

Day 1 – 15 May 2014

## WELCOMING REMARKS

**Tan Sri Jeffrey Cheah – Chairman, Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute represented by Mr Lee Weng Keng – CEO of the Education and Healthcare Division of Sunway Group**

Mr Lee gladly welcomed the VIPs and guests to the event. First of all, he expressed his appreciation to Dato' Seri Idris Jusoh for taking time off his busy schedule to attend the summit and give the opening keynote address. This summit has been an annual meeting which brings together experts to exchange ideas on burning topics today which can then be channelled to policy makers. He explained that the main objective is to look at key drivers which has pushed education transformation over the past few years and would do so for the coming decades. Among the pull factors of education policy are the benchmarks of world education standards today as well as technology innovation. These are exciting opportunities for the country while also providing challenges for teachers, parents and students.

This transformative journey is necessary to continue the current momentum in the country's progression and to keep check on the progress of other developed and developing countries. Our goal to achieve the high income nation status will provide strong motivation to all stakeholders and role players. On an important note, he said that it will depend heavily on the human capital of Malaysia to provide innovation and foresight to bring about changes that make a difference. Hence we are fortunate that the government has placed an emphasis on the education system. The government has also introduced the Malaysian Education Blueprint to chart the progress of the education sector over the next decade. He also stressed the need to bring back scholarships to the heart of education as this will enhance the learning process and boost all levels of education. We should want the students to be intellectually curious and to enjoy the learning experience. He urged parents and teachers to move away from the exam-focused concept which has burdened the students, especially in primary and secondary schools.

Mr Lee expressed that there must be care and caution practised in the process of recruiting teachers as they play an important role in the system. Of utmost importance is that they need to have the desire to make a difference in the lives of young ones. Furthermore, parents can also play an active role in ensuring that their children enjoy a holistic educational experience and is central to the life of their kids. They must ensure physical and mental health is crucial as well, not just the educational aspect. Besides that, Mr Lee underlined that Malaysia needs quality graduates because they are integral to ensure the sustainability and continuity of our country's success and progress. The shortage of talent is critical at this juncture to transform our country into a high income nation by 2020. To conclude his speech, he wished the participants and speakers well to have an insightful and fruitful deliberation. He then welcomed Dato' Seri Idris Jusoh to officiate the 18<sup>th</sup> Malaysian Education Summit to give his opening keynote address.

## OPENING KEYNOTE ADDRESS: CHANGING PRIORITIES AND CHANGING TRENDS: TRANSFORMING MALAYSIAN EDUCATION

**YB Dato' Seri Idris Jusoh – Minister of Education II, Malaysia**

YB Dato' Seri Idris Jusoh expressed his thanks to ASLI for organising such an important event with the defining theme of changing priorities and changing trends as Malaysian education is a very pertinent matter. This summit will provide a platform to discuss a variety of ideas as he observed there were people from all sectors at the summit. He proceeded to discuss the main topic, the education system which presents many opportunities and poses many challenges as well. The last 30 years has shown that schools and universities have been built extensively in Malaysia after the early years of independence. He referred to the time when the government was coming up with the Malaysian Education Blueprint in September last year, they had identified and ensured there were 11 shifts for education transformation as it is the aspiration of the government to produce students for the future. On top of that, the World Bank, UNESCO and OECD were also engaged in the process of gathering information for this Blueprint.

In 2011, the government set up the school-based assessment which is known as the *Pentaksiran Berasaskan Sekolah (PBS)*. He assured the audience that the Ministry of Education wants to make sure that students are holistic and employable upon graduation. They abolished the *Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR)* to ease the pressure on students and implemented the PBS as one of the first steps toward transforming the education system. However to his surprise, parents still wanted the PMR examination because the current ideology is very exam-focused and carries a very heavy weight of emphasis. Another step they have taken to produce high quality students is by promoting higher order thinking skills through multiple programmes and initiatives. The concept of learning must come first because students must come first. Moreover the government has placed a strong emphasis on the English language proficiency of students by making it compulsory to pass the English language subject in *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)* examinations. This will ensure that those in the rural areas can speak and write fluently in English.

He moved on to the topic of enhancing the teaching profession and improving leadership in schools. The Ministry of Education recently introduced new teaching requirements to raise the standards of teachers in Malaysia. With the new requirements in place, only 20% of the top students can become teachers with the minimum grade set at 5A in SPM to be a teacher. Besides that, he highlighted the need for an increase in the involvement of parents and the local community in the education system as they play an integral role because school learning must transcend the education system learning. In the future, the government also plans to pursue greater autonomy and decentralisation which includes trust schools, school improvement coaches, a development budget, school improvement partners and district transformation programmes.

## **SESSION 1: TRANSFORMING MALAYSIAN EDUCATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

Moderator:

**Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam – Director, Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI) & Chairman, Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS)**

Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam expressed his views on the education system and agreed with the Minister who said it honestly and clearly that our standards has declined. Malaysia has gone for quantity but the quality of education has suffered. However, the notion that has been encouraging is the transformation that is enveloping the education landscape. He mentioned through observation that there seems to be stronger political will to move forward, stressing that we must arrest this decline. With all these plans for the future, the crucial question to ask ourselves is whether the government is really serious about this matter, whether it is good politics or good professionalism. To begin the panellists session, he then introduced the first speaker, Professor Dato' Dr Zakaria. He was followed by Professor Dato' Dr Mohd Amin, YM Tengku Nurul Azain and Dato' Sri Dr Vijay.

Following the panellists session, Tan Sri Navaratnam underlined the importance for a country to put more emphasis on the English language. The people who will suffer most from the current regression of the education system and subsequently the economy will be the poorest people in the country. The majority of them in both absolute numbers and proportions are the Malays, the Orang Asli and Bumiputeras. Regressive policies are a prescription for social disparity and lack of progress, hence we have a duty to pass the message to our leaders. If they do not listen to the people's needs, they do not deserve our votes. With that, he thanked the panellists for an excellent job and closed the session.

Panellists:

**Professor Dato' Dr Zakaria B. Kasa – Vice-Chancellor, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris**

Professor Dato' Zakaria talked about 2 major changes which will happen in the education system in terms of the Malaysian Education Blueprint. He noted that the government has released and implemented many policies in relation to education and since independence we have had many reports and ordinances on education where it all started in 1961 with Tun Abdul Razak. These decisions was made in the context of rising international education standards and the government's aspirations of better preparing Malaysia's children for the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and increased public and parental expectations of education policy.

He also talked on the learning needs of the new generation, which is experiential, participatory, image-driven and connected. He hoped that teachers would apply this in the entire learning process for the students so they learn and implement it in everyday life. The 21<sup>st</sup> century requires specific skills which includes creative thinking, communication skills and more.

