history and culture embodied in this ancestral home which was built over two centuries ago," Dr Koh said.

"We also came away with a greater appreciation of the unique Peranakan culture, an eclectic combination of Chinese, Malay and Western cultures, moulded over the past five hundred years, first in Melaka, then in Penang and Singapore.

"Also known as the Nyonya and Baba culture, the food and daily attire, especially of the women, have adapted almost fully to the Malay culture. Yet the furniture, home décor and artefacts are definitely Chinese," he remarked.



(From left) Dr Koh, Datin Paduka Tan, Dr Lee, Dato' Seri Stephen and Tan Sri Andrew Sheng, the moderator for the talk.

# Why the Telegram application is better than WhatsApp

by Nanthini Sinnathamby, WOU tutor

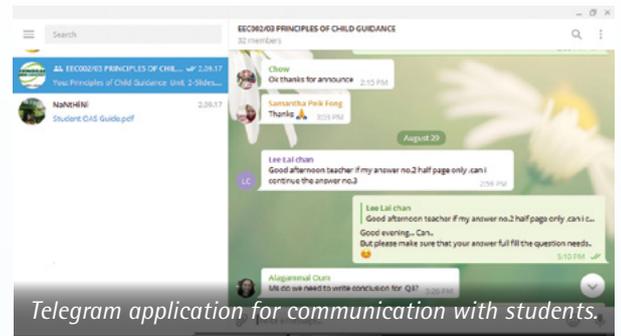
Telegram is an application which I am currently using to communicate with my students. It can be easily downloaded to computers and smartphones. It allows me to communicate via text and voice messages.

You may ask why not use WhatsApp. Here I wish to highlight a few points as to how Telegram is relatively better than WhatsApp.

Firstly, Telegram has cloud storage. This means that all our texts, images and files get saved to the cloud. Therefore, we can log out and log in any number of times from any number of devices simultaneously without losing any data. So we need not worry about having to create backup and restore. This also enables you to download any files, any number of times. For example, if we mistakenly delete a Telegram file from device A, we can still get it back by logging into device B.

Besides that, Telegram allows us to choose whether to compress an image or video, or send it uncompressed. This is because there are times when compression is undesirable as the quality of the image may be damaged.

A normal Telegram group capacity is 200 members. When this is reached the group transforms to a "super group" with a capacity of 5,000 members. Say, for example, I joined my profession-based group in Telegram consisting of more than 3,000 members; I can communicate with a Telegram user even if I don't have the person's contact number, through the username.



Meanwhile, in a Telegram channel there is also no limit to the number of members that can be in it. The creator can decide who can post in the channel (as administrators) and other members merely view the posts. You can create a channel with only yourself as the member. This can be used to do interesting activities like storing web links, documents and zipped files. Telegram chats are end-to-end encrypted and cannot be hacked in any way. Moreover, you can set a self-destruct timer that will destroy the messages after a specified time.

Telegram generates tonnes of metadata. All conversations and contacts are stored on their servers, which is a closed source. Their multi-device system is built in such a way that you can access the history of your conversations if you add a new device to the account.

I find the Telegram application to be better and strongly recommend it for communications between students and tutors, and to perform smart work.



Tutor Nanthini

The writer has been using the Telegram application since she began her work as tutor at the WOU Regional Centre in July 2016. She teaches two tutorial classes for the course 'Principles of Child Guidance'.

## OCL pupils showcase food, talent and diversity with mini fest

A mini Malaysian Food and Cultural Fest held recently at the main campus as part of a student assessment turned out to be wonderful showcase of the coming together of different ethnicities and cultures in the country.

Staged by a group of on-campus learning (OCL) students, it saw the ground-floor foyer of the Albukhary Building creatively transformed to house hawker-style stalls that brought a delightful gastronomic buzz to the premise. The space was also adorned with posters highlighting interesting trivia on the history of various cuisines in Malaysia, as well as on the culture of the Peranakans and the various ethnic festivals such as Deepavali, Vaisakhi, Holi, Dragon Boat Race and Hari Raya Aidilfitri.

The fest on 30 June 2017 was organised by about 60 full-time OCL students who are either pursuing the *Comparative Religions* or the *Cross Cultural Intelligence* courses as part of their academic assessment. Proceeds from the sales of the items offered went towards activities put up by the OCL Student Council.

Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye was full of praise for the meticulously decorated booths and the students who came clad in traditional attires. "One word comes to mind immediately, and that is 'diversity'... diversity in food, diversity in culture. This truly reflects ethnic diversity, something we should all treasure," he said.

