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?   Appropriateness for the Journal
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to this edition of JIRSEA.

As in the past we present to you in this edition seven papers judged by the Editorial Board to be of interest to Institutional Researchers. Papers have come from China, Indonesia, Thailand, Australia and Malaysia and not all have been presented at the SEAAIR conference(s). The scope is also as varied, from medical education to campus culture in China. The first paper in this edition is a revised Best Paper from SEAAIR Conference 2005 which was presented by the author at this year's AIR Forum in Chicago.

I am also pleased to let readers know that JIRSEA from this edition onwards is indexed with appropriate international indexing networks, thus making it even more prestigious and recognized in the area of institutional research and as an international reference.

That we begin to include papers and articles which had not been presented at an SEAAIR conference in itself is a sign of JIRSEA's maturity. I therefore invite readers to publicise JIRSEA's existence and standing to their colleagues and to contribute to JIRSEA. Papers and articles are to be sent to Dr Raj Sharma on rsharma@swin.edu.au

I am also pleased to let readers know that the SEAAIR Conference 2006 held in the resort island of Langkawi, Malaysia went very well. Almost 90 papers were presented and 3 Keynote speeches given respectively by the Deputy Director General from the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, the Vice-Chancellor of University Sains Malaysia and the Vice- Chancellor of Zimbabwe Open University. The Conference was hosted by the Open University Malaysia.

The 2007 SEAAIR Conference will be held at Assumption University in Bangkok, Thailand with the Theme: *Self-sufficient and Sustainable Higher Education – An Agenda.* Papers for the conference should be sent Dr Raj Sharma at above email address. Similarly if you have papers you would like published in JIRSEA. Please visit our website http://www.seaair.info for further information on any aspects of SEAAIR activities.

Happy reading,

Nirwan Idrus
Editor

A Case for reconstruction of the pedagogy of Malaysian University English Test (MUET) through thematic units instruction

Naginder Kaur, Rohayah Nordin

Universiti Teknologi MARA Malaysia (UiTM) devotes 70% of its courses to diploma programmes,). Consequently, a lot of emphasis is placed on preparing its students for the Malaysian University English Test (MUET). MUET is an entry test of four different papers (based on each language skill) and is a pre-requisite to gain entry to degree programmes, upon completion of the pre-university courses of diploma programmes. In preparing students for this exam, lecturers fervently adopt various pedagogical approaches, which sometimes do not yield satisfactory results as the preparatory course for the MUET is perceived laborious and heavy in content. The exam is viewed a big challenge by many students due to lack of language ability. This implies weaknesses such as limited vocabulary, grammar and language sub-skills, causing a major block to gain a good band score. This study explores an avenue of pedagogical reform by using thematic units approach as the way to bring about improvement in students' language ability. The receptive skill of reading and the productive skill of writing are probed to ascertain the extent of improvement. The input revolves around themes, pertinent to the MUET exam, which are presented cumulatively and spirally via the four language skills to enable students to broaden their schemata. It was found that thematic units instruction is able to improve students' reading and writing abilities and is advocated as the apt pedagogical approach in preparing students for the MUET exam thus, ensuring continuous quality advancement in higher education.

Utilisation of Different Resources for Self-Directed Learning by Students Undergoing an Integrated Problem-Based Medical Curriculum

Mala Maung, Zoraini Wati Abas, Azman Abdullah

As the success of self-directed learning depends not only on the learner, but importantly, on the right balance of learning opportunities, utilisation of different resources for self- directed learning was assessed in students undergoing the medical programme at the International Medical University. Utilisation of each resource was correlated with the semesters, students' learning style and their pre-university education. Resources included printed materials, clinical skills (CSU), problem-based learning (PBL), communication with peers, communication with experts, library, museum, laboratory session, assigned independent reading (AIR),

structured independent learning online system (SILOS), and online learning interactive system (OLIS). Of the 708 students assessed, 98% and 49% found printed materials and AIR useful for self-directed learning, respectively. While printed material was ranked highest, AIR was ranked lowest by students of all semesters. Only PBL, CSU and OLIS have positive correlation with semester. Utilisation of printed materials was scored highest and AIR lowest irrespective of whether learners were active/reflective, sensing/intuitive, visual/verbal or sequential/global. Students scored printed materials highest and AIR lowest regardless of their pre-university education. Utilisation of other resources was also addressed. Resources relevant to learners' need are highly appreciated and novel resources should ensure sustainability of learner interest and enthusiasm. The results also indicate that the learning environment is conducive for the development of independence and self-reliance in learners. These findings are invaluable in planning resources and if necessary in promoting relevant traits of self-directed learning, and should convey important feedback to learners as well as implementers to further enhance the learning process.

