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44

TAKING A VOCATIONAL TURN

TCX44 features Part 2 of the interview with YBhg Prof Dato' Dr Mansor Fadzil, President and Vice-Chancellor of Open University Malaysia (OUM), on the University's strategic plans (2016-2020).

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ABOUT TCX

TCX (Tutor Connexions) is a non-profit OUM e-newsletter that provides a dedicated link between the University and its tutors. It serves as a channel for news and updates on tutor-related events and as a platform for the sharing of views, experiences and tips on best practices in university teaching and learning.

TCX is published electronically once every semester.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

The sole feature of this issue of TCX is the continuation of a recent interview with YBhg Prof Dato' Dr Mansor Fadzil, the President and Vice-Chancellor of Open University Malaysia (OUM). The key revelation in the interview is something that is momentarily new in OUM's history – namely, that OUM is on the cusp of offering vocational programmes atop its standard academic programmes. As Dato' Mansor explains in the interview, the move will address not only the issue of graduate unemployment in this country, it will also provide new opportunities for Malaysians to acquire technical skills that are in-demand. One of the implications of this, which TCX will cover in future issues, is the creation of job opportunities for tutor and trainers to guide our vocational learners.

We hope you will find TCX44 edifying and we wish you a productive semester ahead.

Best

Dr David CL Lim

TUTOR INFO

IMPORTANT DATES

TUTORIAL	UNDERGRADUATE		POSTGRADUATE
	SENIOR	NEW	
TUTORIAL 1 / SEMINAR 1	23 - 25 SEPT 2016	07 - 09 OCT 2016	23 - 25 SEPT 2016
TUTORIAL 2 / SEMINAR 2	07 - 09 OCT 2016	21 - 23 OCT 2016	07 - 09 OCT 2016
TUTORIAL 3 / SEMINAR 3	21 - 23 OCT 2016	04 - 06 NOV 2016	21 - 23 OCT 2016
TUTORIAL 4 / SEMINAR 4	04 - 06 NOV 2016	18 - 20 NOV 2016	04 - 06 NOV 2016
TUTORIAL 5 (SMP) / SEMINAR 5	18 - 20 NOV 2016	-	18 - 20 NOV 2016
ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES	EXISTING LEARNERS		
	ONLINE: 31 OCT - 13 NOV 2016 OFFLINE: 4 - 6 NOV 2016		
ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES	NEW LEARNERS		
	ONLINE: 21 - 27 NOV 2016 OFFLINE: 18 - 20 NOV 2016		
FINAL EXAMINATIONS	3 - 16 DEC 2016		

TEACHING PERMIT

All OUM tutors are mandated by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) to obtain a Teaching Permit.

If you have not applied for a Teaching Permit, or if you have obtained a Teaching Permit but have not submitted a copy of it to OUM, please apply and/or submit it to us as soon as possible.

The forms required to apply for a Teaching Permit are:

- (a) *'Borang A - Permohonan Bagi Permit Mengajar'*
- (b) Medical Examination for Teaching Permit

The forms can be found at:

OUM Home Portal > Online Community > Community List > F2F Tutors or ETutors > Announcement > Teaching Permit.

To apply, complete the forms and submit them with the necessary supporting documents to the Institute for Teaching and Learning Advancement (ITLA).

FOR F2F TUTORS

REMINDERS

1. Always come prepared for all your tutorials.
2. Be punctual and refrain from ending your tutorials early.
3. Be honest when signing in and out on the attendance register.
4. Do not reschedule or cancel the tutorial timeslots allocated to you.
5. Avoid reading directly from the module.
6. Strive to initiate higher-order thinking during discussions.
7. Maximise the tutorial hours by focusing solely on academic matters.

FOR E-TUTORS

1. Download the myINSPIRE app (available on the Google Play Store and Apple AppStore) and make full use of its features.
2. Be visible in your respective forums.
3. Check on your forum often (at least 4 times a week).
4. Respond to learners' postings promptly.
5. Never ignore learners' requests for help.
6. Post and redirect questions to learners to encourage and stimulate discussions.
7. Post additional resources (web links, videos, articles, etc.) related to the course content to stimulate interest and spark discussion.
8. Inform ITLA of any prolonged absence and inability to facilitate forum discussions.
9. All e-tutors are required to use their assigned OUM email accounts as official OUM communication will be sent there.
10. When learners post in the forum, email notifications will be sent to your OUM mailbox. You can directly reply to the post via email as your response will appear in the forum.

E-TUTOR FACEBOOK GROUP

If you have a Facebook account, please request to join the e-tutor group on Facebook. Contact any ITLA staff for further information.

MOBILE SUPPORT FOR E-TUTORS (MOST)

Mobile Support for Tutors (MoST), which is accessible on WhatsApp, is now in service. We will be using this channel to post announcements, reminders, and tips from time to time.

