

PEOPLE | SUCCESS | LIFESTYLE

BUSINESSTODAY

AUGUST 2018 | volume 18 issue 08

With articles republished from



FULL STEAM AHEAD

As the Asian Banking School celebrates its third year of operations, Business Today speaks to Professor Colyn Gardner, Chief Executive Officer of ABS on the school's plans of growing with the industry

INSIDE
MINI: Modern Day Icon | Fish, Chips & Language Tips

ISSN 1511-9408 08

9 771511 940000

reach RM9.80(WM)
RM11.80(EM)
www.businesstoday.net.my
KDN-PP 11772/12/2012(031448)

ASIAN BANKING SCHOOL



*Professor Colyn Gardner,
Chief Executive Officer of ABS*

FULL STEAM AHEAD

As the Asian Banking School celebrates its third year of operations, Business Today speaks to Professor Colyn Gardner, Chief Executive Officer of ABS on the school's plans of growing with the industry

Malaysia's growth and transformation are strongly supported by its financial system, which has also been a catalyst in facilitating economic development. According to Bank Negara Malaysia, the strategic role of the Malaysian financial sector will continue to be an important one as Malaysia becomes even more integrated with the international financial system and the global economy.

The rapid changes in the financial sector what many would call disruptors – will also lend a hand in transforming the landscape of the Malaysian financial system. Often times many view change or disruption as something negative. On the contrary, there are opportunities ahead if one were to embrace change.

This is the very notion that propels the Asian Banking School (ABS) forward in delivering premium learning development programmes to financial institutions in the country.

“Disruptors are everywhere, and I would like to think that ABS is a disruptor

in a sense that we want to disrupt the traditional training industry in Southeast Asia... not just in Kuala Lumpur. And I mean it in the most positive way. Discovering how you can best embrace disruption and benefit from it is something quite exciting,” says Professor Colyn Gardner, Chief Executive Officer of ABS.

“We are disrupting what was perhaps the old way of doing things. There has been a tendency to stick to the same topics and the type of courses year after year. Our view is that we have to look constantly for new subjects and develop the right programmes to get people up to speed as quickly as possible.”

Filling the Gap

Since its inception three years ago, ABS is now the largest specialised provider of quality banking training programmes in the region, through its wide range of programmes - curated specifically for the banking and financial industry.

Complementing its public programmes, professional qualification

and certification training workshops, ABS hosts a total of three flagship programmes under its Executive Education portfolio. The Global Banking Leaders programme was launched in November 2016, followed by the Cambridge Summer School programme in April 2017. Its latest flagship is the Emerging Banking Leaders, which was launched earlier this year.

“When we first started three years ago, the programmes offered before by the Institute of Bankers Malaysia (IBBM), now known as AICB, were very much on the introductory type of programmes,” says Gardner.

“One of the objectives that we had right from the start was to broaden and deepen the range of training programmes that are offered to the industry. This is so that we could be more attractive to the banks and allow them to have the opportunity to spend more of their staff training fund (STF) on courses that are more relevant to them.”

The affable CEO recalls that many of the banks were not maximising the



use of their STF funds back then, simply because there were not sufficient relevant courses offered to them by IBBM. In addressing the needs of the Malaysian banking sector, ABS has created a range of new courses catering to middle to senior, as well top-level management.

He adds: “One of the key things that I wanted to do is to introduce top-level programmes that you could only really get from some of the top business schools in the world. It was also an opportunity for us to provide programmes for the management level that are a little lower than the C-suite – the individuals who are going to emerge one day as leaders of the banks.”

Offering More Options

Historically, big banks tend to send their top-level management to highly regarded business schools but there was a need to supplement these courses with ones that have been developed specifically for the banking industry and within a more local context.

“This is why we started off by introducing our Global Banking Leaders programme, which was developed with the Cass Business School, City, University of London,” explains Gardner.

The Global Banking Leaders programme is an annual two-week programme, aimed at giving senior bankers in the country the opportunity to learn about banking trends that have been taking place around the world, while considering its influence and impact to the banks here in Malaysia.

“It is also for them to have the opportunity to share concerns and opportunities in an open environment with a group of their industry peers without worrying about things being too sensitive,” he adds.

Complementing its first flagship programme is the week-long Cambridge Summer School programme. Over the course of five days, participants have the opportunity to converse and discuss with senior academics from the Judge Business School, University of Cambridge, as well as network with other senior management executives of other financial institutions.

For this year’s instalment of the Cambridge Summer School programme, ABS is looking at how banks can use creativity and innovation to counter some of the disruption that are taking place in the industry.

While its Global Banking Leaders programme looks at very global matters, trends and what is going on around the world, the Cambridge Summer School programme involves coming up with strategies based on trends that are taking place in the industry. From there, participants have to try come up with some cursory plan on how they can use that model back in their own business environment.

“It is a very practical course in a sense that they will be exploring practical solutions and ways of how banks can counteract the disruptions that are taking place. There is a very specific objective to the summer programme,” shares Gardner.

Its latest addition to its repertoire of executive education programmes is the Emerging Banking Leaders programme - a ground-breaking programme also developed together

with the University of Cambridge Judge Business School.

First launched in January 2018, the Emerging Banking Leaders programme seeks to prepare high potential bankers on the fast-track to a leadership position with the skills and knowledge needed to face the challenges of working in this increasingly complex and dynamic environment. It is a programme that they hope will help shape the future of banking through its leaders of tomorrow.

