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Investors in People, a Strategy to Improve Existing Good Practice by *V.D.Nadarajah, N.Yusoff, J.J.Ogle and X.Pereira*(International Medical University, Commonwealth Plaza, Bukit Jalil, 57000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)

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Development of the Interactive Learning Modular Unit at the International Medical University: A problem-based module for the Virtual Medical University by *Gregory J S Tan, Anwar Kamal, Aduin S Mustaffa and Kamal Salih* (International Medical University, Bukit Jalil, 57000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)

Investors in People, a Strategy to Improve Existing Good Practice

V.D.Nadarajah, N.Yusoff, J.J.Ogle and X.Pereira

*International Medical University, Commonwealth Plaza, Bukit Jalil, 57000
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.*

The Investors in People (IIP) standard was developed from existing good practices in the United Kingdom, in the 1990s. The standard is an audit of the training and development for people in an organisation and is relatively new to the Asian region. The International Medical University (IMU), founded in 1992, starting with the medical faculty, is willing to invest in achieving the standard because emphasis has been given to the training and development of its staff. As staff is the people component of IIP, a questionnaire was distributed to all staff at different levels to gauge the perception of staff in relation to IIP requirements. The results of the questionnaire had suggested 4 areas for improvement (effective induction, provision of equal opportunities, recognition of performance and improvements to developmental activities). Appropriate solutions have been recommended to improve the areas of concern, e.g. the setting up of the Staff Training and Development Committee. Follow-up surveys and interviews to assess the effectiveness of the recommendations will be conducted every 6 months. This paper reports that staff perceptions and needs are crucial in improving the mechanisms already in place.

MBA students and Entrepreneurship: an Australian study of Entrepreneurial Intentions and Actualisation

Dr Harch Thandi and Dr Raj Sharma

Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia

This study reports on a survey of MBA students' perceptions of a range of issues directed at exploring their readiness for entrepreneurial activities. It identifies the motivation for such students in enrolling for the MBA program within a Southeast Australian State University. The paper considers the post-graduate students' intention with respect to being entrepreneurial in terms of their future vocation. Given the emerging problems of graduate unemployment or under-employment, it is important that university graduates of the future engage in creation of new jobs through the development of enterprises rather than simply looking for a job. The study examines MBA students' knowledge, attitude, skills, experience and the likelihood to be entrepreneurial. The likelihood of actualising their intention to become entrepreneurial is also considered in the paper. Finally, some broad implications for the MBA curriculum are considered.

Student Performance in an MBA Program: Age, Gender, Country of Residence and Perceptions

Dr Adela J McMurray and Dr Raj Sharma

Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia

The aim of this multi-method study was to uncover whether age, gender, and country of residence had an impact on post-graduate student performance and perceptions of assessment in an MBA program. Many of the previous Australasian studies of student performance including those by Dobson, Sharma and Haydon (1996) and Dobson and Sharma (1999) have focussed on undergraduates. This study assisted in bridging the gap by examining 583 post-graduate students enrolled in an MBA program at an Australian university and considered their gender, age and country of residence.

Student record databases containing final grades and marks were statistically analyzed using SPSS means and test of proportions. The quantitative results showed Australian female students (76.3%) had a significantly higher mean mark than their male counterparts (74.7%) with the differences being highly significant ($t = 2.75$, p is less than 0.01). Female International students (72%) had a 4% advantage over their male counterparts (69.3%) with the difference being statistically significant ($t = 1.98$, p is less than 0.05). Age appeared to be a factor where the older students aged at or above 30 years obtained 16.1% high distinctions outperforming their younger counterparts who comprised 10.75%.

The statistical data was complemented by semi-structured interviews, containing open-ended questions relating to student perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of subject assessments, and how they could be improved to maintain academic standards and fairness. The qualitative data showed no discernable gap between the strengths and weaknesses of the system.

The study findings resulted in policy recommendations that will assist the academic unit to improve the assessment and management of MBA students.

Articulation and Credit Transfer across the College and University Tertiary Education Sectors: A Study of Relative Performance and related issues

*Mr. Jitendra Chandra and Dr. Raj Sharma
Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia*

This study reports on a regional higher education institution's experiences in terms of dual sector tertiary education articulated and credit transfer programs. Basically there are two broad tertiary education transfer opportunities at this higher education institution; one arises from joint Diploma/degree programs offered across the two tertiary sectors and the other where TAFE students obtain credit whilst entering this Australian higher education institution. The two groups are compared and contrasted in terms of their relative performance in higher education component of the program. Various demographic variables including age, gender, mode of attendance, ENTER score, discipline and basis of admission were considered in terms of the student outcomes in higher education examination. Conclusions are drawn on the two alternative colleges to higher education undergraduate studies pathways.

