



Cultivating Excellence through Quality Education

Cosmopoint Group's Efforts to Provide Quality, ICT-based Education

One of the most basic rights is the right to an education. Not just any education of course, but quality education that is comprehensive as it is affordable. As Malaysia races towards developed nation status, it is imperative that a ready pool of skilled knowledge-workers is ready to meet the demands of the industries. Playing a part in this is the Cosmopoint Group - an education provider that is changing the face of ICT-based education in the country. *Technology Business Review* had the opportunity to speak to the visionary man behind Cosmopoint, Datuk Idrus Mohd. Satha, the President and Founder of Cosmopoint, about his contributions to the education and IT sectors as well as the state of IT education in Malaysia.

The establishment

One thing has to be said about Datuk Idrus, and that is he is not a man who saw the trend towards ICT and merely decided to jump on the bandwagon. Instead, he is armed with knowledge acquired from his time working in the ICT industry, culminating in him becoming a system analyst. In 1991, he left it all behind and embarked on an exciting new direction. It was the infancy of the IT age in Malaysia, and

Datuk Idrus saw the prospects in it. As such, he set up an ICT training centre in Kuala Lumpur, which would be the first of many. And which would later go on to become Cosmopoint International College of Technology - the first college in the Cosmopoint Group that is now recognised as one of the foremost providers of ICT education in the country.

Cosmopoint has since grown from strength to strength, with 13 centres

nationwide and a student population of more than 9,000 from various backgrounds. Besides being one of the few private colleges in the country to be awarded the prestigious Multimedia Super Corridor status, it was also given the license to operate a university in 2006, which Cosmopoint now has under the brand name Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan University College.



Datuk Idrus Mohd. Satha, the President and Founder of Cosmopoint.

“We want to be the leader in providing quality, relevant education and training through an innovative, effective delivery system, by engaging technology in the way we impart education and training to our customers,” Datuk Idrus expounded.

Affordable for all

In Malaysia today, there are countless numbers of private education institutions, which of course, raises the question about differentiation. According to Datuk Idrus, Cosmopoint is able to create a unique niche for itself in the fact that it provides quality at affordable rates. As he explained, one of the main driving forces behind the establishment of the Group is so that it can help build a strong knowledge-based society that uses powerful digital tools to communicate and educate.

“At Cosmopoint, we believe that when it comes to education, quality

cannot and must not be compromised. It is the one area in education which you cannot compromise,” Datuk Idrus stressed, before comparing education providers to automotive engineers. “Just as automotive engineers cannot compromise on the quality of a car’s engine because they are beholden to the safety of the people who will be in the car, so too, are education providers responsible for developing and equipping our future generation with the skills and knowledge to contribute to the country. We do not want to produce poorly-equipped graduates who cannot contribute to their families, companies, society and country. So we believe that quality cannot be compromised, and at the same time we make it affordable.”

Education solutions

To this end, Cosmopoint Group has since diversified into many areas since its establishment in the effort

to provide quality education and training to their customers, while remaining within the realms of education and IT. One of these acts is acquiring the master franchise licence for the No.1 IT corporate training centre, New Horizons, a US-based company of international repute. “We are setting up 11 New Horizons Computer Learning Centres throughout the country to specially cater for corporate learning to meet the IT training needs of corporations, or individuals seeking to acquire additional skills to excel in a new or blossoming career path,” Datuk Idrus explained.

He also mentioned another initiative which Cosmopoint has been involved in since the mid 90’s. This initiative, according to him, focuses on promoting and developing education content-based solutions using IT-based learning and multimedia, such as e-learning facilities and web-based applications, and is being looked into by Cosmopoint’s subsidiary, IMS-Solution, which specialises in producing a diverse range of solutions for customers depending on their needs, such as solutions for web, multimedia, creative graphics, virtual reality, animations, e-learning, and business applications.

Aiding progress

As one of the early pioneers in ICT education in the country, Datuk Idrus admitted that ICT education in the country has made no significant progress in the past 10 years. He said this is evidenced by the high rate of unemployment among IT graduates in the country.

He believes that the three factors contributing to this are the

ineffectiveness of the current IT curriculum, students being taught using irrelevant technology or technology no longer required by the industry, and weak English language skills.

According to him, most current IT curricula in universities do not place an emphasis on the core, fundamental skills of IT, which is problem solving and analytical skills. "This is key to becoming a good IT professional," he stressed. "The emphasis, unfortunately, is more on how to use applications and though it is necessary, it should not be the most important. Because of this, problem-solving and analytical skills are neglected, and not given the needed emphasis here in Malaysia," he lamented.

Even though the focus is on teaching students on using IT applications, Datuk Idrus revealed that there are still graduates who are being taught using obsolete technology, applications which are either outdated or are no longer relevant to the industry. "This is where relevancy in education is important," he explained, "Students have to be taught according to the current needs and relevance of the industry. If not, you are then producing graduates who are good users of IT but cannot contribute in specialised capacities such as developers, programmers and analysts."

At the root of it all, is mastery of the English language. Students and even education providers themselves often lack the fluency required to understand IT terminology and jargon. This is a serious problem because most IT materials, resources and technologies come from the

US. "As their language proficiency is poor, they are not able to keep themselves abreast with the latest developments in the IT industry because much of the reference books, magazines and websites are all in English," Datuk Idrus said.

Being aware of this, Cosmopoint has established a specialised program to help unemployable IT graduates re-skill themselves and equip them with the necessary and relevant skills required by the industry today. Called CCSP - Certified Career Specialist Program - Datuk Idrus said the re-skilling and re-training program "is complemented with an intensive English course and students are instructed through the use of the latest and relevant tools based on real life applications. With more than 200 IT companies working closely with Cosmopoint, we are able to place these graduates into job positions at the end of the program." He believes that with an estimated 400 to 500 students enrolling in this program each year since the course started in 2004 and successfully becoming employable, the program has been a success before adding that this is what the ideal IT curriculum should be, and complemented by intensive English courses and the relevant technical and soft skills.

Looking to the future

Over the years, the efforts of Cosmopoint and Datuk Idrus have been recognised by various organisations and awards, among them the 2007 Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship Award for Outstanding Entrepreneur of the Year and the 2008 Technology Business Review ASEAN Award for Bumiputra Leadership in the ASEAN Education Management Sector for IT Education.

"Winning awards was not something which I intended to pursue when I established Cosmopoint. But we appreciate them and we see them as acknowledgement of our efforts and contributions in providing cultivating a culture of excellence through quality, relevant and affordable training for all and at all levels - from childhood education to corporate training and to postgraduate programs," he said.

And with a new RM200m campus currently being built in Wangsa Maju and scheduled for completion in two-and-a-half years time, Cosmopoint remains on the right path towards becoming a global provider of excellence in training, education and consulting services, as Datuk Idrus had envisioned since the establishment of Cosmopoint Group of Colleges.

With a man of excellence and vision such as Datuk Idrus Satha at the helm, Cosmopoint will certainly remain one of the most exciting and promising education providers in the country. And with its commitment to offering quality, relevant and affordable education to all, significant progress will surely be achieved.