

One senior citizen's PhD experience

> Learning has no finishing line

FOR Dr Ho Nee Yong, an alumnus of Asia e University (AeU), "learning has no finishing line". An advocate of lifelong learning, Ho recalls how his enrolment at the university "caused a little commotion among my family members".

But he promised them that quality family time would always supercede his PhD journey that began, as he recalls, "one Sunday morning as I saw an advertisement by AeU in the newspaper offering 50% discount for senior citizens on tuition fees".

"After some mental calculation on my monthly government pension, I headed for the AeU campus in Kuala Lumpur to enrol in PhD in Education."

And since then, Ho has discovered many good things at the university, including how affordable the programmes there are, and how students can learn from anywhere, anytime.

"Gone are the days when people had good reason to lament on the lack of opportunities to continue with tertiary education. AeU has made it possible for everyone to obtain a degree at their own pace and using their preferred method of learning. Open entry is available now for working adults lacking the minimum entry requirements," he says.

Ho finds the university's



Ho is most happy with his PhD in Education journey at AeU.

facilities most helpful. "The AeU's Digital library, also known as AeU Knowledge Centre is cosy," he says of the centre at the university's Kuala Lumpur campus that offers some 20,000 e-books and 70,000 online journals.

He recalls meeting Prof Dr Siow Heng Loke, dean of AeU's School of Graduate Studies, and Prof Dr John Arul Phillips, dean of the School of Education & Cognitive Science before enrolment. "After a casual look at two lecture rooms and a few questions asked on e-Learning, I showed my MA degree in Education from Reading University, UK to Prof Siow who then approved my application. He was later to become my supervisor.

"At the orientation, the president of AeU, Prof Datuk Dr Ansary Ahmad's remark that the dropout rates for PhD students

were very high had me ponder whether he was also referring to me—I was 63 years old then."

But Ho found he didn't have to worry. At AeU, he found learning to be "much easier with easy access to scores of international online libraries and e-Journal databases".

"As my reference research was almost exclusively done through e-Library, I had the option of not having the static queue-up counter service—and it meant a much lower time-cost. There were also the AeU librarians who offered their assistance at my point of need in online research," he says.

"I attended a few doctoral colloquia for research ideas, had one-on-one sessions with my supervisor, and had my thesis proposal passed by the vetting committee during the first year of my study.

"As the doctoral journey is a shared one between supervisors and candidates, both parties need to make their expectations known to bring thesis writing to fruition. I am glad to say that AeU has all it takes for this cordial relationship to be in place.

"On another perspective, I am thankful to AeU for having given me the opportunity to attend three sessions of external quality audits conducted by both the international and local academia.

"It is well known that the higher education quality assurance reports across the world serve as a benchmark for improvement in quality tertiary education, accountability and transparency of public funding.

"I am proud that AeU, a relatively young university, has now been accredited by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency."

Ho also finds the lectures at AeU eye-opening. "The many enlightening classroom lectures, and those presented by international guest speakers have enlarged my body of knowledge on matters concerning research and current educational issues.

"Exposure to these lectures has had a positive impact on my critical thinking. What interests should schools and universities serve? What constitute good education? Is there justification for society to subsidise the production of doctorates?

"In the course of doing my research, I am convinced that for a

holistic education to be a worthwhile effort, and to ensure its success, the character-building aspect must take precedence over the pure quest for knowledge and wealth."

Ho's journey at AeU was at its crucial stage when the viva voce was held in January 2013. "My external examiner from the University of Oxford, UK, had to be ready at seven on a winter morning to be linked up through the tele-video conferencing with other examiners at the AeU meeting room in Kuala Lumpur—it was 3pm local time. It was a defining yet exciting moment for me.

"I have AeU to thank for, not forgetting the confidence my supervisor Prof Dr Siow had in me for his selection of external examiners."

Like Ho, working adults will find the many lifelong learning options offered by AeU beneficial.

The university is a collaborative multinational university established under the auspices of the 33 Asia Cooperation Dialogue countries.

The university provides many forms of financial aids, including a 10% discount for alumni, 50% discount for senior citizens (who are 55 years of age & above) and 75% discount for disabled students. Assistance is given to students to apply for loans, EPF and MyBrain15.

For more details, visit www.aeu.edu.my