**Professor Dato' Dr Mohd. Amin bin Jalaludin – Vice-Chancellor, Universiti Malaya**

Professor Dato' Dr Mohd Amin highlighted that the Malaysian Education Blueprint has to be a continuity throughout the years and not just a set of goals to achieve and complete. The progress of the education system should not stop once a certain standard has been achieved as we must strive for more and better each time, setting no limits. Thus in any output that we produce in education policy, it should be better than the current one. The result of our current education policy is a preliminary Blueprint that evaluates the performance of Malaysia's education system against historical starting points and international benchmarks. The Blueprint also offers a long-term vision of the education system and students that Malaysia both needs and deserves, and suggests 11 strategic and operational shifts that would be required to achieve that vision.

He also listed the 6 key attributes needed by every student to be globally competitive. To facilitate the education system, we must also identify all role players involved. There are 5 key stakeholders in the education system: Students, Teachers, Ministry officials, Parents and School leaders. For the transformation of the Malaysian education system to be effective and sustainable, each participant must understand the critical role they each play and the benefits that they will enjoy. It is envisaged that the programme defined in this Blueprint will lead to a collective set of desirable benefits, rights and responsibilities for each group. He thanked the crowd to end his speech.

**YM Tengku Nurul Azian Tengku Shahrman – Director, Education NKRA, Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU)**

YM Tengku Nurul Azian spoke on the 4 principal 'Leavers', also known as constellations, in the education system. The first are Principals, second are Teachers, third are Parents and fourth are the Students themselves. As part of the Education NKRA, she introduced the New Principal Charter which takes the education initiative further by putting in place an altogether new principal charter, which will support the appointment of high-performing candidates by revisiting the appointment mechanism for principals. New minimum requirements for the appointment of principals and head teachers were put in place in 2013, which moves away from the previous tenure-based appointment system. Under the New Principal Charter, the process is in the execution phase. Hence to be a principal, one must be trained and certified officially through a rigorous process. She provided a prime example of the only Orang Asli school which has achieved Band 1 status as a model for all to follow. The government is serious about bringing good teachers into the profession. She also underlined that teacher initiatives are crucial to transform the teaching profession. The process starts from Recruitment, followed by Pre-service Training. Once that is concluded, there is a Quality Assessment and finally the In-service Training to refresh their skills.

**Dato' Sri Dr Vijay Eswaran – Executive Chairman, QI Group of Companies / Quest International University Perak**

Dato' Sri Dr Vijay highlighted that many years ago, Malaysia had one of the best education systems in the region or even in Asia. To address the alarming issue, he intended to raise several points, amongst which were the English language proficiency. The next point is the lack of higher level thinking and thirdly, the Malaysian national identity. Regarding the proficiency of the English language, he said that we should not discount the national language but learn to be proficient bilingually as the lingua franca in the world today is English. He gave the example of Singapore who has an excellent education system and are proficient in both Mandarin and English, with high standards of teaching in both languages. He also emphasised on the importance of developing a young generation with creative thinking. Besides that, the system has failed to inject patriotism which has been seen strongly in Thailand and Indonesia, they are inherently proud of being a national of their country. Hence, the education system must establish the feeling of patriotism first, to be a foundation to build up the next generation. We must all work for the future and betterment of Malaysia and with that, he thanked the crowd.

**SESSION 2: SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**

Moderator:

**Professor Dr Malachi Edwin Vethamani – School of Education, Taylor's University**

Professor Dr Malachi introduced the topic and panellists for this session. He invited Dr Zainuriyah to be the first speaker for this session. Following her speech, Professor Malachi passed the floor to Mr Timo Karmakallio to say his piece on the Finland education system. He was followed by Mr Wan Saiful from IDEAS who gave a brief presentation of a research project carried out by his organisation over the past year. Mrs Lok concluded the panellists' discussion session.

Professor Malachi noted that the School-Based Assessment (SBA) is actually not new in Malaysia because it has actually been tested for many years in schools but it is not displayed on the SPM certificates. Hence it is not well known and not many people look at it.

Panellists:

**Dr Zainuriyah binti Abdul Khatab – Head of Research, Principal Assistant Director, Examination Syndicate, Ministry of Education**

Dr Zainuriyah discussed the feasibility for School-Based Assessment (SBA) to be a solution to the examination-focused system right now. The education system should be nurturing students to be effective human beings when they grow up. This includes having the right attitude, using their knowledge and skills well to better their workplace and add value to their employers. In 2012, the SBA was first introduced at the primary school level and the government has placed many hopes and dreams on it. This hope is

depicted in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 too. To facilitate a fully functional education system, children must be productive, effective and bilingual. English language prowess should not be a problem anymore as we have gained independence for 52 years already. She noted that we should actually be learning a third language, which she recommended to be Mandarin or Arabic. Furthermore as the education is holistic in nature, we also need to develop students physically and emotionally for complementary growth.

She mentioned the 5 system aspirations which are Access, Quality, Equity, Unity and Efficiency. There are a host of factors which affect the child and contribute significantly to their growth such as their surroundings, their mentors and more. Many benefits support the implementation of classroom assessment and recent trends show that examinations are very isolated but School-Based Assessments (SBA) are much more involving and utilises skills to be used together. The curriculum standard refers to how high the student can achieve a certain benchmark whereas the performance standard shows how easily the student can reach those performance levels. She gave an example of the football player Robin van Persie who is paid very well due to his high performance levels. A graph she presented tracks his performance where he has increased his goals and games every season to become successful.

**Mr Timo Karmakallio – Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Finland**

Mr Timo began his presentation by introducing the Finnish education system where in the 1970's and 1980's, Finland employed centralised control. However in the 1990's, there was a devolution of power and the schools were given more autonomy. As a consequence of this matter, there were equal opportunities provided in regards to free education for everyone from pre-primary school to university level with no tuition fees. Basic education was fully provided with free school materials, meals and transportation. He underlined that the key factors in such a successful system is competence and trust. The Basic Education Act in Finland requires that education providers shoulder the responsibility to evaluate and assess their system consistently

He explained that there is only 1 national examination in the whole country of Finland, which is after general upper-secondary school, also known as the Matriculation examination. Knowledge and skills are highly required by the curriculum and is prioritised when conveying the syllabus to students. There is no compulsory national tests for every student and no school ranking lists, because all schools are equal. Furthermore, they carry out local self-evaluations to steer through information, support and funding. The school system also rely on the proficiency of teachers and centrally provided tools like 'quality cards'. The government of Finland also plays an important role and carries out national sample-based evaluations which practices control concerning equal educational opportunities which does not discriminate against neighbourhood, race or gender.

