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Creating your future

THE Business & Advanced Technology Centre (BATC) in Kuala Lumpur offers participants a two-in-one training programme - paper qualification as well as the opportunity to directly use the skills and knowledge acquired in the workplace.

'BATC adopts an inter-disciplinary approach in developing human resources,' says Managing Director Professor Dr Nooh Abu Bakar. 'Our programmes require participants with at least five years of working experience. We want people to work on real problems so that there is an immediate application of what they learn in the workplace.'

Ten years and 500 graduates later, Nooh can recount a number of success stories. Companies have been happy that money spent on training their employees at BATC has resulted in increased profitability and productivity. Half the students at BATC are sponsored by their companies, a testament to the confidence placed in the centre. 'Our target is for all our students to go back to their companies and be agents of change,' he adds.

NATIONAL AGENDA

One of the aims of BATC, located in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia's (UTM) City Campus Kuala Lumpur, is to forge closer links between academia and industry and promote technological and human resources development.

Its establishment in 1992 was spearheaded by then Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. To help BATC meet its aims, a smart partnership was forged with the Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG), under the University of Warwick in Britain, consistently among the top five in the British league tables.

WMG is Britain's answer to the USA's Massachusetts Institute Technology, delivering immediate practical applications and solutions to major Britain's corporations, such as BAE, Rolls Royce and British Leyland. It educates more than 5,000 postgraduate students a year at Warwick and also through its international network of satellite centres in Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, Thailand, South Africa and Continental Europe.

BATC is mirrored after WMG, a very successful industry-university collaboration programme, with a focus on Engineering Business Management. BATC is also involved in planning and implementing research and development programmes that will accelerate transfer of technology.

INDUSTRY RELEVANCE

BATC's programmes are modular based and geared towards the training and retraining of CEOs, engineers, managers and executives in managerial problem-solving and decision-making. It offers over 30 20-hour and 40-hour modules of instruction that encompass the latest in best practices in financial and organisational factors and current and emerging technologies.

Each module consists of lectures, tutorials, group discussions and practical activities, with assignment-based assessments. Tutors from WMG are supported by local tutors, and all have extensive working experiences.

BATC has adopted three main programmes from Warwick: Integrated Manager Development Scheme (IMDS), Integrated Graduate Development Scheme (IGDS) and Doctorate in Engineering Business Management.

The IMDS programmes lead to Executive Diploma (E.Dip) in Engineering Business Management awarded by UTM. A key feature of IMDS is that entry requirements are based on personal capability and work experience rather

than academic qualifications. It is awarded to a candidate who has successfully attended 12 modules within a minimum of 12 months of part-time study and satisfactorily completed in-company projects.

POSTGRADUATE OPTIONS

Students who have successfully completed the IMDS can pursue the IGDS programme, which leads to a Master of Science (MSc). The MSc awarded by Warwick consists of 12 modules of 40 contact-hours and an in-company project.

'The flexible programme allows an organisation to select relevant modules for its staff according to the company's needs,' says BATC's Academic Programmes Director, Associate Professor Dr Ahmad Rahman Songip. Companies can claim reimbursement from the Human Resources Development Fund, and Masters candidates can take modules in any of the seven centres without paying any extra fees. 'The modules are stand-alone units, and participants can build up from our Executive Diploma to Warwick's Masters and then to an Engineering Doctorate. This makes our MSc programme unique and in high demand.'

Professor Hamdani Saidi, the director of research and development in BATC, stresses that 'the BATC's Engineering Doctorate is a radical alternative to the PhD and is better suited to the industry's needs.' BATC currently has 50 students on the doctorate programme, which is awarded by UTM.

'The uniqueness of BATC's programmes is that our students are all working professionals who study on a part-time basis as ours is an industry-based programme,' he adds.

There is an industry steering committee to oversee the content relevancy of BATC's programmes, and a mix of teaching staff, including working people who are practitioners. They include staff from Telekom, Tenaga Nasional, MAS, Proton, Komag, Texas Instruments, Hewlett Packard and Hitachi.

'The encouraging feedback from our previous participants indicates that they and their organisations have benefited tremendously from BATC's programmes,' says Md. Sharif Othman, the director of BATC's Engineering Services & ICT.

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