

INTERVIEW WITH V.P. THINAGARAN

By Majmin Hanum



Majmin Hanum Abdul Samad:
Please tell us briefly about yourself.

V.P. Thinagaran: I joined Universiti Putra Malaysia as a Research Assistant and I am now pursuing my PhD there. I am also a part-time tutor at OUM's Lembah Kelang Learning Centre at the International Islamic University in Gombak.

In terms of interests, I enjoy reading, writing and sports – especially badminton. I like to engage in intellectual discussions on global issues and matters related to my research interest.

Majmin: *Please describe your experience as an OUM tutor.*

Thinagaran: The entire experience is interesting and rewarding. I always feel that there is a new challenge every semester as you meet new people across generations. I enjoy working at the Lembah Kelang Learning Centre because the Administrators are very supportive and provide excellent coordination.

Majmin: *Please describe your most memorable experience as an OUM Tutor.*

Thinagaran: There are plenty but let me single out one especially memorable incident. I received a message from an OUM graduate who studied at the same learning centre where I was tutoring. He told me that I had stirred his interest to do research. I was then tutoring on research methodology. Stirring and sustaining interest in an individual wasn't an easy thing to do and at that moment, I knew that I had reached my objective by motivating the learner.

Majmin: *What do you think of OUM's mode of ODL delivery and the administration of tutors in general?*

Thinagaran: OUM's leveraging on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) provides a flexible learning environment, which I feel is the most practical way of learning. We have seen the outcome of how learners interact, giving feedback and getting in touch with their tutors anytime and anywhere via myLMS. The ODL mode of delivery fits in well with our learners who have different learning needs and styles. It helps our

learners to manage their studies and learn systematically. The Centre for Tutor Management and Development is doing a great job by continuously providing support to tutors in implementing OUM's blended pedagogy approach.

Majmin: *In your opinion, what can OUM do to further improve the quality of education provided to its learners?*

Thinagaran: It could carry out impact studies to ensure that it meets the learners' expectations and delivers quality education. Revising the content of OUM modules and e-learning materials from time to time would ensure that quality is always maintained.

Majmin: *Is there anything you would like to tell the OUM community in general?*

Thinagaran: As the environment around us is changing, we should always gear up in gaining knowledge, particularly in the area of our specialisation.

Majmin: *What do you think of OUM going fully English starting from the January 2009 semester?*

Thinagaran: In an era where globalisation is more important than technology itself, borderless education is the ultimate objective. Going fully English would nurture competitiveness among our learners. This would be the first step in producing quality graduates who meet international standards and I believe this is readily achievable at OUM.

Majmin: *What advice would you give to new tutors?*

Thinagaran: Tutors shoulder a huge responsibility in producing well-rounded graduates. Tutors should walk the extra mile to ensure that their learners excel in their studies. Balancing family commitments, studies and work could prove too much for learners and this might lead them to neglect their studies. Therefore, it is important for tutors to motivate, provide moral support and encourage learners in order to sustain their interest in completing their studies. Be professional and always strive to create a friendly learning environment while tutoring.