

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Pushing the agenda further

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As part of the Entrepreneurship Action Plan of Higher Education Institutions (2016-2020), the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has rolled out various initiatives to push the uptake of entrepreneurship among students and graduates.

The ministry's secretary general Tan Sri Dr Noorul Ainur Mohd Nur said the efforts are in sync with the implementation of the major shifts of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) and alignment of the higher education system with the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

"With the rapid advancement of disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, nanotechnology and quantum computing, our education landscape, delivery and content must be re-engineered."

"Re-engineering to meet the current and future needs of society can lead to creative disruption," said Noorul Ainur at the Entrepreneurial Higher Education Symposium held at the recent Global Entrepreneurship Community Summit 2017 in Kuala Lumpur.

"The change brought about by the Fourth Industrial Revolution is projected to be big, impacting many sectors. The higher education sector must step up its networking, research, re-engineering and creativity, and really be entrepreneurial," she added.

Researchers from both public and private higher education institutions — as cited in shift seven of the blueprint which focuses on innovation ecosystem — are encouraged to conduct demand-driven research as solutions providers for technological problems faced by the industry in the country.

The Entrepreneurship Action Plan stipulates a target of at least 15 per cent of students involved in entrepreneurship activities and at least five per cent of graduates choosing entrepreneurship as their career of choice by 2020.

Within that same period, 1,500 educators with entrepreneurship expertise are expected to become advisers or mentors to student businesses and entrepreneurship projects.

"Higher education institutions are also expected to be more entrepreneurial in raising revenue and resources. They must be self-sustainable and less dependent on the government."

"MOHE is enhancing capacity-building programmes to meet digital economy requirements. There is also the implementation of the Siswapreneur programme where students immerse in experiential entrepreneurial learning as well as enhancement of social entrepreneurship and volunteerism courses as an effort to humanise the Fourth Industrial Revolution process."

Elaborating on entrepreneurship among students and fresh graduates, MOHE Entrepreneurship Unit head Datin Dr Syahira Hamidon said the Siswapreneur programme in 2017 took student entrepreneurs out of their comfort zone to the actual business environment.

"Students have been conducting their businesses in the compounds of universities, polytechnics and community colleges with friends as customers. Starting this year via the real business ecosystem of the Siswapreneur programme, we got students to promote and sell their products and services in venues such as



Noorul Ainur Mohd Nur (left) visiting booths at the Siswapreneur Showcase 2017 in Berjaya Times Square. PIC BY HAFIZ SOHAIMI

Berjaya Times Square, Sungei Wang Plaza and the Curve in Kuala Lumpur, and at malls in Penang and Kelantan. We are planning a Siswapreneur event in Sabah early next year," added Syahira.

MOHE has also organised various entrepreneurship competitions — the most recent being Pertandingan Usahawan Inovasi Piala Menteri Pendidikan Tinggi 2017, with the award ceremony at Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Strategic entrepreneurship collaborations have also been formed with organisations such as Teraju, Malaysia Technology Development Corporation and Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre.

Syahira also announced the MOHE Entrepreneurial Awards (MEA) 2017 competition which was held in 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2016.

Adapted from the United Kingdom's the Times Higher Education Entrepreneurial University Award of the Year, MEA act as a catalyst for the creation of a holistic and conducive ecosystem for entrepreneurship development in Malaysian higher education.

With five categories available this year, the contest is open to both public and private higher education. Written submissions of nominations must be made by Feb 21 next year. The award ceremony will be held on April 20.

The categories are Institutional Awards for the most entrepreneurial university, polytechnic and community college respectively; Outstanding Student Enterprise Award; Outstanding Graduate Enterprise Award; Outstanding Entrepreneurship Mentor Award; and Outstanding



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Student Social Entrepreneurship Award. Winners get substantial cash prizes.

"After MEA 2016, we reviewed and enhanced the competition. We looked at current developments and made sure the contest is in line with the new direction of the ministry. One new aspect is the Fourth Industrial Revolution," said Syahira.

For the MEA 2017 Institutional Awards category, public and private universities are no longer judged under different categories but will compete on the same platform.

"This is in line with the Malaysia Education Blueprint which aims to harmonise public and private universities to be one."

As for the student categories, there was only one MEA award for the last four years that covered both student entrepreneur and graduate entrepreneur. "This time, one recipient will be chosen from students who are still studying but have their own businesses for the Outstanding Student Enterprise Award while only one winning contender of the Outstanding Graduate Enterprise Award will be selected from the nomination pool of graduates who choose entrepreneurship as their career."

By organising MEA, the MOHE hopes to see integrated and holistic development in higher education, enhanced entrepreneurial learning opportunities and experience for staff and students, and increased commitment and participation from them and external stakeholders.

For details on MEA2017, contact MOHE Entrepreneurship Unit at entrepreneurship@mohe.gov.my