Nation building at Taylor’s University

By Samantha Joseph

TAYLOR’S excellence in teaching future generations to take their productive place as leaders in the global community through their internationally benchmarked Australian and Canadian pre-university undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, renowned tourism programmes and investments in training and research have paid off handsomely in building a stable foundation for their students. Their graduates regularly find places in top overseas universities through twinning or postgraduate programmes, and have an excellent reputation amongst would-be employers.

No doubt Taylor’s has made its impact in contributing towards the human capital of educated professionals that form the building blocks of our economy, and now Taylor’s aims to make their mark on nation building through the research that the institution does.

“In our definition, ‘nation building’ comprises many aspects which include human capital development in terms of both quality and quantity,” says Professor Datuk Dr Hassan Said, the Vice Chancellor and President of Taylor’s University. “Here at Taylor’s, we have a pool of accomplished researchers with unique expertise in various areas that contribute to our university’s research output.”

To further enhance research output, Taylor’s has formed another network of researchers, the Centre for Research and Innovation in Tourism (CRIT), which provides a platform for researchers to collaborate and publish their findings.

“CRIT brings together researchers from various disciplines and industries to work on projects that are relevant to the tourism industry. This collaborative approach has led to the development of innovative solutions that benefit both the industry and society,” said Professor Datuk Dr Hassan Said.

The collaboration between the university and the industry has been instrumental in the development of new tourism products and services, as well as in addressing the challenges faced by the industry.

Dr Vickneswaran (left) with Hector Ceballos Lascuain, the founder of the Ecotourism concept.

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He cites the lack of an effective sustainable management practice, enforcement in ensuring the ecosystem is sustained, consistent approaches in implementing mitigating measures and the large number of organisations in tourism and their related fields that only adds to the challenge.

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Research by CRIT shows that there is a growing interest in sustainable tourism among both tourists and local communities. This is evident in the increasing number of eco-tourism activities in different parts of the world.

“CRIT’s research has shown that sustainable tourism has the potential to contribute to the development of local communities and the protection of the environment,” said Professor Datuk Dr Hassan Said.

One of the key findings of the research is the need for a collaborative approach to ecological tourism. This involves the establishment of partnerships between the industry, government, and local communities to ensure that tourism is managed in a sustainable manner.

Professor Datuk Dr Hassan Said

Caring for the community

One of the practices of responsible tourism is involving the indigenous community, whose homelands provide the location for many eco-tourism destinations. Their lack of education, applicable skills and language barriers are seen as obstacles that are not worth overcoming despite their wealth of native knowledge.

“Local communities have the potential to benefit greatly from responsible tourism, provided that they are properly equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge,” said Professor Datuk Dr Hassan Said.

In another ambitious research project, Taylor’s and Universiti Sains Malaysia have formed a collaboration to conceptualise a rural responsible tourism capacity framework that would monitor all the rural tourism spots to ensure that it remains at or is rehabilitated to a level that is sustainable. A tourism barometer is being developed to monitor the fragility of all rural tourism sites.

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Advocating responsible change

Through its Centre for Research and Innovation in Tourism (CRIT) at Taylor’s School of Hospitality Tourism and Culinary Arts, Taylor’s has set up a proactive approach to its contributions to RT through close collaboration with a social enterprise group, Wild Asia. The collaboration has initiated the setting up of the Asian Responsible Tourism Initiative (ARTI) to further promote the RT concept at the national level.

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By these means Taylor’s with both new knowledge and an alternative source of revenue for the private institution, Taylor’s dynamism and willingness to invest in something that will affect the big picture in terms of nation building — and even the world, as we turn towards a more knowledge-based society — bodes well for its future and that of its students and academy. One particular field that the researchers at Taylor’s have excelled in and is slowly making their mark on is in the field of sustainable and responsible tourism.

**Creating a sustainable tourism environment**

Malaysia ranks among the top 10 tourism destinations in the world. Our amazing beaches, virgin forests and fantastic shopping malls have lured tourists in by the millions — and we hope to continue to do so for years to come. That means we have to think long term, and if our current practices will only ensure the eradication of our tourist attractions in the long run, we will have to look elsewhere for a sustainable future for tourism.

One of the main focus points in terms of sustainable tourism that capitalises on our abundant and sometimes untapped natural beauty is ecotourism. Much spoken of, but largely a misunderstood form of tourism, Taylor’s in its infinite wisdom has taken a research interest in the concept’s use and management of ecotourism and its practices.

Looking at Malaysia, it can be said that the main problems in add to bureaucracy, as the major issues that need to be dealt with. Ideally a top-down approach would work best, as it would involve the establishment of policy-making, enforcement and infrastructure,” Dr. Nair admits. “But it is not likely. That means other parties have to play a significant role in upholding responsible tourism.

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<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>RESEARCH CENTRE / UNIT / RESEARCH FOCUS</th>
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| Hospitality, Tourism & Culinary Arts | • Centre for Research and Innovation in Tourism (CRIT)  
• Services, creativity, innovation and sustainability in hospitality, tourism, food, events, sports & recreation, health, spa and wellness. |
| Architecture, Building & Design | • Centre for Modern Architecture Studies in Southeast Asia (MASSA)  
• Research on documentation of buildings, architects, firms, policies, organisations and laws developed in Southeast Asia during the modern era from the 1920s to the present. |
| Business | • Business, Research, Innovation & Case Centre (BRICC)  
• Islamic Finance, Financial Analysis and Policy  
• Entrepreneurship and Service Management |
| Law | • Centre for Research in Law and Development in Asia (CRELDA)  
• Contemporary public interest issues affecting individual and national interest, for example cruelty to animals, children’s rights, environmental laws, consumer rights, human rights, and so on. |
| Clinical, Life & Behavioural Sciences | • Clinical, Life and Behavioural Sciences Research Centre (CLUBER)  
• Infectious Diseases  
• Lifestyle Diseases |
| Communication & Humanities | • Southeast Asia Research Centre for Communications & Humanities (SEARCH)  
• Media culture and practices in Southeast Asia and other neighboring countries  
• Development of communication strategies, approaches and application |
| Education | • Centre for Research in Education and Instructional Technology (CREDIT)  
• Pedagogical research findings, technological innovations and promoting “the global best practice” in teaching and learning. |
| Engineering | • Centre for Engineering Research & Development (CERD)  
• Biomechanical engineering, fluid flow and flow visualisation and engineering education  
• Reactors fluid mechanics, fractionations of oil and fats and porous media |
| Information Communications Technology & Computing | • SIMRIN: Systems, Information Management and Multimedia Research Unit  
• Strategic use of new wave computing technologies in knowledge management and for process improvement (for example: of performance, operations, as catalyst for growth, and so on.) |