Please join us on WhatsApp by adding our mobile phone number to your contact list. The number is **019-3204899**.

ON ASSIGNMENTS

For courses with assignments:

1. Assignments and Assignment Rubrics have been uploaded to myINSPIRE.
2. With regards to online submission of assignments, please note that there are different deadlines for existing learners and new learners.
3. Encourage learners to refer to and use the Guide to Writing Assignment. This guide can be found on the OUM portal.
4. F2F tutors and e-tutors can only provide guidance on completing the assignments based on the rubrics given. Please do not give any confirmation of marks for the assignments as the assignments will be graded by the e-graders.

TUTOR INFO

ON THE F2F TUTOR COMMUNITY AREA & E-TUTOR COMMUNITY AREA

Tutors are encouraged to log in to the F2F tutor Community and e-tutor Community forums for continued support and development. The forums also give tutors and e-tutors the opportunity to exchange and share experiences with other tutors/e-tutors.

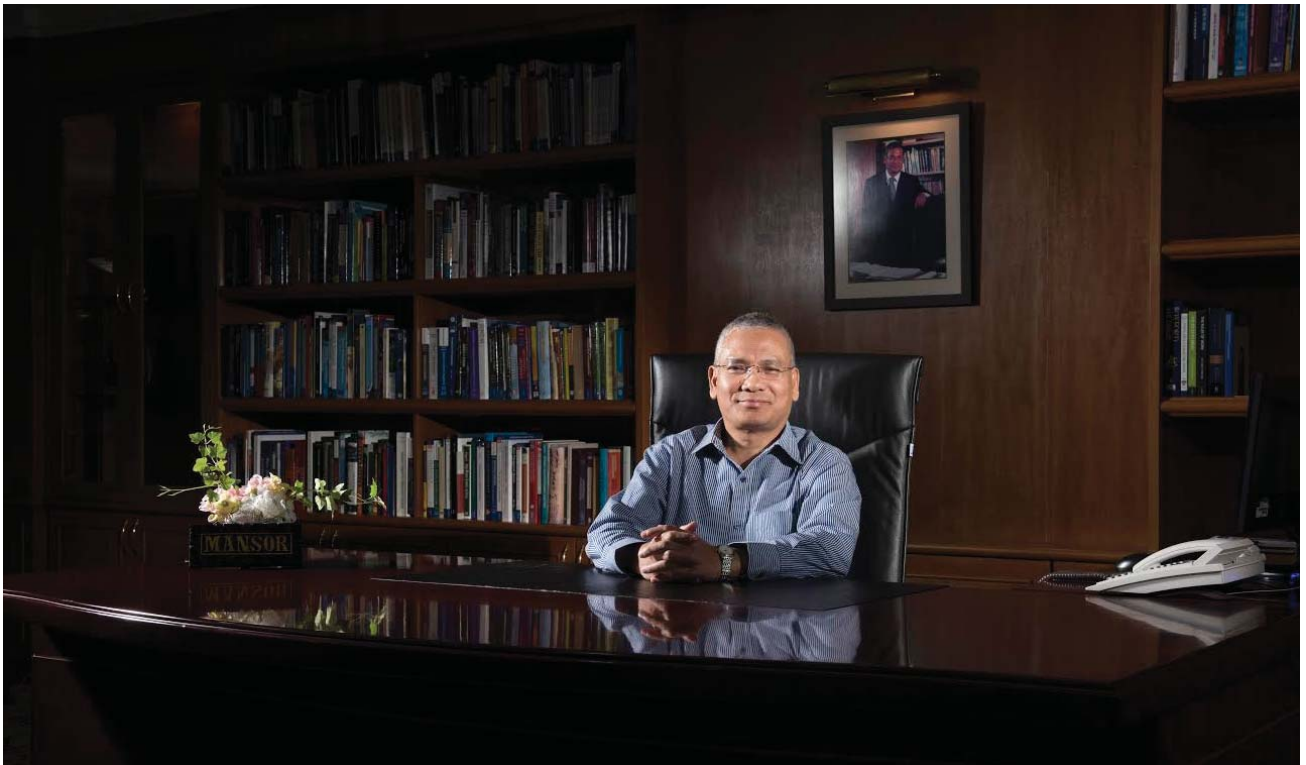
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OUM'S STRATEGIC PLANS (2016-2020), PART 2:

A CONVERSATION WITH
YBHG PROF DATO' DR MANSOR FADZIL,
PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR, OUM

By Dr David CL Lim (david@oum.edu.my)



YBhg Prof Dato' Dr Mansor Fadzil

Extending on Part 1 which appeared in TCX43, Part 2 of the interview with YBhg Prof Dato' Dr Mansor Fadzil, President and Vice-Chancellor of Open University Malaysia (OUM) covers the University's vocational turn and newly-added shared values.