## **Encik Wan Saiful Wan Jan – Chief Executive Officer, Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS)**

Encik Wan Saiful planned to cover the main topic of the bottom 40% of the population in his presentation as IDEAS had just completed a study on the topic which produced interesting results. Encik Wan Saiful firstly give an introduction of IDEAS, citing their purpose, mission and objectives for the country and their work. He demonstrated previous projects undertaken by IDEAS which were launched by the think-tank in the field of education and several others which encompassed public policy. He then proceeded to present the IDEAS project which was carried out as a nationwide survey of the bottom 40% of Malaysians who were interviewed. They included over 1200 parents from low-income households which enquired on their perception of and aspirations for their child's education. It was found that the SBA possesses the potential to appeal to weaker students who may be at risk of dropping out. The report covered 3 main points, the first of which was a survey. It was revealed that 72% of children dropped out of school because they lack interest in studying and another 23% dropped out because of poor academic performance. The second was the existence of high-stakes exams and dropouts, which showed a positive correlation to causing more dropouts. The third was how the SBA could be designed carefully to emphasise on learning, not constant memorisation which is the current syndrome afflicting the Malaysian education system.

Not surprisingly, even in the survey of the bottom 40% of income earners, the parents are more focused on academic outcomes and see it as the most important skill to acquire, thus making exam results very important. For some reason, examination results seems to be fair to them, while the SBA introduces an element of uncertainty and therefore a risk to the social outcomes of schooling which represents such significant parental aspirations. Hence, this raises the question of how parents can be involved in the education system. First off, parents could be expected to work more closely with teachers to improve their child's performance. Among the primary challenges faced by students these days are the lack of parental involvement and their lack of interest. Right now the system is heavily reliant on teachers and it alarmingly assumes that all teachers are competent. Hence ensuring the highest standards in assessments will be crucial to overcome challenges of underperforming teachers.

Encik Wan Saiful concluded that to make the SBA policy work, it is important to engage parents as it is a major challenge to engage with them especially amongst the bottom 40% of the population. The presence of high quality teachers is another factor to address while simultaneously removing underperforming teachers as the next step. He established that the way forward is to engage parents effectively and to produce high quality teachers.

## **Mrs Lok Yim Pheng – Secretary-General, National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP)**

Mrs Lok introduced herself and explained her role as the representative of the many teachers in the nation with the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP). In the

context of the current education scenario, the Malaysian education system is too exam oriented. This has had detrimental effects on the students and teachers nationwide. Hence transforming the exam-oriented system through the implementation of the Malaysian Education Blueprint will help the country achieve quality education for every individual child through the concept of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), creative thinking and innovative skills. With that said, the SBA is being implemented in 2011 for primary schools and in 2012 for secondary schools. The teachers union and teachers are not against the SBA policy, but are objecting due to the enduring pressure and workload in the process of implementing the SBA system. She emphasised that the main issue is not the implementation of the SBA policy and this must be clarified to the public. The main issue at hand is the technological and ICT problems due to the lacking IT infrastructure of schools in Malaysia. Recently during the implementation process the E-system was not able to cope with simultaneous massive data key-in and on top of that, they are not user-friendly. Furthermore, the SBA system is ignoring the human factor, so information liquidity and density additionally makes teachers lose confidence in the SBA.

## **SESSION 3: EXCELLENT TEACHING: IMPROVING TEACHING QUALITY IN MALAYSIAN SCHOOLS**

Moderator:

**Ms Elizabeth Lee – Senior Executive Director, Sunway University & Sunway Education Group**

Ms Elizabeth welcomed everyone back from lunch and expressed her hopes that this session would provide a good discussion on excellent teaching from the excellent panellists. She proceeded to explain the format of the session which would provide a set amount of time for each presenter from the panel to say their piece which would be followed by a dialogue. She then introduced Mr John to take centre stage as the first speaker of session 3. Following Mr John was Mr Christopher Bell and subsequently Mr Matt Sheldon. Ms Elizabeth then invited Datin Noor Azmiah to round off the panel session with her speech.

Panellists:

**Mr John D. Chacko – Chief Executive Officer / Managing Director, LeadEd Services Sdn Bhd**

'A good teacher comes from being a good learner', was Mr John's opening quote. He introduced himself as the CEO of LeapEd, an organisation who oversees holistic transformation across schools which prepares teachers and leaders to deliver holistic teaching to students. He noted that a lot of jobs is the modern world today did not exist just 10 short years ago. He gave examples such as nano-medicine researchers, offshore wind farm engineers and more which are brand new careers which has been driven into existence by innovation and necessity. Innovation and creativity has been the source of this technological progress and this is needed in the current Malaysians education system. He highlighted the importance and integral role which holistic education plays in a child's development throughout their schooling years.

Interestingly he also presented a study called 'The Slow Erosion of Genius' which tested children on their intelligence which was considered to be of genius level as they grew up based on their age. At their youngest age group, it started off with 98% when children were still in pre-school. This group slowly grew smaller and became 10% as the children grew into adolescents. Hence the source of this problem can be targeted at schools who nurture the children in primary and secondary school. Currently, the generation of children simply do not have the ability to apply their knowledge in the real world. Thus this raises the question of whether the teachers are teaching their students to be lifelong learners or to employ information regurgitations in examinations. Teachers are actually the best learners and should convey this holistic skill to their students. Mr Phua Seng Tiong, a former headmaster, once said that the heart of education is the education of the heart. With that, Mr John wished all teachers a Happy Teachers Day and thanked the audience for their attention.

### **Mr Christopher Bell – Chairman, Brighton Education Group**

Mr Christopher highlighted that teachers are the key in the education system. Hence it is important to know what makes a quality teacher. From his experience, it is not first and foremost qualifications nor experience. It is the type of personality, attitude and character which the teachers bring with them to the classroom. He described his previous experiences as he recruits and employs thousands of teachers, citing that it is very easy to check qualifications and working experience. He underlined that the difficult part is gauging how the potential teacher will interact with students, children and fellow colleagues. On top of that, leadership and continuous professional development are crucial because they show enthusiasm which a person brings to their job. Besides that, Mr Christopher said that the education pedagogy is important but it must not be linked to proficiency. This is evident as even a native English speaker may not necessarily be a good English teacher. Hence pedagogy ability must be the leading factor in a person's set of skills, followed by proficiency.

To get to the root of problem solving, he mentioned technology as an effective tool to utilise. Furthermore, higher exposure to the English language will also be crucial as the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is coming up in 2015. That union will initiate English as the official language used across the ASEAN countries. Hence even regional integration and success hinges upon the education of human capital in each individual country. Malaysia has the exceptional chance to be central in ASEAN and in the surrounding region as well. If the country can utilise the education sector to facilitate the intake of good foreign students, the future would look very good for Malaysia in fostering an attraction of brains to enhance human capital in the labour force.

