

The Line Between Teaching and Learning

UNIMAS is both an old and new place for me. It is a place I have gradually learned about since I was a little girl in the year 1993. Back then, for a seven-year-old who occasionally followed her parents to their workplace, UNIMAS appeared an alien environment. After completing secondary education, I left Sarawak for eight years to further my studies. I went to Labuan for matriculation then across the South China Sea to my childhood home in Selangor for both undergraduate and masters degrees. Now it seems like I am back home again here after having been offered a lecturing position at the university.

I am now teaching Physics course at the Centre for Pre-University Studies in UNIMAS. Until recently, I have been experiencing a mix of old and new phenomena. The atmosphere felt the same as it did many years ago, but the surroundings appeared somewhat different. Within a month of working here, I can honestly say that it has been both a teaching and a learning experience. The lecturers do what they can to guide their students to understand the subject matter they are teaching, but at the same time, lecturers learn something from the process as well. As lecturers, we learn that the pre-university students have their own opinions and they are brave to stand up and voice their thoughts and ideas. They are capable of critical thinking, and weighing the pros and cons of various

issues. In a lecture hall, the question and answer session is in fact, in full motion. In this, lecturers learn how to provide information to the students as well as how to accept their point of view. During the sessions, these students are very exceptional in terms of expressing themselves. The knowledge they received is carefully evaluated to be mentally occupied in the various topics of the subjects.

As one enters the classrooms here at the Centre for Pre-University Studies, the class atmosphere is often filled with noise. Within this noise there exist honest souls who are willing to learn. What is commonly perceived to be a noisy environment is actually a lively discussion about the rationality of each piece of knowledge absorbed. The manner in which knowledge is learned in these pre-university classrooms can be compared to the act of eating. Every little bit of knowledge is carefully chewed, digested and dissolved.

As a lecturer, to teach in UNIMAS is also about learning many new things. The knowledge that we deliver and share with students will create a new path of discovery, and perhaps spark new kinds of knowledge that we could be learning from.



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The tree of knowledge is never short of its expanding roots. Its leaves fall to the ground, giving a different condition to the earth, which connects the soil back to the roots.

Here in UNIMAS, there is a subtle of a two-way communication within a little group of people, encouraging one another to make a huge difference. Back when I was the student, I never truly appreciated the meaningful value of each lesson. However, now that I am the teacher, knowledge that is shared in the classrooms has never been more meaningful. Each day that passes give me a whole new perspective about the content of knowledge that I teach, about the nature of teaching, and consequently the reality of life. There is a saying that goes: "two heads is better than one". In a class full of dozens of heads, the meaning of the adage goes a long way. If everyone in the room is willing to contribute his/her opinions, however small or large they may be, the value of learning will go a long way.

As I gradually move into another new month in the academic session, the old UNIMAS that I remembered when I was younger is starting to feel very new. Between the historical wooden buildings and the brick walled corridors, the past and the present collide with one another.

The generous quaint lakes on the east side of the East Campus and its massive counterpart on the west complement each other. The neighborhood in and around UNIMAS continues to develop. Its faculty buildings still stand, but the staff members are constantly on the move. Between the students coming in and the staff going out, there is always something to see everywhere we turn. For each person we miss when they leave, another person walks in to be acquainted with. In UNIMAS, the old does not give way to the new. They co-exist with one another, trying to create a balanced harmony for a better future. Teaching here can be observed as an old experience to some, but learning is always, and always will be, a new experience for each and every one of us. As a whole, I cherish the teaching and learning experience in the Centre for Pre-University Studies. This experience is truly worthwhile. Together we can build a better future in education here in UNIMAS.