UMS takes lead in global education inclusivity

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) together with the Department of Higher Learning (JPT) Ministry of Higher Education (KPT), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and Malaysian Council for Public higher Learning Institutions (MEIPTA) successfully organized Malaysian Inclusive Open Educational Resources (iOER) Virtual Showcase 2023 recently.

The event is a follow up to the National iOER Policy launched in December 2021, brought together distinguished guests, educators, and international representatives, underscored UMS leadership in promoting accessible education for all.

The Vice-Chancellor UMS, Professor Datuk Dr Kasim Haji Mansor said UMS is honoured to be one of the key parties involved in the project called 'Design and Development of iOER'.

"This project is conducted fully online in three phases over a period of six months. The activities were made possible with the generous financial support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, USA.

"UMS is committed to implement the Malaysian National iOER Policy and Action Plans as outlined in the UNESCO OER Recommendation 2019. This project focuses on Action Plan No.3 namely, to support the creation, access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and redistribution of inclusive and equitable quality OER for all stakeholders," he said.

The showcase was officiated by the director of JPT, Professor Dr Azlinda Azman, involving 80 academicians from 20 Malaysian public universities.

Furthermore, Kasim said UMS is also responsible in establishing the website ioercop.ums.edu.my to archive all activities and deliverables from this project under creative

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>
> Datuk Dr Kasim Haji Mansor

Commons licenses and can be accessed globally.

He also informed that the iOER project was initiated by director for eLearning UMS, Professor Dr Fong Soon Fook who is also the UNESCO iOER consultant and his team.

"We congratulate KPT on the showcase of the project 'Design and Development of iOER' which will transform the lives and abilities of everyone and the differently-abled individuals in Malaysia by giving them access to educational resources that are vital to their inclusion in society and their contribution to the greater good of humanity.

"Our shared goal is to contribute to the realization of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, ensuring quality education for all.

"As we celebrate this iOER Showcase, allow me to express our commitment to providing the fullest support and cooperation to the Ministry of Higher Education as we collectively embark on the next steps forward in advancing iOER," he added.

Soohyun Kim

UMS also expressed gratitude and appreciations to the director of the Regional UNESCO Office in Bangkok, Soohyun Kim; Chief Advisor UNESCO Bangkok, Joe Hironaka; UNESCO Consultant Trainer, Professor Dianne Chambers; Creative Commons USA, Dr Cable Green; UDL Implementation Specialist Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST), Bill Wilmot and Google Malaysia.

Earlier in speech, Soohyun applauded UMS's dual focus on championing the open education movement and advancing accessibility for persons with disabilities.

She commended UMS leadership in this global project by showcasing how the OER policy has been practically applied through capacity-building workshops supported by UNESCO.

"This OER showcase demonstrated how a national policy has been practically applied to create innovative and inclusive OER learning materials in Malaysia," she said.

She also highlighted the exponential growth of open-licensing and UNESCO's adaptation of the UNESCO OER recommendation, emphasising the role of inclusive education for persons with disabilities and open licensing in achieving SDG-4.