"Diversity is Malaysia's greatest strength and asset; our diverse languages, food, music, the clothes we wear, and our festivals. This uniqueness is to be celebrated and enjoyed together by all segments of our society. It is our way of saying that we value the differences in our people, whether



they be in languages, religions, cultures, skills, attitudes or experiences," he added.

Prof Ho said the fest was a good reminder of "the beauty of living in a multi-ethnic country" and emphasised the need to maintain this unity in diversity, and to accept, respect and celebrate our differences. He stressed that it is with diversity that Malaysians have the opportunity to enjoy and appreciate the wide range of foods and the rich cultures.

Touching on the two WOU courses, he said they allow the students to gain a deeper understanding of the uniqueness of our country's variety and unique social-cultural heritage.

Following a simple ribbon-cutting ceremony by Prof Ho to launch the event, the booths were opened for business. Among the scrumptious delicacies offered were *char mee hoon*, pandan cake, *kuih bauhulu*, *cecodok*, *nyonya kuih*, *satay*, briyani rice, *capati*, Indian snacks, chicken rice dumpling and Christmas cookies.

# Facing future education challenges with innovation and openness

WOU must continue being more open and innovative in its delivery of learning for adults in order to cater to future education needs, even as it confronts the impact of technology on careers in the years to come.

Registrar Dr Andy Liew Teik Kooi, who is also Director of Quality Assurance and External Relations, made this important contention in his talk on *Making Education More Open and Innovative* at an in-house seminar themed 'The Future of Learning: Learning from Others' at the main campus on 25 August 2017,

The event, attended by academics and heads of department, saw him touching on three principal concerns in relation to his assertion: careers of the future, innovative approaches and capacity building.

Dr Liew explained that careers of the future shed light on the types of courses and programmes that the University should offer. Some of the 72 future careers include professions like that of teacher, accountant, personal web manager, big data analyst and even police officer.

With the help of data analytics, WOU is then able to customise the delivery of learning support services according to the needs of individual students, he said.

"Future education will be student-centred, a hybrid of online and in-person classes, be it through physical or virtual mode, and will allow people to accumulate credits at their own pace and time," he stressed. "WOU must keep these three pillars in mind for its learning activities."

Dr Liew also elaborated on the importance of proper learning design to create an excellent learning environment. "Learning design covers content design and development, implementation and delivery, and assessment," he explained, noting that it significantly affects student satisfaction, retention and success.

In highlighting how technology can be used innovatively to make education more appealing, he cited digital uplift like mobile learning and social media, as well as the creation of a multimedia-rich learning environment with aspects like enhanced PowerPoint slides, augmented reality, gamification (using game principles in education) and online assessment.



Dr Koh introduces the two speakers.

Dr Liew also underscored the need for WOU to have continuous capacity building of staff and to enhance its related learning design, learning analytics, social networked learning and assessment.

Meanwhile, WOU consultant Wong Hun Heng cited the experience of Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) in the USA, which had successfully expanded its scope in open distance learning (ODL) after initially delivering only on-campus learning (OCL). In the last eight years, SNHU's ODL programme has grown swiftly to serve about 90,000 students.

"They transformed the university by recognising that the primary competition is not so much the other online universities but non-consumption or untapped potential," Wong said.

He attributed SNHU's success to "customer focus" and "technology and data analytics". He noted that the university's research pointed to adult learners wanting convenience, customer service, credentials and speedy completion times.

The university utilised data analytics techniques to identify and diagnose students' problems faster, and to revamp systems and processes regularly so that students are effectively and reliably served. He also noted that a key manner in which they addressed ODL student needs was by employing personal student advisors who can respond fast to enquiries and proactively call students every week if needed.

## Exciting new upgrade of WawasanLearn in January 2018

WOU's part-time open distance learning (ODL) students can look forward to a fresh new design and easier navigation experience throughout the *WawasanLearn* platform as the University has upgraded its learning management system to Moodle 3.2.

The exciting enhancements, which will come into effect in January next year, also feature a brand new interface that will ensure greater improvement across all devices.

