

The education industry is responsible for moulding the minds of the future generation. Realising its importance, the Government has introduced the Malaysian Education Blueprint – 2013-2025 with the intention of revamping the education landscape with an education system that prepares learners for the 21st century. Perhaps, the most crucial component in achieving the goals of the Blueprint is the teacher in the preschool, primary school, secondary school and higher education.

Most teachers in the public schools have a teaching qualification and nearly all teachers in secondary school and about 40% teachers in primary school have a bachelor's degree. The School of Education and Cognitive Science (SECS), Asia e University (AeU) has been accorded the task by the Ministry of Education Malaysia to upgrade more than 3000 primary schools to the bachelor's level. In the 4th Convocation on 21st September, the first cohort of around 80 teachers had graduated with the Bachelor of Education (Teaching English as a Second Language).

The goal of the SECS is to provide educators with a qualification from kindergarten to higher education. For example, in Australia and New Zealand, early childhood educator need to possess an undergraduate degree. "In Malaysia, only about 10% of kindergarten teachers have teaching qualification approved by the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA). It is of concern that the young minds of our country may be taught by teachers who have minimal training in early childhood education. Just because one has been a mother does not qualify that person to be a early childhood educator", according to Prof. Dr. John Arul Phillips, Dean of the School (picture).

In meeting this need, the School offers the Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Education which admits practicing kindergarten teachers with only an SPM. The programme is

# Developing educators for excellence in teaching

conducted part-time through distance learning with face-to-face tutorials during weekends. Teachers do not have to leave their jobs to obtain an MQA approved teaching qualification.

With the rapid development of private and international schools, teachers with an approved teaching qualification are in demand. The School offers the Graduate Diploma in Teaching for both primary and secondary school teachers. This diploma is a teaching qualification for both degree and non-degree holders and is approved by the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA).

Another trend identified by Prof. John is the growing trend for lecturers in colleges and universities to possess a teaching qualification, which is a requirement in several British and European universities. "For example, a person with a master's degree in marketing, may have the content knowledge but may not have the pedagogical knowledge and skills to impart content effectively. In many universities, most

of us are employed to be teachers first," according to Prof. John. The School offers the 12 month Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Teaching which is aimed at tertiary education teachers to equip them with the knowledge and skills in higher education teaching.

As Malaysia moves towards becoming a developed nation, the work place will require people with a Master's degree. For example, many teachers in Finland have a Master's degree. SECS offers the Master of Education programme in ten areas of specialisation such as educational management, instructional technology, educational assessment, TESL and so forth. The 18 month programme is open to degree and non-degree holders from any background with experience in teaching or education related experience. Currently, about 500 students are enrolled for the M.Ed from varied backgrounds such as banking, IT, engineering, training and so forth.



According to Prof. John, AeU is unique in that all its students are working adults who want to upgrade themselves. The delivery system is flexible adopting e-learning based on a blended-approach which combines online and face-to-face interaction. Students are provided with all learning materials online and classes are held once a month during weekends. Students access the materials and discuss online and attend classes in over 26 learning centres spread all over Sabah, Sarawak and the Peninsular. Currently the students registered with AeU come from remote parts of Sabah and Sarawak.

SECS hopes to provide opportunities for educators and others who wish to upgrade themselves to be involved in the education industry. It is the vision of the school to equip the education work force with the knowledge, skills and values to engage in activities that will eventually enhance the performance of our future learners.