Institutional responses to Quality Assurance in Australian Higher Education

Lance McMahon (Principal of Policy Resolutions and affiliate, Murdoch University), Michael Sim Yaw Seng (Principal of ESD International) and Helen Cripps (Affiliate, Edith Cowan University)

The Howard Government has pursued a policy of change for the funding and management of Australian Higher Education (AHE) since coming to power in 1996. The newly appointed Education Minister Nelson has instigated a comprehensive review of AHE, recently publishing *Higher Education at the Crossroads: an Overview Paper*, as the first part of the ongoing review process. The stated purpose of the review is to ensure that Australia's higher education institutions are best placed to contribute to the nation's future. The government has also announced that the Productivity Commission will undertake an international comparative study of the resourcing of higher education institutions and the management of those resources.

The paper argues quality is central to the government's policy drive and has been for the two decades. An overview of the development of quality in AHE is given, relating past initiatives to current developments. The paper then looks at the role of the Australian Universities' Quality Assurance Agency (AUQA). Using AHE institutional examples, the key functions and processes of AUQA are examined, as also are the pressures for and of quality compliance for institutions.

The paper concludes that quality compliance in the AUQA process can be demanding for the already resource stretched AHE institutions. Many of the quality problems in AHE can be attributed to the Howard Government's funding reductions and quality measures, no matter how well intentioned or structured, cannot redress this problem.

Effective and Efficient use of ICT in the provision of Higher Education

Peter Ling and Geoff Arger (Learning and Teaching Support, Swinburne University of Technology)

There are many evaluative studies on the efficacy of ICT in higher education, but in some cases, these evaluations relate only to individual instances of the use of ICT and/or have been undertaken by parties with a vested interest. This paper draws on a national investigation of the effectiveness of the use of ICT in flexible provision of higher education in Australia and upon the emerging conventions concerning ways in which ICT can be used effectively and efficiently in the provision of higher education. The paper identifies critical decisions that need to be made when employing ICT in provision of education and provides some guidelines for the effective and efficient use of ICT.

Increasing the Effectiveness of Problem Based Learning: Online Possibilities

Zoraini Wati Abas, Ed.D; Sushela Devi, Ph.D.; Ammu Radhakrishnan, Ph.D (Faculty of Medical Sciences, International Medical University, Sesama Centre, Plaza Komanwel, Bukit Jalil, 57000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)

Problem-based Learning (PBL) has been adopted by many medical schools throughout the world. It is identified as constructivist pedagogy and is believed to be able to contribute to deep and meaningful learning, hence, adding to the quality of learning among medical students. The IMU is among the earlier educational institutions in the country that uses PBL mode as a significant learning mode to support the delivery of its integrated curriculum in both the medical and clinical schools. A number of advantages are associated with PBL. This includes: an increased retention of information, the development of an integrated knowledge base, an encouragement towards lifelong learning, a greater exposure to clinical experience and at an earlier stage in the curriculum, and an increase in overall motivation. The focus of this paper is to describe the IMU experience in PBL, particularly in how effective PBL is perceived to be and whether or not supplementation with discussions on-line is perceived to be helpful in further meeting the objectives of the PBL at the IMU. The findings are based on a survey with the students and interviews with the facilitators.

Development of the Interactive Learning Modular Unit at the International Medical University: A problem-based module for the Virtual Medical University.

*Gregory J S Tan, Anwar Kamal, Aduin S Mustaffa and Kamal Salih
International Medical University, Bukit Jalil, 57000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

The concept of interactive computer-based learning at the International Medical University (IMU) was first initiated to promote IT skills among the students. This led to the development of the Online Learning Interactive System (OLIS). OLIS, however, was too text-based mainly because of the lack of suitable interactive materials. A new online module, the Interactive Learning Modular Unit (ILMU), was subsequently developed to provide a higher degree of interactivity to challenge the students' learning process. ILMU while replacing OLIS is being built to be the major portal for the delivery of the medical sciences curriculum for the Virtual Medical University project of the IMU.

The approach taken in the development of ILMU is in building the institutional infrastructure for e-learning to ensure its acceptability and fit with the established pedagogical process. This involves a new acculturation process as well as technological adaptation. The curricular philosophy and the ILMU Learning System interact to provide the main framework upon which the modules are developed. The E-med pathways create a network of Gateways comprising modules driven by particular clinical triggers, supported by reusable learning objects (RLOs) and the ILMU Learning System monitors and tracks students' usage and performances. The second part of the approach, the institutional infrastructure needed to support e-learning, is to link ILMU to other delivery modes of the curriculum consistent with the curriculum map of IMU's medical education program. ILMU together with the RLOs, the ILMU Learning System, the supporting infrastructure and the IMU Interactive form the main framework for the planned IMU Virtual Medical University.