### **Mr Matt Sheldon – Head of Programme in Teach for Malaysia (TFM)**

Mr Matt introduced his company Teach for Malaysia and their objectives in setting up their programme for the

schools in Malaysia. Teach for Malaysia is part of the global network across the world which aims to raise the educational standards in their respective countries. The basic model of their work is to recruit excellent graduates and to allocate them to work in schools around Malaysia. He highlighted that a teachers training should not just involve training to be teachers but also to be mentors, encouragers and motivators for the students. Teachers need to harness the curiosity of students, to make them want to explore. Mr Matt underlined that the critical point is to take notice that the teachers must be assessed more rigorously, especially their values and what their beliefs are. Humanity, empathy, resilience, an optimistic mind on growth and a passion for growing kids are prime values which should be found in every teacher. These principles and values will glow on their CV and should be of primary importance, and then it is important follow up to check their qualifications and skills to project their knowledge in the field.

Mr Matt mentioned that it is a necessity that the education system must be rigorous with excellent standards when hiring adequate teachers. It would also help to look out into the world to observe global standards, bring them back and use them effectively back home. Amongst the techniques which can be learned from high-performing education systems are identifying teachers who possess skills in problem solving, critical thinking and decision making with children at the core. This will not happen by simply selecting the top 30% of teachers based on their qualifications and achievement, but we must really dig diligently and find those who are really passionate for teaching. Moreover, the model of training has to be practical with critical reflection as the key area where people work, as it should be an explicit partnership between universities and schools. Finally, he suggested that a network based on personal development is crucial for teachers. They need a really advanced social network based on their training so that they learn from others and become leaders of best practices. In Malaysia, the country is blessed and social media is very strong so the technology can support this type of engagement between teachers. That was his recipe for success to those who connect with schools around the country.

### **Datin Noor Azmiah Abdul Rahim – Chairman, Parents Action Group for Education Malaysia (PAGE)**

Datin Noor Azmiah presented the Malaysian Education Blueprint and the highlights which showed that two thirds of teachers in the Malaysian education system are under the age of 40. This occurrence highlights the importance of ensuring that the current crop of teachers meet the quality standards and are able to convey the right syllabus to the students. On top of that, another statistic showed that 63% of schools rated themselves good or excellent while school inspectors rated only 13% of them as good or excellent. Hence it shows the disparity between the schools perception of their quality and the quality which is up to standard. Teachers are also spending not more than 2.9 hours a day teaching in the classroom. It is the hiring system which has proven to be ineffective, which is evident in the scenario where teachers nowadays are being sent through the Civil Servant Performance Report which is not

tied to specific teaching competencies. Thus it is just preparing them to be civil servants, not teachers. Furthermore, the Blueprint is already in the second year of implementation but nothing new is happening in schools. The government has also set up Trust Schools spearheaded by Yayasan Amir and the founder's sponsor is Khazanah Nasional. She expressed that we just have to hope that the important aspects of the Blueprint are taken seriously to address the serious issue of quality teachers in the education system.

#### **SESSION 4: PARENTS' ROLE IN EDUCATION: ENSURING QUALITY EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Moderator:

**Datuk Dr Chiam Heng Keng – Founding President, The Early Child Care and Education Council**

Datuk Dr Chiam acknowledged the important role of parents in the education of their children. He noted that many people in the audience are undoubtedly parents and hopefully they would find this session interesting. In the current day, children are bombarded with so many instructions and distractions, that they are influenced heavily by them. Parents have to work hard to assure that they have the quality of life by working a lot, resulting in parents not spending enough time with their kids. This results in many adolescents lacking love and attention from their parents. Datuk Dr Chiam introduced the panel of speakers who will speak on challenges with children as well as internet addiction which has inflicted this generation. She briefly introduced the speakers on the panel; Prof Datuk Dr Mohamad Ali Hasan, Dr Patrick Soh and Prof Dr Mohd Ismail Noor and highlighted their specialties in their respective areas of work.

Panellists:

**Prof Datuk Dr Mohamad Ali Hasan – Chairman, National Parent-Teacher Association**

Prof Datuk Dr Mohamad Ali expressed the need for parents to volunteer more and get involved in co-curricular activities of their children. Activities outside the classroom also contribute to the development of young children and play an active role in instilling the right values and principles in them at that age. The presence of a role model in their life can have a major impact in the formation of their character and personality. Associations such as the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) contributes a lot if parents are active and in the know of how things are going in the school. Also, the alumni of schools would be of great help to groom up the communities. For example, they can motivate or be an inspiration to the students in their former schools. Among his suggestions for improvement include a system which allows and encourages people to be involved with the school in a more direct role.

**Dr Patrick Soh – Lecturer, Faculty of Management, Multimedia University**

Dr Patrick began his presentation with the introduction of the Internet, the current phenomenon which has engulfed the digital world from the beginning. The world-wide network of computers and mobile devices that facilitate

communication between people, communities and countries make up the system that we know as the Internet. He explained that it is a powerful tool, an information highway and a great place for learning and social business. However it is also a good avenue for crimes such as drug cartels and pornography. A recent survey in 2008 revealed that 90% of urban children are connected to an online source.

Following that, he expressed his concerns that the Internet has downsides as well, most notably by reducing the attention spans of the youth from 12 minutes (10 years ago) to 5 seconds today. Furthermore it reduces creativity, reduces EQ skills and people relationships, fosters undesirable materials, causes obesity and brain damage. He proceeded to give horrifying statistics on sexual abuse and pornography, showing the high risk of indecent exposure to kids these days. All these issues raise the question, on whether the internet is bad for people's health. Certainly there are potential risks of spending too much time online such as insomnia and depression. Internet addiction is a real thing and even online games are designed to make players addicted. Hence parents have an important role to play as children often turn to the internet for bad reasons, much more than for good purposes such as for educational learning. Children closer to influential friends are more prone to using the internet for social media abuse too, so parents must be on high alert to notice these trends to ensure the Internet is healthy for their child. Dr Patrick concluded that the Internet is a powerful tool if utilised for the right reasons and if regulated well by parents and mentors, children can derive the best learning benefits from it.

**Prof Dr Mohd Ismail Noor – President, Malaysian Association for the Study of Obesity (MASO)**

Prof Dr Mohd Ismail's prime topic was about obesity, which is the main concern for many parents and youths in the current generation, considering the situation in Malaysia. He presented a study that revealed that more than 15% of Malaysia's school children are either overweight or obese. He noted that there are many influences in each person's weight, which may include anything from environmental to societal factors. He explained that obesity has become pandemic due to many reasons such as the mass production of food and excess supply in certain areas. Furthermore, Malaysia is constantly exposed to unhealthy food daily, as evident with our roadside stalls and coffee shops, making us extremely spoilt for choice. On the other side of the coin, our lifestyle is sedentary, and physical activity is extremely low amongst Malaysians.