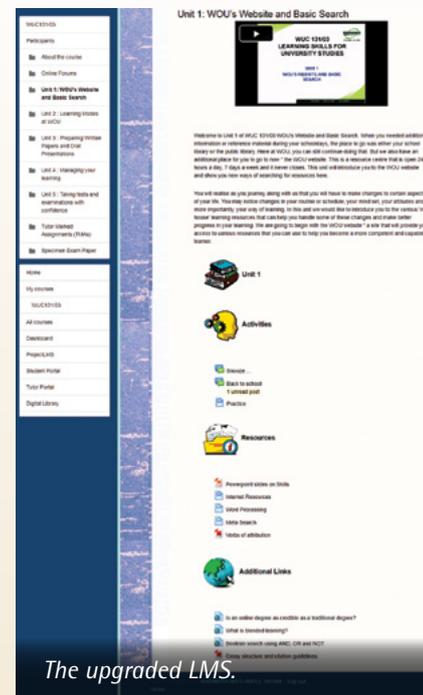
The upgrading also boasts other improvements such as:



Marnisyia (left) teaching how to populate courses in the upgraded LMS.

- ▶ **Enhanced interface and navigation.** With improved navigation that aligns with many websites, users will experience a seamless navigation within the platform. To further boost learning experience, the University's online course resources will now be structured according to the units so that students would have more space on their screen to view the important course content.
- ▶ **Easy means of communication and viewing online course resources using Moodle Mobile App.** In response to the global increase in the usage of mobile devices, students can now use the Moodle Mobile App available for iOS and Android devices to view online course resources and engage in forum discussions using the App.
- ▶ **Informative dashboard.** The user's dashboard now contains important information such as TMA deadlines, My Library Search widget, and guides for Online Assignment System (OAS) and Turnitin.

With these remarkable and highly convenient new features, students are assured of an even more enjoyable e-learning experience at WOU.



The upgraded LMS.

# WOU seafront campus launches kayaking for fitness and leisure



*Getting the kayaks ready for use.*

The kayaking facilities at Wawasan Open University's seafront campus in Penang may soon be open for enjoyment by the public with the creation of a subsidiary company, Essential Atlas, to manage the activity and ensure that necessary safety measures are observed and implemented.

The activity is currently restricted to staff and students of the University and DISTED College.

"Once a proper operating system is in place, then everyone can come anytime to enjoy the sporting facility," WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye announced during the official launch of the kayaking activity which was held on the breezy compound facing the beach on 12 August 2017.

He said due caution needs to be exercised in the running of the activity as it involves public safety and insurance coverage which comes with a cost.

"We are one of the very few campuses in the country that are located so close to the sea," he added. "Our campus-by-the-sea is a selling factor

as many students join WOU because they appreciate the ambience and environment. They feel very at home and relaxed studying here."

Prof Ho explained that the sport also contributes to the line-up of co-curricular pursuits among the University's programmes. He especially encouraged WOU's full-time students to make full use of the facilities to reap their benefits.

He said regular kayaking, which requires one to perform paddling on the water, brings many advantages related to fitness such as in the building of body muscle strength and development of cardiovascular health. He stated paddlers must nevertheless always be mindful of their safety when venturing out to the sea.

Prof Ho also thanked the Yeap family, Yeap Leong Gwan and Yeap Leong Soon who is a director of the Wawasan Education Foundation for donating the eight kayaks.

Prof Ho and Ahmad Taiff Isahak, DISTED College's Director of Academic Support and Continuing Professional Development, then performed a ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially launch the activity, to the accompaniment of the stylish *Hawaii Five-0* tune.

The launch was attended by staff and students of WOU and DISTED, as well as pupils and teachers of Methodist Boys School who were visiting the campus and also went kayaking that morning.



*Kayaking available for WOU and DISTED staff and students.*

## First relay race on campus sees zest and sporting vigour



*Getting ready to start the relay.*

The picturesque main campus became the unlikely setting of a relay sprint race when students and staff of WOU recently participated in a run around the sprawling grounds in the spirit of friendly competition.

It may not have been the Olympics or the SEA Games, but the 4 x 400m relay event held against the backdrop of the majestic Homestead mansion certainly brought out much zest and sportsmanship from among those who competed. The event was organised by the On-Campus Learning (OCL) Student Council, with the support of its advisor Kevin Tan Pooi Soo, a lecturer with the School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The runners began in front of the iconic Yeap Chor Ee statue that stands gracefully in front of the mansion. They were required to circle the field, dash past the fountain, the Homestead, the Albukhary building and go

past its sea-facing cafeteria, before heading back to the starting point to hand over the baton.