Dr David Lim (DL): We have previously looked at the transition to full-online learning using the new myINSPIRE learning platform, as well as the place of social constructivism in open and distance learning – both as part of the strategic plans for Open University Malaysia (OUM). Could you share with us what else is in store, Dato'?

YBhg Prof Dato' Dr Mansor Fadzil (DM): Another key thrust of OUM's strategic plan is the vocational turn we're taking. From 2017 onwards, OUM's programmes will be two-streamed. The first stream is what we've been offering all this while – that is,

academic programmes such as Islamic Studies, Management, Business Administration, and so on. The other stream we will soon be introducing is post-secondary school vocational education and training (VET). The exact initial offering of skills-based programmes has yet to be finalised but we're considering a wide range to help learners acquire the technical skills required to perform the tasks of specific jobs. Hairdressing, beauty therapy, construction, carpentry and furnishing, culinary art, plumbing and wiring, photography – these are just some examples of the kind of vocational education and training we're looking to provide.

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DL: Could you talk a little about the impetus behind OUM's vocational turn?

DM: We believe that VET deserves much more attention than it has received thus far in this country. VET is designed to deliver workplace-specific skills and knowledge-based competencies. Clearly it has a major role to play in developing our human capital and advancing the national economy. Yet there doesn't appear to be sufficient formal opportunities for Malaysians to pursue VET. And then of course there is the unfortunate stigma attached to VET by those who, out of outdated prejudice, peddle the notion that a degree is the only passport to success.

DL: Negative attitude towards VET is well-acknowledged. And it is a worldwide problem, except perhaps in countries like Germany and Austria where there are relatively high levels of engagement in vocational learning.

DM: Malaysia, especially, needs to realise quickly that investment in vocational skills will yield substantial long-term benefits to the economy. And it has high potential in cutting unemployment and boosting productivity. The situation is getting rather acute at the moment. The Malaysian Employers Federation estimates that there are currently 200,000 unemployed university graduates in the country. The unofficial figure could be as high as 400,000. Not everyone is academically inclined yet almost everyone is driven to obtain academic qualifications out of the erroneous assumption that the academic stream necessarily leads to a job that pays well above vocational ones. Proof of this fallacy is in the graduate unemployment figures.

DL: What is unfolding in Malaysia is seen in other countries too – like India, for instance. India is set to become the world's biggest producer of graduates. But it faces an acute shortfall of workers with formal skills training. Would you see this as a problem of mismatch between personal inclination, parental expectations, stakeholder needs, and state planning?

“Hairdressing, beauty therapy, construction, carpentry and furnishing, culinary art, plumbing and wiring, photography – these are just some examples of the kind of vocational education and training we're looking to provide.”



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DM: Certainly there is considerable disconnect and OUM seeks to proactively redress the problem. How do we do that? First, by creating opportunities for Malaysians to acquire vocational skills that fulfil individual, industry and community needs. Second, by helping to create technically skilled workforce whose sought-after expertise will enable them to work or operate independently as their own bosses, as entrepreneurs, without needing to wait for employment by existing companies, if that is what they choose. Indirectly, then, this helps to reduce unemployment numbers in Malaysia. Individuals trained in electrical wiring, plumbing, cookery, or carpentry, for instance, could easily create business opportunities for themselves wherever they are located. The same goes for those trained in hairstyling, automotive repair, floristry, and a whole wide range of vocational areas. Third and finally, we want to redress the said problem by running an educational campaign to de-stigmatise VET and rebrand it as an attractive first choice for Malaysians.

DL: In what modes will OUM run its proposed vocational programmes, and at what levels will they be offered?

DM: OUM's strength in open, online and distance education will be leveraged in the delivery of our forthcoming vocational programmes. Theoretical aspects may be covered in self-study mode while practical training will be conducted in purpose-built spaces either at our existing learning centres located throughout the country or at newly-commissioned facilities or workshops. We're optimistic about offering vocational programmes at the certificate, diploma and degree levels. The details are still being worked out but we expect to launch the first of our vocational programmes before 2017 is out.

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DL: 2017 will no doubt shape out as an exciting year with the vocational turn. Meanwhile would you like to relay any message to our academics, tutors and facilitators?

DM: I'd like to firstly commend our academics, tutors and facilitators for the dedication they have put into helping our learners to upgrade their knowledge and skills, and to wish them all the best carrying out their duties in this September 2016 semester. In addition, I'd like remind them to be guided by and to uphold the University's shared values: professionalism, integrity, caring, innovativeness, and teamwork. To these, I would like to add patience, positive thinking, meticulous, and can-do attitude.

DL: Thank you, Dato'. I'm sure our teaching force will strive to internalise these shared values to bring the University to greater heights. **TCX**

“Not everyone is academically inclined yet almost everyone is driven to obtain academic qualifications out of the erroneous assumption that the academic stream necessarily leads to a job that pays well above vocational ones. Proof of this fallacy is in the graduate unemployment figures.”