Prof Dr Mohd Ismail then evaluated the initiatives of the government in recent times, where they have made a lot of plans and collected a lot of data. The most recent study was the Malaysia School Based Nutrition Survey which came to the conclusion through intense discussion that obesity is caused by bad habits in daily life. Amongst them are skipped meals, fluctuating meal frequencies, fast food consumption and irregular meal patterns which all seem crucial to contributing to obesity amongst adolescents in Malaysia. Another project that they are implementing is the MyBFF (My Body Fit and Fabulous) programme, an

intervention study to combat obesity among secondary school children. He emphasised that obesity is about everybody and everyone has to be involved in tackling the problem, with that he thanked the crowd for their attention.

## Day 2 – 16 May 2014

### **SESSION 5: VICE-CHANCELLOR ROUNDTABLE UPGRADING QUALITY TO MEET RAPID CHANGES: LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES AND TRANSFORMATION**

Moderator:

**Dato' Professor Dr Hashim Yaacob – Vice-Chancellor,  
Quest International University Perak**

Dato' Professor Dr Hashim said that a leader is someone who brings his people somewhere, it is someone who is willing to make the tough decisions in any situation. A leader must be on fire, making the best decisions and managing time in an orderly manner. He proceeded to describe the format of the discussion and noted the largest number of speakers in this session. On a side note, this session was termed the vice-chancellor roundtable as they have gathered the vice-chancellors from universities around Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia to discuss the current topics in the education system. He introduced the 5 speakers; Professor Datuk Dr Noor Azlan Ghazali, Datuk Professor Mohd. Yusof Kasim, Professor Helen Bartlett, Professor Dr Sulochana Nair and Professor Stephen Doughty.

Dato' Professor Dr Hashim also presented some statistics on the funding of universities overseas compared to the local ones. In 2014, a combined total of RM \$54 billion was allocated by the government through the Ministry of Education for secondary schools, primary schools and universities. This is the overall investment in education and the research in universities attain a small portion of this sum. Comparatively in the USA, USD \$40 billion is given to research alone. For example, the John Hopkins University received USD \$1.8 billion for research purposes from the US government and this is not even the full amount dedicated to research, they even have their own endowment funds.

**Professor Dato' Dr Noor Azlan Ghazali – Vice-Chancellor, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia**

Professor Dato' Dr Noor Azlan emphasised that all participants are here for leadership, change and transformation. Leadership leads to change, but this change is challenging as it brings about enemies and resistance from many parties, so proficient leaders must be ready for it. He mentioned that all universities have a mission and vision for their establishment, and it is important to develop their path and identity over the course of the journey. He then spoke on the multiple university rankings around the web and how diversified they are. However, each rankings criteria may differ in importance for each stakeholder. For example, most stakeholders do not care about where the university publishes their research, whether they be in journals or newspapers. For parents, they only care about the employability of their

children and the opportunity for a good salary upon entering the workforce. Besides that, there are also different environments surrounding a university such as politics, culture, technology and economy which all play different roles in affecting the overall experience of attending tertiary studies.

Professor Dato' Dr Noor Azlan said that change is a must at every university, there is no option not to change. Universities have to be uniquely different, utilising creativity and innovation for product differentiation. The redefining process must have its purpose, there must be a system to be efficient and effective. He stressed that if we want to push for change, the first thing to learn is to know why change is necessary and to disseminate this concept to the whole university. Unfortunately, a lot of leaders usually jump into defining the changes without finding out the necessity of carrying it out, resulting in the lack of understanding on why they do it. In this style, people become like robots and bureaucratic, meaning they follow orders without knowing the reason. He gave 4 examples to address this issue; changing from class to student, from learning to experience, from teaching to sharing and from a la carte to buffet. To add on to this, there are problems in the higher education scene today where universities design the course in what they think is good for students but this may not necessarily be aligned with the students' ambitions. Evidently, generations these days know what they need and they want to decide the course which is best for them. He concluded on what needs to be done, which is that we need to engage, explain and expect from the different role players and stakeholders in the education system.

**Professor Dr Sulochana Nair – Vice-Chancellor, Binary University College**

Professor Dr Sulochana said that the matter at hand is whether universities are teaching their students the syllabus that are relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace. This century is characterised by shooting demographics, technological advances, people and capital mobility and more. At the beginning of the age spectrum are the new entrants who grew up in the technological age and at the other end are those who have been working for decades and are essential to their companies. However they have had to adapt to major changes with all the changes in this era. She expressed that times have drastically changed and we must be a very different individual to work in this century. Another key factor is the technological aspect of the modern world which allows people to work 24/7 around the clock and anything is accessible everywhere. A team can work remotely on any project nowadays. All these technological advances requires a different kind of skill in the workforce. Besides that, people will go into more entrepreneurial ventures and this requires brave people to take the risk. Also, small businesses must be the dominating force in the workforce because this sector is the one that provides the majority of jobs in the workplace, way more than the multi-national companies (MNC). Another feature of the current situation is the multi-generational workforce that exists in the current day. All these generations have different, even contrasting attitudes towards work. Gen-Y prefers individuality whereas Baby

Boomers are loyalists. Furthermore, the role of women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is becoming more integral and even the number of women in universities are on the rise.

On to the issue of employability, Professor Dr Sulochana raised the matter of what makes employees employable in this age. People are looking for people with extra skills, possibly a set of achievements that helps the employer understand the person's attitude. A positive attitude, transferable skills, personal quality and adaptability are key factors in the decision-making process of an employer. They are looking for communication skills, leadership skills, initiatives, problem solving, flexibility and enthusiasm. Also, the employability of an employee is shared by both the individual and the organisation. The individual shoulders the responsibility to make themselves employable. Another question to ask is whether universities are producing people with the right skill sets. She felt that the university does play a part and is involved in the employability of their graduates. She finished with the point that the English language needs more attention and is very important.