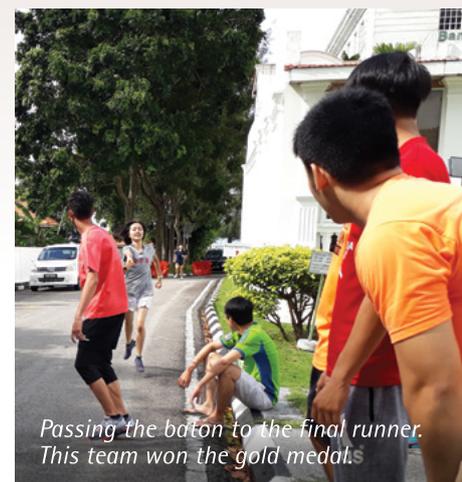
Six teams participated, with four comprising full-time students mostly in their 20s, and the remaining two teams featuring staff members of WOU.

Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye was on hand to kick-start the race with a booming blast from a hailer.

The participating staff from the first to the last runners were Mohd Yusuf Hanafiah (Library), Xuenna Loh Sau Lai (PGRC), Assoc Prof Dr Balakrishnan Muniapan (SBA) and Assoc Prof Dr Ramesh Chander Sharma (ETP) who were in the team that came in fifth, while Kevin Tan, Ch'ng Lay Kee (ETP), Lim Peng Keat (SBA) and Choy Paik Lin (Library) made up the group that took the sixth spot.

Youth and vitality seemed to have won over age and wisdom in this sporting and stamina challenge. The team represented by OCL Student Council president Pan Bo Zhong, 24, Grace Gan, 19, Mohd Sanim Mohd Saad, 20, and Tan Rong Kang, 21 emerged champion.

Prof Ho presented the gold, silver and bronze medals to the winning teams, and also posed for photos with all the runners. Kevin Tan thanked the staff and students for their participation in this first campus run, informing that the student body aims to make it an annual affair.



*Passing the baton to the final runner. This team won the gold medals.*

## A Family Day with a whiff of the kampung



*Doing the hopscotch.*

There was a distinct air of camaraderie and warmth all around as staff and family members mingled with board directors and top management officials of both institutions during the DISTED-WOU Family Day.

There was also a feeling of going down memory lane for many as the theme for the annual event this year was 'ala ala kampung'. A few of the participants were seen proudly coming with a sarong draped like a sash for a touch of tradition.

The gathering held at DISTED College on 26 August 2017 also saw a surprise little birthday celebration for WOU Pro-Chancellor and Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon. Led by WOU Sdn Bhd Chairman Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap, the crowd sang 'Happy Birthday' as Dr Koh was presented with a cake which he duly cut.

Dr Koh and Dato' Seri Stephen launched the event by releasing colourful confetti. The whole occasion kicked off with a zumba workout, followed by Chinese diabolo performances by full-time students Pan Bo Zhong, Ng Xin Pei, Goh Kelwen, Tan Xuan Jinn and Mohd Sanim Mohd Saad.

Various group games were organised, reminiscent of the good old days when playing was outdoor-oriented and physically interactive. The

celebrants were treated to a gunny sack run, 'teng-teng' jump (hopscotch) and a knock-down-the-can-tower contest. In true traditional spirit, they also played 'tuju' marbles where they had to hit marbles out from a drawn circle on the gravel.



*The marble game.*

They even had a 'sepak raga' game which saw participants passing around a rattan ball in a circle and another game where competitors had to tread on coconut shells. It was like playing in a kampung.

A children's colouring contest saw 10-year-old Leandra Anne beating about 20 others to win first prize. She received an educational stationery set from WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye.

Over 150 people attended the Family Day, including members of WOU Board of Governors Tan Sri Dr Chin Fook Weng and Ooi Teng Chew, and DISTED President Dr Seah Soo Aun.



*WOU full-time students perform the Chinese diabolo.*

## Celebrating eternal values of Hari Raya for the workplace



*Welcoming staff to the Hari Raya luncheon.*

Reflection and forgiving others, while seeking forgiveness for one's own wrongdoings, help to further strengthen relationships among colleagues at the workplace. This was the nugget of wisdom articulated by Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye at WOU's Hari Raya Aidilfitri lunch celebration organised by Muslim staff at the main campus on 13 July 2017.

"It is a time of circumspection, to look inwards, to see how one can improve oneself, and then continue in life to perform better with good deeds, and so on," he said in his informal address.

The Hari Raya celebration is also about "atonement", he added. "Three meaningful words - *maaf*, *zahir* and *batin* - are said in prayers and in

greetings, basically to seek forgiveness and to forgive others for any wrongdoings we have done to them or they have done to us."

