

UMS explains KD Chair, lingo centre

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KOTA KINABALU: All universities, locally and abroad, are synonymous with creating a professorship chair in certain fields via appointment of well-known and wide experience scholars.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) as the state's premier institute of higher learning took the same approach. Its Corporate Relations Section said UMS had, initially, wanted to form the "Chair of Sabah Indigenous Studies".

"It was aimed at carrying out studies and research on the cultural practices of the Bumiputera communities in the State similar to that introduced by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak through its Chair of Dayak Studies.

However, Tan Sri Bernard Giluk Dompok, who was Chief Minister at that time (in 1999), who proposed the Chair, decided it be the Kadazan-Dusun Chair, being the largest ethnic group in the State.

The Chair's aim was to conduct studies and research on the Kadazan-Dusun community with progress, unity and strong relations between the races in Sabah in mind.

The University's Board of Directors (BoDs) approved the chair based on Clause 6(1g) of the UMS Constitution. The Chair also received a fund of RM2 million from the State Government.

A Trustee Holder Committee guided by the regulations and guidelines set by the board of directors is responsible to manage the fund and also financial resources for the chair.

The committee is chaired by the Vice Chancellor and its members comprised of a member of the BoDs, a State government representative, Deputy Vice Chancellor, registrar and also UMS treasurer who acts as secretary.

Apart from that, deans of schools including centres and institutes would also automatically become members of the committee concerned.

After going through several procedures and processes such as amendment to the regulations and guidelines in terms of appointment of professor to the Kadazan-Dusun Chair, the intake to fill the vacancy for the chair was advertised in local papers in December, 2001.

The selection committee comprised of committee as stated under Clause 23(1) of the University's Constitution.

Qualified candidates for the post must be academicians, especially senior professor or senior researcher of a university or institute of higher learning irrespective of gender, race or citizenship.

Well-known academicians in related field could also be considered to fill the vacancy.

In the event the candidate is a non-academician, he or she must be considered qualified and fulfil the criteria of professor appointment according to acknowledgement by the selection committee.

The criteria are necessary to ensure the selected candidate is able to fulfil the objectives of the formation of the Kadazan-Dusun Chair.

The objective of the Chair's formation is to acquire the services of an expert either from a professor or renowned individuals in the field of ethnography studies particularly those related to Kadazan-Dusun community affairs in Sabah.

It is also to conduct research that could be used by the relevant parties to develop the socio-economy status and to create researches related with the Kadazan-Dusun communities.

In this respect, the appointed can-

didates to assume the chair must possess the criteria set and approved by the Selection Committee and its appointment approved by the University's Board of Directors.

After the appraisal and consideration has been carried out on the applications, the Selection Committee appointed Prof Madya Dr Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan as the holder of the Chair effective Jan 20, 2003.

She was entrusted with the Chair for a period of two years and if she showed good performance and service excellence, including satisfactory health, the university could consider extending her service for another term.

In short, the Ministry of Higher Education, who is also a monitoring body of academic chairs in institutes of higher learning saw the success of Dr Jacqueline that she has been entrusted to continue heading the Kadazan-Dusun Chair until now.

Among her achievements were 11 researches on the Kadazan-Dusun community and also studies on several Bumiputera ethnic groups in Sabah.

She was also involved with 10 consultancies that are related with ethnic and culture.

Dr Jacqueline has published a book, six internationally peer-reviewed journal articles, 13 chapters in an academic book and three proceedings.

She also has written 16 seminar and conferences papers that has not been published and prepared five modules for workshops.

All these are related with the Kadazan-Dusun and other ethnic Bumiputera communities.

At the moment, she still has two books, several peer-reviewed articles, chapters in book and proceedings that are in the process of final editing.

Dr Jacqueline has also participated and presented papers in 37 conferences at the national and international levels.

She also has conducted five conferences that include the Borneo Research Council 9th Biennial International Conference in 2008 apart from 13 seminars held at the Social Science School.

Since holding the Chair, she also has supervised 16 post-graduate and 52 undergraduate students.

At the same time, she also taught Borneo Ethnography and Ethnomusicology subjects in the School of Social Science although normally a person holding the Chair is not involved in teaching undergraduate subjects.

Through her researches, publications and other academic activities, Dr Jacqueline has uplifted the image of the Kadazan-Dusun as well as other ethnic Bumiputera groups in Sabah throughout the world.

Dr Jacqueline is the Vice-President of Regional Borneo Research Council, a member of the ICTM Study Group on Southeast Asian Performing Arts (a think-tank of Unesco that are related to the cultures in Southeast Asia).

She is also a member of the Heritage Registration Expert Committee (Customs) under the National Heritage Department and is involved in the editorial and in most research journal publications.

For her contribution in academic researches, especially in Kadazan-Dusun communities, she has received various acknowledgement including the prestigious Adjunct Research Fellow in Anthropology from Monash University, Australia.

Overall, she is very much directly involved with the Bumiputera communities in the State through community service and cultural practices of the Kadazandusun communities.

She is eligible to a salary from the RM2 million fund from the State Government but the UMS decided to keep the funds, considering she is also a UMS staff. The fund is still with UMS and has not been utilised yet.

However, the interests from the fund could be used for research funding or for conferences and seminars related to the Kadazan-Dusun Chair.

Interestingly, Dr Jacqueline did not use the fund or interest to conduct researches but sought grant by applying for it from the Ministry of Higher Education.

The UMS said it is proud with the efforts and initiatives by Dr Jacqueline, adding that it is commendable and should be emulated by other researchers.

In line with the mastery of Kadazandusun language that are shunned by younger generation today, the UMS is looking at very seriously.

But it is not through the Kadazan-Dusun Chair because the chair is more inclined towards academic, especially conducting researches and studies on customs and cultures of the Kadazandusun community and other native communities.

To enhance mastery of the language, the UMS has its Knowledge and Language Upgrading Centre that offers Kadazandusun language programme.

The centre has qualified Kadazandusun language teachers who are always prepared to give good service to the students.

Nevertheless, the UMS is always ready to listen to suggestions from any parties.

This, it said would assist in the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage and also as a platform to provide explanation to the general public that are mostly still confused with the role of the Kadazan-Dusun Chair of the university.

It said that until now there are still those who do not understand the aim of the Chair because they think it is a cultural association.

On other development, the UMS would always be monitoring the Chair annually to ensure that it runs smoothly in line with its formation at the same time the Ministry of Higher Learning conducts its monitoring on all institute of higher learning academic chair in the country.

The response and feedback from the people was very encouraging throughout activities conducted by Dr Jacqueline.

Community leaders such as village chiefs and chairmen of JKKK were also directly involved with the people in the respective areas when the researches were conducted.

Among it was the Ethnographic and Cultural Mapping research in Tambunan.

The people considered such research very important for future generations.

Considering the importance of the research results and also contribution of the Chair to the society, UMS said various upgrading would be planned to ensure that it remains relevant and a reference to the society in the future.

Among the upgrading is to create a research archive for the Kadazan-Dusun Chair that would become a source reference to the Kadazandusun and also Bumiputera communities in Sabah.