**Datuk Professor Mohd. Yusof Kasim – Director/CEO, Insaniah University College**

Datuk Professor Mohd Yusof thanked the organisers from ASLI for inviting him to speak and the moderator for his kind introduction. He started by contextualising the previous 2 speeches and picked up their key points which were relevant to his topic. He cited the change needed at the highest levels in the university as well as the employability of students which must match the current and future requirements in the workforce which evolves constantly. In this age, everyone is talking about the marketplace. There is also a school of thought that universities should produce scholars and researchers and another who says that universities should produce workers who are highly skilled. He believes in both ideologies and the university must find the right balance to ensure that the marketplace is sustained by a constant flow of graduates. Students are the ones that give staff and researchers their jobs in universities and on top of that, they are also the customers. All these must be done in the name of university reputation and he cited that he is in the process of rebuilding the reputation of Insaniah University College, to attract international students and make it a global campus which welcomes all students who are willing to learn.

**Professor Helen Bartlett – Pro Vice-Chancellor & President, Monash University Malaysia**

Professor Bartlett thanked ASLI for the invitation and opportunity to contribute to this panel discussion. She took the discussion into the topic of challenges faced by universities and how they will face them. The landscape of universities has been in constant change throughout the years and adaptability is crucial. In Malaysia, the tertiary education landscape is incredibly diverse where there are 59 private universities and 9 international branch campuses. She expressed that international branch campuses are no longer just a duplicate of their home programmes but they have had to reinvent themselves to fit into the local context for the community and lifestyle. There

are many opportunities which must be utilised, to engage with the Malaysian students as well as international students. There is an obvious need to align what we do with the needs of the region is important, as well as the needs of the young people of this generation which has changed. Just by observing the age difference between academics with the young students, the gap is cavernous. This must be bridged as they share a teacher-student relationship which is the foundation and avenue for both their personal development. As reflected in the private sector, it has been shown that when programmes are failing, it takes a lot of effort to turn them around, as such is the case of universities too. It is by far not going to be nimble, it will be more similar to turning around the Titanic in the context of switching agendas in this environment.

Another area that needs to be highlighted is the difficulty of hiring academics who are excellent teachers. The advent of social media and technology has brought a revolution to classroom changes. However, change has been slow and a tour around an average classroom shows that things largely remain the same. Furthermore, funding for research has been on the backburner, leaving very little funds dedicated for research purposes. Universities have to rely on external income or sponsorship as the internal income does not seem sufficient to cover these expenses. Professor Bartlett suggested that the first thing that must be done is academic strengthening. There should be a systematic approach to recruiting, promotion, career development and restructuring of the workforce to bring in the best academics. Reward and incentives are a critical part of this, for teaching students on top of research output. Succession planning is also important to ensure the sustainability and continuity of a concise syllabus. Professionalising the system will also support the enterprises which rely on the labour force for skilled people whilst raising employability of graduates too. She suggested preparing carefully designed programmes which accommodates all parties while also having sufficient flexibility to ensure that the best benefits can be derived for both students and teachers.

**Professor Stephen Doughty – Vice-Provost for Teaching and Learning, The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus**

Professor Doughty thanked ASLI for inviting him to speak for the second year in a row to the Education Summit, representing Professor Christine Ennew. He intended to address the skills gap in his speech where universities play a crucial role. It has been observed many times that there are clear issues where graduates are caught in non-graduate jobs, which raises a questions of the skills gap or jobs gap. Unemployment among graduates are difficult to measure too, but estimates suggest that graduate unemployment 6 months after graduation is significantly higher than the national average. To further add on to this problem, there are significant barriers which contribute such as companies who employ the policy of only employing graduates from foreign universities, which must be overseas. Universities in the local scene have to raise their reputation and change this perception by instilling desirable graduate attributes which are attractive and includes abilities such as technical skills and softer skills.

To achieve these graduate outcomes, the best way to address them would be through the curriculum provided based on delivery by the university. The next aspect is the co-curricular delivery which play a large role in creating an environment which supports student's initiatives. On top of that, universities can apply integrating mechanisms which revolve around employer engagement who understand the needs of the students and consults them along the course of the programme. Next, the university has to look to the future and prepare their programmes with anticipation for future changes in the workplace and their demands. There seems to be a growing need to help students learn how to learn as the education scene evolves. With that, Professor Doughty thanked the audience for their attention.

#### Q&A Session:

***Ms Lina, an independent education consultant, cited that transferable skills are better caught than taught. However the concern is that this happens lower down the education system in primary and secondary school level. She also mentioned the issue where companies only want to hire students who graduated from foreign universities, citing that they have a logic to take the crème of the crop as it makes sense that most of the best students are studying in foreign universities. Compare this with the local universities who are producing average graduates and have low standards of entry, leading to the process of garbage in and garbage out. The rationale of this concept is that the best students receive scholarships from bodies such as Khazanah Nasional, Bank Negara and more while the independently funded students are self-selected from the upper ends of the socio-economic spectrum and would have attended private schools or international schools.***

Mr Stephen mentioned the UK system where they had the attitude that soft skill sets would be taught early so they would be useful later in life. Then UK government said that skills have to be instilled at an extremely young age, even in schooling years, so it cascades down until they enter university. Critical thinking should also be instilled in the 10 year olds to begin developing their mind's ability to stimulate intelligent thought processes.

Professor Dato' Dr Noor Azlan commented on the second point, suggesting that the role of universities is to develop students to be the best at their personal abilities. At UKM, people say that their graduates cannot communicate in proficient English, but that is because 60% of them come from rural areas which was his reason. He said that we have to be very careful with defining universities based on their graduates output.

***Ms Patel asked how we should be adapting English as the global language. Another issue at hand is should we agree to strengthen the employability of graduates which defines the quality of our labour force. Local employers looking to foreign graduates also raises the point of the shift in cultural perceptions and the need to re-evaluate them. Higher education can excel in the way that it should, by producing efficient and productive graduates. Her last point and question is whether we are really teaching for the 21<sup>st</sup> century***

#### ***workplace or teaching beyond the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace.***

Datuk Professor Mohd Yusof said that in either private or public universities, the values are the same and the marketplace requires a certain level of this value. Students with this values will surely be more employable in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. On the question of foreign graduates being higher on demand, he thinks that right now the market is not necessarily looking for graduates who have graduated from foreign universities but they are looking for students who can work immediately. So if we can produce students who are employable, that is what is needed by the market. That is why the Ministry of Education has also placed emphasis on soft skills to be provided by universities.

Professor Sulochana gave her comments, with particular emphasis on the global language. To be a global citizen, she stressed that we have to master the global language. Another point is the garbage in garbage out comment from the previous participant. Professor Sulochana cited that if the students are sub-standard but are given the opportunity to maximise their potential, they can achieve the best of their ability with the necessary willpower. Hence it is about providing the chance while teaching the right skills with recognition, and this can surprise employers when they turn out to be efficient global citizens.

