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Striking the right balance

THE only business school in Malaysia with a comprehensive pool of faculty members in each and every aspect of business management aims to use this advantage to produce future business leaders with international outlooks, excellent decision-making abilities, and the capability to execute changes for the betterment of business, society and the environment.

This is the goal of Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business (OYA Graduate School of Business) at Universiti Utara Malaysia, which was established to provide innovative and effective business management-related education.

The vast experience and expertise of the faculty members at the OYA Graduate School of Business encompass the fields of accounting, banking and finance, entrepreneurship, human resource, international business, marketing, production and operations. On the basis of this academic strength, OYA Graduate School of Business offers the Master of Business Administration and the Doctor of Business Administration programmes as well as the Executive Diploma Programme.

Apart from these, in collaboration with the College of Business, it also offers the Master of Science, Doctor of Philosophy and Diploma in Management programmes.

"Students who enrol at the school can expect at least five unique experiences during and after the completion of their programmes, including experiential learning, entrepreneurship and innovation, international exposure, alumni relationship, as well as publication and resources," says Prof Dr Noor Azizi Ismail, who has been the dean of OYA Graduate School of Business since 2010.

Experiential learning, or real-world challenges, is presented with the intensive use of case studies that combine Harvard, Emerald and local cases. Stanford management CDs are also used to enhance the students' learning.

Presently, students study an average of 10 cases per subject or a total of 140 for the MBA programme. According to Prof Azizi, this will be increased to 20 cases per subject by next year. This means that MBA students will be exposed to up to 280 case studies.

In terms of entrepreneurship and innovation, the school conducts the BizTalk series once or twice a month, featuring prominent speakers from the industry who share their knowledge and experiences with students.

Being the first business school in the country to introduce adjunct professors, the theoretical knowledge of students is further augmented by periodical talks given by these adjunct professors on the real-life features of the business world.

At present, the school is also in the process of setting up a Business Incubator and Accelerator Centre in cooperation with several agencies including SME Corp and Mara. Through this centre, along with the professors, students will be part of a team that will provide consultancy services to businesses.

The OYA Graduate School of Business has also forged strong networks with several associations and professional bodies, including the Malaysian Institute of Management, the Institute of Marketing Malaysia and the Malaysian Advertisers' Association.

Prof Azizi explains that these moves reflect the important link between academia and the industry: "Business in itself is a practice, while the school deals with the theoretical aspect of the field. The key to staying relevant is finding the balance between theory and practice".

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This balance is also represented in the demography of the faculty, where 40% of the 30 faculty members are from nine different countries. While each faculty member holds a PhD or DBA, none of them are pure academicians. In fact, 50% of the faculty has more than five years of industry experience.

With Prof Azizi's leadership, OYA Graduate School of Business is grounded in a value-led management philosophy that focuses on the issues of growth and sustainability.

By offering relevant curricula, the school aims to develop future business leaders who can demonstrate moral humility – leaders who are not only responsive and responsible for their businesses but also mindful of the social and environmental consequences of their actions.

Prof Azizi's management philosophies and values have been proven to be successful. In 2012, OYA Graduate School of Business was awarded the Business School Leadership Award by the World Education Congress.

As the dean, Prof Azizi has also been awarded the Innovation Leadership Award and Education Leadership Award by CMO Asia Best B-School Award in 2011 and 2013 respectively.

"We aspire to see OYA Graduate School of Business recognised as a place where noble ideas flourish and where great minds meet, innovate and create. We want our students to leave us as sustainable business leaders whom the nation can be proud of," says Prof Azizi of his future outlook for OYA Graduate School of Business.

There is no doubt that OYA Graduate School of Business will continue to produce innovative and effective business management-related education and meet its goals of becoming one of the top business schools in Asean and the Asia-Pacific region by 2015 and 2020 respectively.

■ For more information, visit www.uum.edu.my



Prof Dr Noor Azizi Ismail, dean of the OYA Graduate School of Business.