

# **REPORT ON PROF HALIM ALI VISIT TO THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE**

**10 – 17 MARCH 2013**

## **Introduction**

The office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic and International has formally appointed Prof Halim Ali as the Adjunct Professor for the Faculty of Social Sciences effective from 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013. The Dean of the faculty, Prof Spencer, has agreed to invite Prof Halim to the faculty once the agreement was in place. The Department of Anthropology and Sociology (ANSOS) was the organiser of the event and has hosted Prof Halim's first visit to the faculty on 10 to 17 March 2013. All of the events planned throughout the visit were open to all members of the faculty and across all departments and academic programmes.

## **Objective**

For the second visit, there were two main objectives identified. The first objective was to continue on the agenda for publication of edited volume of essays consisted of young academics in the faculty. The second objective was to provide academic training for students and staff through lecture and reading circles.

## **Programme**

There were three streams of activities addressed the general interest of colleagues and students in the social sciences. There were:

- **READING CIRCLE**

11 & 14 March, 2 - 3. 30 pm:

The activity was open to all, with the intention to encourage the culture of reading and discussion among members in the faculty. Two books were selected by Prof Halim and discussed respectively:

- 1) "The structure of scientific revolution" by Thomas Kuhn (1962)
- 2) "The sociological imagination" by C. Wright Mills (1959)

Both essays were selected from the previous recommendation by the participants who wished to be familiarised with the classical works in social science. The book by Kuhn was a classical reading for the philosophy of social science. The author analysed the function of paradigms in the field of natural science and juxtaposed them with their roles in social science. Unlike the sciences, social science paradigms (or grand theories) exist simultaneously and remain persistent through the test of times. The lesson learned from the text was to encourage as many paradigms as possible so that more ideas and differences can be discussed and debated as in the word of the speaker "let a thousand paradigms live".

The second work by Mills was a chosen because it reminds the present readers of the parallel between social science in the 1950s and today. Two of such were identified, namely the continuation of an "abstract empiricism" in social research in which

studies become detached from social problems that concerned the people. The second parallel was the continuation of political agenda in dictating the course and direction of social science and university learning. These reminded the readers that much need to be done to ensure the survival of academic independence and integrity.

For the future reading, it was suggested that the work by Guy Standing *The Precariat* (2011) to be discussed in the next visit.

- **WRITING COLLOQUIUM**

13 & 15 March 2013, 2-5.30 pm

The colloquium was a presentation of first draft by the contributors of the volume. Everyone in the faculty was invited to come and assist in giving feedbacks to the authors. The title of the volume of edited essays is “Issues in Development: Multi-Dimensional Perspectives in Social Science”. The editors are Dr Gusni Saat and Sharifah Sophia. The presenters, the essays and their field are of studies/department are:

- 1) Telecentre as a means for better livelihood among the indigenous community in BIMP-EAGA Zones: Potential and Challenges  
Gusni Saat (Development Studies)
- 2) Power relations versus community development in Nigeria  
Omar Adamu Madu (Development Studies)
- 3) Issues of teaching and learning in a primary school of Orang Asli: A case study of Sekolah Kebangsaan Senderut, Kuala Lipis, Pahang  
Bemen Win Keong Wong and Christopher Perumal (Development Studies)
- 4) Religious Conversion among Temiar of Kelantan and Semai of Pahang  
Nicholas Gani and Mohd Shazani Masri (Anthropology and Political Science)
- 5) Television, Islam and Morality: Negotiating housewives’ subjectivities in domestic space  
S. Z. A. Ishak (Communication Studies)
- 6) Challenges facing Malay families in Kuching: Young Malay Women’s perceptions and solutions  
Dyg Asmah Awg Hamdan (Labour Relations / Development Studies)
- 7) Understanding Marital Power  
Parveen Kaur and A.J. Moghal (Sociology)
- 8) Framing juvenile delinquents as the pathological individual  
Kamsiah Ali (Social Work)
- 9) A question of ‘difference’ in autobiography  
S. Ahmad and Siti Zanariah A. Ishak (Sociology and Social Theory)
- 10) Bridging self and the research, researching and communicating  
Faizah Mas’ud (Social Work)

11) Missing Links in the Evolution of Sarawak's Social Science  
Abdul Halim Ali (Sociology and Social Theory)

**GUEST LECTURE for SSF 1083 Gender Ethnicity and Class**

12 March 2013 12-1 pm, 4-5 pm.

A lecture for first year student on the topic 'social stratification' was delivered by Prof Halim as part of his duties as an adjunct professor. The student was taught on the creation of 'class' in society and how a social subject relates to the class system. There were around 300 students attended the lecture and gave positive response to the questions raised by the guest Professor.

**Recommendation**

The organiser has received several feedbacks from the guest and the participants about the programme. While the responses from the colleagues and students in the faculty were overall positive, supportive and encouraging, there are areas that needed attention. They are summarised as follow:

1. The number of activities planned for the second visit was lower than before. This was due to the limitation of funding on behalf of the faculty. As a result, the second visit was more focused. This however, did not affect the attendance to the activities as the turnout remained high.
2. The focus on capacity building agenda remained to be a consistent feature of the visit and will be continued in the next programme. As the numbers of young academics in the faculty are increasingly growing, there is a sense of urgency for support in terms of academic mentoring and motivation.

**Conclusion**

Overall, Prof Halim second visit to the faculty was a success. The attendance to the programme was very well indeed despite being held during teaching week. Colleagues across departments came and lend their support for the activities. The ANSOS department is looking forward at organising the next Prof Halim's visit to the faculty and shall be announcing the details in due course.

Signed by the Head of Anthropology and Sociology Department (ANSOS)