#### **SESSION 6: 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TECHNOLOGIES FOR EDUCATION: IMPACT OF BIG DATA IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS**

Moderator:

**Mr Gurpardeep Singh – Vice-President, Operations, Asia Pacific University of Technology & Innovation**

Mr Gurpardeep provided interesting statistics on the size of data that is being produced every day and the exponential advancements in technology. Hence, the term big data is apt and suitable to the modern world. Data in higher education is tremendous itself and to put it into context, he gave an example that even in the session itself they could produce a few gigabytes of data. Nowadays, data comes in all forms and problems that are faced by educators is how to harness the data and to make it useful to everyone. He proceeded to introduce the first presenter, Professor Dr Ho. He was quickly followed by Mr Kaleem Chaudhry, Mr Bob Chua, Professor Wing Lam and Mr Guy Perring who closed the panel discussion.

Panellists:

**Professor Dr Ho Chin Kuan – Dean, Faculty of Computing and Informatics, Multimedia University**

Professor Dr Ho began by introducing the term big data and what it means. He cited a study by Lloyd at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) who fitted cameras in his house which records video and audio for 3 years long. His purpose was to learn how his son would learn how to speak and these devices helped his data collection for 3 years to track the progress. At the end, he amassed about 90,000 minutes of videos and he had 140,000 minutes of audio. The size of this data amounted to 200 terabytes. This example was to give a perspective of

big data. He explained what makes big data special, consisting of 3 Vs: Volume, Velocity and Variety. In the context of universities, he first explored course registration which handles a large amount of data, and is useful in controlling for an oversupply of students in certain courses as well as keep track on the financial information of students.

He also spoke on learning and academic analytics which are programmes employed by universities to evaluate students. Through extensive analysis, it gives an early warning to the lecturer or administrator if the system thinks that a student will dropout. Professor Dr Ho then explained the concepts on implementing these analytics and the challenges faced. With that, he concluded his presentation and handed the floor back to the moderator.

**Mr Kaleem Chaudry – Regional Director, Enterprise Technology, Oracle Asia Pacific**

Mr Kaleem gave 3 main points for his presentation; unlocking the potential of research content, institutional leadership and the re-use of intellectual property. Before this, technology had been limited in analysing data because of the volume, velocity and variety. Storing data was possible but the analysis and useful information could not be derived at that time. Historically, data analytics have been on the rise as they provide useful information in the decision-making process and provides a lot of convenience. Big data is about predicting the future so it is the real time of information processing which is crucial to make productive use of time. Modern big data technologies should be able to read the information at exponential and phenomenally high velocity to process high volumes of data. This will reduce the size of relevant data and bring it down to a simple pattern to make it useful information. These will be useful information to be presented to the consumers as well as give a clear picture to suppliers. He summarised that through big data and technology in the current age, we can answer many questions which could not be dreamed of in the past.

**Mr Bob Chua – Chief Executive Officer, Pulse Group Inc.**

Mr Bob spoke on the scale of big data and the development of this industry in recent years. This matter is also related to some of our neighbours in the region. The big data academy has a significant impact on the economy, it produces knowledge-based talent as we work towards becoming a high income nation. This is an area of services where we can compete within the region, a distinct step-up on the skills level. The data centre itself is a multi-million dollar industry and there is huge potential to further advance it. However it lacks talent and skills from universities, which must be addressed. The eco-system of big data needs the necessary talent pool to really flourish and push the country's economy forward. He urged universities to align their courses and programmes to suit the advances of the big data industry to produce highly skilled labour which would meet the needs of the industry. He then thanked the audience for their attention and closed his presentation.

**Professor Wing Lam – Vice-Chancellor, GlobalNxt University**

In his presentation, Professor Wing described his personal experience and the impact of big data on the current generation while also touching on the shifts and changes it is causing in higher institutions. As a faculty member, he had several suggestions in mind. The first was to increase learning effectiveness and to ensure a good learning experience for all those involved. The second was to increase teaching efficiency to boost the overall experience of students and lecturers.

**Mr Guy Perring – Regional Director, South-East Asia, International Graduate Insight Group Ltd. (i-graduate)**

Mr Guy thanked ASLI for his invitation and began his topic on using big data to improve the student experience, attracting the best students and ensuring the success of the institution. The changes occurring globally can be seen everywhere. His organisation is an education-focused consultancy and among the work they do is benchmarking student and stakeholder's perception. They work with over 700 universities and colleges across the globe and is the leading independent benchmarking and research group for international education. He introduced the Student Pulse which is essentially an international research study that examines the awareness of student who study abroad. Mr Guy presented a graph of universities and their attraction to students and topping the list were the United Kingdom, USA and Australia. Malaysia is moving up this rank but it will take some time. Following that, he showed the ease of which it was to obtain student visas from certain countries, with Malaysia topping this list. The next graph showed the ease of which to obtain a job upon completion of a student's studies. For international students, friends has proven to be the most important influence to help them choose their country and institution. Hence, universities should concentrate on the young minds who will be the voice of the university to their friends. Another way to analyse data is to generalise the database and cut through all nationalities, determining preferences and possible choices. In a world of big data, getting the student's choice right at the beginning will lead to success as it is time efficient.

**SESSION 7: IMPROVING RANKING OF MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITIES**

Moderator:  
**Dr Khong Kim Hoong – Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), HELP University College**

Dr Khong mentioned that whether we like it or not, rankings and ratings of universities are here to stay. However it is important to be careful and to listen to relevant experts and not be misled by university rankings. In several cases, a university can have a very high ranking, but some departments might not be good. He told the story of his friend's child who rejected Harvard University in favour of a lower ranked university. Her reason was because the professor was good and she wanted to work with him on that particular topic and subject. He said that when you know what you want to do and researched on it, it will turn

out well. Back to the main point, knowing the criteria of the university rankings will be crucial for each person to make their decision if they are pondering on selecting their university.

Dr Khong proceeded to invited Professor Dr Rao to say his piece on university rankings. Following that, he introduced Assoc Professor Elajsolan to take the floor for his speech. The panellists session was then concluded by Senior Professor Dato' Dr Khalid Yusoff. Dr Khong thanked ASLI and the organisers as well as called for the appreciation of the panellists to close the session.