Survey of Leadership and related skills development in the Thai MBA Programs

Wisanu Launglaor, Raj Sharma, Uachit Thasnapark

The MBA degree is generally regarded in Thailand's corporate sector as an important requirement for promotion to higher ranks of the business world. Accordingly many staff with bachelors qualification from this sector aspire to complete this Masters level qualification. Indeed what are the motivations of MBA entrants in undertaking this program? This is one of the issues addressed in this study. Another somewhat related consideration is the development of leadership skills in the MBA program. Presumably one of the important aspect of climbing the ladder of corporate success is the aim of the white collar graduate staff to become captains of industry or at the very least leaders of management units therein. This raises another important issue for MBA academics and indeed universities offering such a program, in particular, what leadership skills are being developed in the MBA for students enrolled in that program? An institutional research project was undertaken within the Thai universities located in Bangkok to explore these issues with current MBA enrolled students. It is hoped that the study will provide decision support to university and academic managers in their quest to improve the MBA program offered by the Universities. However, the study could be of broader interest as their appears to be a dearth of such projects undertaken in the past within the Asia Pacific region.

The Development and Validation of an Electronics Laboratory Environment Inventory and Attitude Towards Electronics Questionnaire in Indonesia

Suryadiputra Liawatimena, Darrell Fisher

The objectives of the study were to develop and validate an actual and preferred form of the Electronics Laboratory Environment Inventory (ELEI) and the Attitude Towards Electronics Questionnaire (ATEQ). Data were compiled by library research and field research. Library research wad done by studying and modifying the Science Laboratory Environment Inventory (SLEI) and Computer Laboratory Environment Inventory (CLEI) into Electronics Laboratory Environment Inventory (ELEI), that was combined with Attitude Towards Electronics Questionnaire (ATEQ) into 63 item questions distributed to students, laboratory assistants, and a group of alumni as respondents. There were 353 respondents from Bina Nusantara University. The five scales measured Student Cohesiveness, Open-endedness, Integration, Technology Adequacy, and Laboratory Availability. The results showed that all five scales have a reasonable alpha reliability with low mean correlations. The paper discovered that, the development of the ELEI and ATEQ have been shown to have acceptable reliability and discriminant validity in this study. The instruments, ELEI and ATEQ, are now available to researchers and lecturers, and should prove useful in the design and implementation of the laboratory component of a course.

Assessing Academic Computing in Malaysian Higher Education: A Value Chain Approach

Shamsul Anuar Mokhtar, Rose Alinda Alias, Azizah Abdul Rahman

Analysis on thirty-three academic computing-themed journal and conference papers identifies six broad academic computing areas: 1) Teaching and Learning Using ICT; 2) Researching Using ICT; 3) ICT Vision, Plan, Policies and Standards; 4) ICT Infrastructure; 5) ICT Information Services; and 6) ICT Institutional Support. In addition, nine ICT assessment frameworks encompassing certain academic computing areas are analysed. To develop an academic computing assessment framework for Malaysian higher education, a model is proposed using the value chain approach. The model includes all six academic computing areas as well as components of each area. To implement the model, a case study was conducted on five higher education institutions in Malaysia. Findings from the case study are used to identify forty-six performance indicators and rubrics that differentiate and describe the different levels of academic computing implementation in higher education institutions.

Students' Perceptions of Campus Culture in a Chinese University

Xiaoshen Zhu, Raj Sharma, Jun Yan

Campus culture has been the subject of a number of institutional research projects in developed countries such as the USA. Some of these have focused on the corporate culture that focuses on furthering the understanding of how institutional decisions and actions are made, whilst other studies consider the supportive nature of internal cultures regarding the achievement of organisational goals and strategies. The latter is very important, particularly in relation to the enhancement of the University's mission concerning learning and teaching. Yet such studies are rare within the Asian region. The present institutional research aims to at least partially address the dearth of institutional research on the topic by considering campus culture and possible effects on the learning and teaching of English language at a Chinese University. It suggests some changes in the cultural environment in order to improve the effectiveness of learning of English within this Asian country.

Knowledge capacity building through Quality Management of Education and Institutions of Higher Learning

Nirwan Idrus

The globalization of knowledge or information is multidirectional. It only makes sense when the provider and recipient of the knowledge or information are capable of both providing and receiving. The fact currently is that this is not the case, especially when it involves developing countries. While the expectations are that developing countries should at least be able to receive, if not provide, the education infrastructure is normally not present to allow that to happen. This paper proposes an exploration into effective learning, a move away from current pedagogical thinking and delivery and instilling innovative management of institutions of higher learning, so that we could *catch up* with the rest of the world and hence join them in globalizing knowledge and information. In particular, this paper discusses the demise of *rote learning* in this technological and globalised world and challenges the Asian values concept of *acceptance.* In combating these educational drawbacks, this paper advocates a fundamental change in the requirements of teachers in the broadest sense of the word (i.e. including lecturers and professors). At the same time this paper also discusses the need for a conducive environment to allow the above to occur. This leads to a quality-based management of higher education institutions. This requirement has become a given in many developed countries.

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