“The inaugural Emerging Banking Leaders programme was conducted in April 2018. There were 33 young talents who joined us for the programme and who have a long banking career ahead of them. They have been identified by their respective banks as individuals who are talented and perfect for such a programme. And I must tell you, they were terrific – they gelled as a group extremely well and worked very, very hard throughout the course,” shares Gardner.

While ABS’ Executive Education programmes offer the industry access to internationally acclaimed resources, its public programmes also cover a comprehensive list of banking areas.

The public programmes are designed and developed in-house by its Specialist Training Consultancy Team, with some in collaboration with strategic learning partners that includes top business schools in the world.

One of its latest additions is the Investment Banking public programmes, created in consultation with investment and capital market practitioners from the banking industry. It is also in collaboration with the Malaysian Investment Banking Association (MIBA).

Another noteworthy event is this year’s Applied Corporate Finance programme. The jointly hosted programme with MIBA will be conducted by internationally renowned Professor Aswath Damodaran, Professor of Finance at the Stern School of Business at New York University.

The two-day programme seeks to provide participants with the tools and techniques developed to answer corporate



finance questions, and how best to apply them in practice. It will also look at the big picture of corporate finance, the inter-relationship between corporate financial decisions and how these decisions affect the value of a business.

Moreover, on the professional qualifications front, the school conducts face-to-face training workshops for every module of qualification programmes offered by the Asian Institute of Chartered Bankers (AICB). These workshops form an essential part of the overall study plan suggested to candidates of the exams and are held at ABS as public programmes.

The school also hosts a range of in-house graduate training, which is designed to shape young graduates and entry level professionals into future bankers.

These are just the tip of the iceberg for what ABS offers the banking industry, with more new programmes and courses created and designed to address current and upcoming issues and challenges in the industry.

Growing Beyond

When asked if ABS will be introducing any new programmes into its arsenal, Gardner shares that it is something the school continuously considers: “Our approach is that we have to be innovative



Top and bottom: Participants of the Emerging Banking Leaders programme at the University of Cambridge.

and creative. Innovative in a sense that we are constantly looking for new content, programmes that are topical and relevant to the industry.”

In 2017, for example, ABS had run several programmes related to Fintech a buzzword that to this day remains relevant to the banking industry. The school is constantly looking for what are the emerging trends in the industry and how can its programmes enable banks in Malaysia to get up to speed, if not ahead of the pack.

“And that’s my great thrill! If I can, I want to see the banks in Malaysia really responding to the types of training that

we can offer them; the type of innovation that we can produce,” he says.

On this front, ABS will also continuously develop more executive programmes with top business schools globally. Gardner reveals that he is very pleased with ABS’s executive training programmes – one of the areas that the organisation is rightly proud of.

“I do not want us to lose sight of this very important area of developing executive education. We must remember that there is still work to be done even after being certified. Having the certificate does not always mean that you’re going to be equipped to perform



An Executive Education programme held at ABS.

for the rest of your banking career,” he opines.

The reason is that such programmes are ultimately more transformational than certification courses. He believes that if you can transform the top level of the banking industry, it would feed down rapidly to more highly qualified and talented individuals lower down the hierarchy. And that is ABS’ strategy.

Its collaboration with the Cass Business School and the University of Cambridge Judge Business School has also provided past participants with an added advantage aside from gaining skills and knowledge.

“Our collaboration with these schools have been quite exceptional. Participants of the programmes can become alumni. It is a terrific benefit; being an alumnus goes a long way in your CV while enabling the participants to keep in touch with leading academics in the world. It really is a wonderful opportunity,” he explains.

Additionally, ABS works together with a list of banks in Malaysia in providing customised programmes.

He adds: “These are the programmes that we run for organisations based on the individual

bank’s specific needs, particularly focused on what their strategic plans are.”

Building Relationships

While ABS has made a name for itself in Malaysia, it is not stopping there. The next few years will see the school focus on stretching the ABS brand and products to other SEA countries. The world of banking training is one full of wonderful opportunities, especially for organisations that have a clean and clear vision.

“It is quite an interesting challenge that we have to face. My feeling is that we should be looking at Vietnam, Cambodia and other countries in the region,” he shares.

For a start, ABS participated in the 2018 Asian Pacific Association of Banking Institutes (APABI) Meeting and Conference. This year’s conference was hosted by Taiwan Academy of Banking and Finance (TABF) and carried the theme “FinTalent Development in the Digital Era”.

ABS, as a banking institute representative from Malaysia, believes that APABI plays an important role in bringing together specialist training institutes that share a common goal.

Through a network of banking institutions, the association aims to equip banks and financial institutions with the capacity to deal with the transformational developments that are shaping the financial sector by supporting the continued renewal of human capital.

In further expanding its reach, the school also visited the Association of Banks in Cambodia in June 2018, to build and strengthen the relationship between both countries and its respective institutions. It was also an opportunity for ABS to introduce its programmes, which includes the new Certified Anti-Money Laundering & Counter Financing of Terrorism Compliance Officer (CAMCO) and Cambridge Summer School programmes.

“We are called the Asian Banking School after all. There are certainly opportunities in Southeast Asia, where they have a fast-growing economy with banking systems that are still relatively developing,” says Gardner.

ABS is not interested in doing things other than what it can do extremely well; it is highly focused. He concludes: “The world of banking training is filled with endless possibilities and we intend to explore every one of them.” **BT**