He added that this noble Hari Raya practice is also observed by other religions and cultures in Malaysia to a certain extent. "This is one trait that we as colleagues should cultivate and perpetuate even at our workplace," Prof Ho stressed.

"As colleagues, we are all members of the WOU family. At times due to work pressure we are challenged, emotionally, and we lose ourselves, regrettably, due to flashes of anger or emotional outbursts. Events like this give us a chance to make things right and to start over, thereby further strengthening good work relationships between us," he remarked.

The event saw staff and full-time students showcasing their hidden showmanship and artistic talents with two pre-recorded video performances. Library Assistant Ahmad Sharidwan Ahmad Nasruddin and ETP Executive Norliza Mhd Rodzi belted out a duet titled *Seloka Hari Raya*, made famous by the popular 1970s duo Hail Amir and Uji Rashid. This was followed by an eight-member choir of staff and students giving a rendition of celebrated diva Sharifah Aini's *Suasana Hari Raya*.

Staff members of different ethnicities who attended came dressed in baju kurung, baju kebaya and baju Melayu. In true Hari Raya spirit, they mingled and feasted on delectable cuisine like tomato rice with dal gravy, curry chicken, cucumber-pineapple salad and egg sambal, complemented by ketupat, pulut hitam, chocolate cake, watermelon and oranges.

# Fight cancer together with healthy lifestyle and awareness



*The WOU team walk in support of Relay for Life Penang.*

For the 11th consecutive year, WOU lent its support to the Relay for Life Penang, held to generate awareness among the public on early prevention and treatment of the ailment and to honour those who have courageously fought the disease.

The University was a silver sponsor of the event organised by the National Cancer Society of Malaysia (NCSM) Penang branch and the Penang Hospice Society on 30 September 2017. WOU also had a team of about 15 participants, comprising staff and full-time students, to join the traditional walkabout as part of the occasion.

The Relay themed 'Fighting Cancer Together' was an opportunity to draw attention to the disease and to remember loved ones lost, celebrate survivors and raise funds for the battle against cancer.

In a change of scenery, the annual event was held for the first time at the Athletics Stadium of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) after having been organised at the Penang Youth Park for many years. WOU's representatives carried placards and a banner showing the University's support for the cause since 2007, as they joined the survivors and other teams to walk around the track. Some survivors had come from as far as Johor Bahru, Melaka, Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh and Taiping.

In his speech, NCSM Penang Chairman Dato' Seri Dr T Devaraj said this was the 13th year of celebrating the Relay in the state to make people recognise that "the burden of cancer can be reduced if all of us can work together, especially by leading healthy lifestyles".

In launching the Relay, USM Deputy Vice Chancellor (Industry and Community Network) Prof Dr Abdul Rahman Mohamed cited national statistics that revealed "the risk of males getting cancer is 1 in 10 and for females is 1 in 9". Cancer contributed to 14% of total deaths that occurred in hospitals under the Health Ministry in 2015 and is reported to be the third most common cause of death in Malaysia, he added.

"The best way to fight cancer is primary prevention through changes in lifestyle, which include not smoking, following a healthy diet, regular exercise and decreasing exposure to carcinogens," he said. "The best way to survive cancer is early detection through regular screening and checkups. Once diagnosed, remember that many of these cancers are curable."

## Childhood education students hold blood donation campaign

In the spirit of giving and community service, about 45 individuals turned up to participate in a blood donation campaign organised by a group of part-time open distance learning (ODL) students of WOU.

The drive held at the main campus on 10 September 2017 saw 26 successful donors, most of them being ODL students.

A few University staff managed to donate too. Among them were ITS Senior Database Administrator Shaffiah Mohd and Library Assistant Mohd Yusuf Hanafiah. This was only the second time Shaffiah had donated blood and the fourth time for Yusuf.

The campaign dubbed with the theme of "one pint saves three lives" was put together by a team of nine adult learners pursuing the Diploma in Early Childhood Education programme. They conducted it as part of their co-curriculum project, in collaboration with the Blood Bank of Seberang Jaya Hospital and Bukit Mertajam Hospital.

Project leader Christina Yew Pei Phing summed up the spirit and motivation behind the effort. "The purpose is to encourage and inspire the public, particularly young adults, to become lifelong blood donors and help save lives, thus contributing to the community at large," she said.