Panellists:

**Professor Dr PLNG Rao – Vice-Chancellor, Manipal International University**

Professor Dr Rao expressed his delight to present at this event and gave a brief introduction on his university, Manipal International University in Nilai which has been here for 2 years. He began with the existence of many university rankings around the world, and brought up the question of which of those can be trusted. There are 18 Ranking Agencies around the world, and they are all mostly research oriented. The rating of international universities started in 2003 in China named the Academic Ranking of World Universities, it accounted mainly for research which included criteria such as Nobel Prize-winning alumni. Then in 2004 to 2009, the popular Times Higher Education World University Rankings and QS World University Rankings were started and based on 5 broad overall indicators and 6 broad parameters respectively. He continued to present the other 15 Ranking Agencies which have mushroomed since then and covers several categories such as regions and subjects. Examples include the High Impact Universities, Leiden Ranking, News Week, SCImago Institutions Ranking, U-Multirank and UI Green Metric World University Ranking among many others. Anyhow, the top 3 rankings which are most widely consulted in the world are the aforementioned ones which are considered as the 3 most influential international university rankings. Countries and education systems can be very different from each other, hence he questioned whether it is possible to compare these universities. He felt that that answer is yes and no. Most of the rankings use globally acceptable parameters such as research citations, faculty student ratio, international student's numbers and such. The results-oriented rankings rely on factors such as employability, placements, student feedback and cost of education.

Hence, he asked if universities should be concerned with their rankings. Amongst the reasons he gave was global competitiveness and policy decisions which are consequently taken by governments, because they are crucial for attracting international students and partnerships with other universities. The immigration policy is also influenced because it is related to attracting international academics. Importantly, collaborations are the foundation for most universities and a recognisable name is important to secure these partnerships. These are the various links which emphasise the need for universities to prioritise their rankings. He followed up with another question, on how seriously students should take the rankings when deciding

the university they attend. He concluded that no single ranking is comprehensive and they are mostly research-oriented. However they are beneficial to students to give them an idea of how beneficial the name of the university might be and universities need to identify the gaps to know where they can improve.

**Assoc Professor Elajsolan Mohan – President, National Association of Private Education Institutions (NAPEI)**

Assoc Professor Elajsolan suggested that many questions have been put up over the years, on how many lists exist to rank universities around the world and which university rankings list has the most authority. Still for others, the concern for rankings are sometimes just for the 'syiok sendiri' factor. He underlined that at the grassroots level, the students take the rankings very seriously. However, some universities move up and down at times, they can be ranked with 6 stars at the starting of the year but 4 years down the line they become 4 stars. However when a student joins, they would not be able to change their university when they realise the downgrade in the ranking once they have enrolled in the university. So the main question is what message these rankings send out to the students. Malaysia has often times played the game of sour grapes where the universities only shout out about it when they are in the top 100 but when they fall out of the top 200, they say rankings are not important.

He took a look at the criteria of evaluating and ranking of these bodies. 40% of the university rankings are from academic peer reviews. This is the most controversial part of the QS World University Rankings, their use of an opinion survey referred to as the Academic Peer Review. Another 20% is assessed based on the faculty student ratio, and it is a classic measure used in various ranking systems as a surrogate to teaching commitment in the QS Rankings. Another 20% is credited based on citations per faculty, 10% is given to recruiter's review and the last 10% is used for international orientation which is intended to capture their internationalism. Hence this is the overall picture of the QS Rankings which is widely popular and has a large influence worldwide.

**Senior Professor Dato' Dr Khalid Yusoff – Vice-Chancellor, UCSI University**

Senior Professor Dato' Dr Khalid said that rankings are a means to an end, not an end itself. When he asked his friends at Harvard University about their thoughts on their university's high ranking, their views are that rankings are only good for the public relations team. Academics are only concentrated on their research and what they want to do. Rankings are the talk of the day however, and is very influential in the world. The global stage is highly interconnected, and the university rankings are just another fashion of the day. Rather than trying to raise the ranking of a university, he expressed that we should be concentrating on the subject matter and exams which will bring benefits to the student. Another thing to be taken into consideration is the contribution of the university towards the society. Universities are becoming major economic influences in the country and there are many possibilities for upgrading

their role and status because solely focusing on rankings will be an expensive exercise.

#### Q&A Session:

**Mr Alexandar from Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MICCI) mentioned his surprise and confusion on the university rankings. He believes it is important if it benefits all stakeholders. Delivery is the primary product for all universities and this should be prominently judged in a university's ranking.**

#### **SESSION 8: LIFE-LONG EDUCATION IN KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY NO LONGER AN OPTION**

Moderator:

**Datuk Dr Tan Chik Heok – President, Tunku Abdul Rahman University College**

Datuk Dr Tan first introduced Professor Dato' Dr Ho and invited him to take the floor for his presentation. Following his presentation, Professor Dr Tengku Aizan gave her speech on the knowledge economy and life-long education. With that, Datuk Dr Tan then closed the final session of the day and thanked the audience for staying till the end.

Panellists:

**Professor Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye – Vice-Chancellor and CEO, Wawasan Open University**

Professor Dato' Dr Ho highlighted the importance of employability, which is the ultimate goal of students who go to university to gain an education. He cited John Dewey who said that education is not preparation for life, but education is life itself. The knowledge economy is a place where organisations and people acquire, create, disseminate and use knowledge effectively for greater economic and social development. As individuals we need to constantly learn throughout life and organisations realise that to survive, they have to engage themselves into learning too. He focused on the enabling environment which consists of the IT infrastructure, applications, content and services. He quoted that behind every successful knowledge economy is a learning economy. He presented a graph showing the learning curve, from the bottom up it will be a challenge starting as a novice, rising to a competent level, eventually becoming experienced and finally qualifying as an expert. For organisations to survive and grow today, their rate of learning must be quicker than the rate of change in their surrounding environment, this is termed as Revan's Axiom.

He mentioned that it is undeniable that technology is dramatically changing the way we work. Mobile tools and apps allow us to work or study anywhere, anytime. Cloud computing is flattening our world too, making business operations more decentralised. We also gain actionable insights from clever use of Smart Data (also known as Big Data). This helps us plan our moves ahead. The killer application of the internet is education, as we need to use the internet to educate people.

**Professor Dr Tengku Aizan Hamid – Founding Director, Institute of Gerontology, University Putra Malaysia**

Professor Dr Tengku Aizan spoke on the aging demographics of Malaysia, which was the main point of her presentation. She presented a graph which showed that a high percentage of the population in Perlis is aging but the absolute number is small compared to Selangor who has a lower percentage of older people. As an individual, we need to prepare for our old age as well as for the nation as it ages. She gave a short history of the third age. There is an element of self-determination. U3A Malaysia aims to train older persons as instructors and facilitators of courses. They encourage the set-up of self-sustaining U3As managed by older persons themselves. The ultimate goal of U3A Malaysia is to be consultative, not as paternal providers. The primary role of U3A Malaysia is to coordinate learning, education and training activities for older persons.

In conclusion, she stated that whether it is to bridge gaps in the digital divide, cultivate a creative hobby or improve health and fitness, learning in later life has become a byword for self-improvement. Although third age education in Malaysia is still at a nascent stage, by enhancing this sector, we can reap benefits from a constantly growing knowledge economy.