*Yusuf doing his part to support the campaign.*

## Library and ETP grab top spots in inaugural kayaking race

Fifteen staff members from WOU and DISTED College participated in an exciting inaugural inter-departmental 100m kayak competition held at the main campus' seafront on 19 August 2017. A total of seven teams participated in the singles and five teams in the doubles race.

The event was part of the monthly sports and recreational activities initiated by WOU's Human Resource Department to promote an active lifestyle among the staff.

Library Officer Choy Paik Lin beat the other paddlers in the singles race, registering 2 min 21 sec on the clock, while Educational Technologist Assoc Prof Dr Ramesh Chander Sharma emerged second at 2 min 31 sec and Welson Ng from DISTED came in third at 2 min 36 sec.

In the doubles race, Dr Ramesh's pairing with Educational Technology & Publishing (ETP) Executive Ch'ng Lay Kee proved to be a winning combination. They emerged champions, clocking 2 min 6 sec.

Very close behind with a time of 2 min 9 sec were Library Assistants Ahmad Sharidwan Ahmad Nashruddin and Mohd Yusuf Hanafiah who were runner-ups. The second runner-up spot was won by the General

Services & Administration team of Facilities and Maintenance Manager Indros T Roslan and Assistant Officer Jegatheswary Tamilmany who managed to clock 2 min 47 sec.



*(From left) Choy, Indros, Ch'ng, Dr Ramesh, Jegatheswary, Yusuf and Sharidwan of WOU*

## Moulding to be an engineer with the BTSN degree



Aspiring to be a software engineer and fuelled by a passion in IT, Pung Yu Xian is pursuing the Bachelor of Technology (Hons) in Computer Systems and Networks (BTSN) programme at WOU.

The 20-year-old from Ipoh had enrolled in the February 2016 intake with his UEC III qualifications from Shen Jai High School, after having surveyed the higher education industry and conducted due diligence.

He investigated online and found WOU to offer quality teaching and robust facilities, while its fees are cheaper compared to other private universities. He was also smitten by the beautiful Penang campus, the seafront view, the proximity to public transportation and its location in the heart of George Town that makes for convenient shopping and easy access to various appetising food outlets.

"The library provides lots of computers, books, and a very comfortable and organised learning environment," he said. "And WOU's learning management system, *Wawasan2u*, is easy to

access and the content easy to read. It is all very helpful." He added that the lecturers, tutors, staff and fellow students were also helpful and made for a good learning community.

He was introduced to the full-time programme by his older sister, a part-time student of WOU who has since switched to full-time study herself. She is now pursuing a Bachelor of Business (Hons) degree in Logistics and Supply Chain Management.

Pung lists the profession of network engineer as his second career choice and web designer as his third.

He is learning programming skills like Java language and Visual Basics, and also design layout, how to configure the network, the basic architecture of the network design, and network systems.

"The BTSN programme will equip me with the required programming and network configuration skills to drive me in the direction of my career," he said, brimming with confidence.

## Preschool and kindy teachers fulfil Ministry requirements and more



Jennifer (left) at WOU's Ipoh Regional Centre.

Preschool teacher Jennifer Alberto had for long yearned to gain new abilities and techniques, in addition to a recognised official qualification, to strengthen her performance and standing as a child educator.

The Ipoh-based instructor's concern became more acute after the Ministry of Education announced in August last year that all preschool teachers must have a diploma in early childhood education as a minimum qualification by 2020.

Fortunately, Jennifer discovered that WOU is offering a diploma programme in that very subject after the chairperson of the Perak Kindergarten Teachers' Association recommended it to her. As the fees are affordable and her employer offered her a study loan, she joined the first

batch of students for the Diploma in Early Childhood (DECE) programme at WOU in the January 2017 intake.

Applicants for the DECE at WOU must have a minimum of 3 credits in SPM or an equivalent qualification, or alternatively possess relevant work experience to enter via Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

Offered through open distance learning, the DECE programme serves to professionally equip current and would-be teachers for childcare and preschool centres. The fee for the three-year diploma at WOU is less than RM10,000.

Jennifer has not looked back since then as she has seen her knowledge and confidence become invigorated after starting the programme.

"I am learning creative ways to help children acquire the skills they need for their intellectual, emotional and physical development," said the teacher who has been with Tadika KinderJoy in Ipoh for the last eight years.

"I also have a better understanding of how to work with young children," she added. "In this programme, I am learning communication and other skills on how to keep the interest and teach young children."

As a person who likes to motivate the young, she remarked that "to be an educator in early childhood, we must be creative, possess a desire to help them learn, as well as mountains of patience and oceans of love".

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